Building Quality Education to Improve Teachers' Welfare as The Key to Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Education is a key factor in a country's development, as the quality of human resources is largely determined by an effective and equitable education system that keeps pace with the times. The quality of education plays a vital role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 4: Quality Education. In Indonesia, a major issue in the education sector remains the welfare of teachers. This study aims to analyze the level of teacher welfare and efforts to improve quality education toward achieving the SDGs. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a systematic literature review method. The analysis reveals significant challenges for the Indonesian government in ensuring teacher welfare, particularly in remote areas. Furthermore, the government needs to implement policies and strategies focused on addressing various issues in the education sector, as this represents a major investment in achieving inclusive and sustainable education in Indonesia.

Keywords: teacher welfare, SDGs, quality education, sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most crucial aspects in supporting sustainable development. The three main dimensions of sustainable development economic, social, and environmental, present challenges for today's global society (Mujidiatama and Husamah, 2024). Quality education plays a vital role in national development by enhancing the quality of human resources. However, Indonesia's geographical conditions comprising islands, mountains, and remote areas create educational disparities, such as inequities in facilities and teacher quality between urban areas and remote or "3T" (Frontier, Outermost, and Underdeveloped) regions (Nabila *et al.*, 2024). A study (Sihombing, 2022) examined the educational Gini index across Indonesia's 34 provinces and investigated whether there was a relationship with education funding, educational infrastructure, and average income for the 2015–2019 period. The results indicated that educational inequality persists, particularly in the western and eastern provinces of Indonesia.

Many regions, particularly remote and underdeveloped areas, still face educational challenges. Regions such as Papua, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), and Maluku are known to face significant challenges in providing education due to their remote locations far from economic and governmental centers. The problems include limited educational facilities and infrastructure, such as a shortage of classrooms, a lack of learning materials and tools, and limited access to technology. This situation not only reduces the effectiveness of the learning process but can also dampen the enthusiasm and motivation of students and teachers in achieving the desired educational

goals. This remains the government's greatest challenge in realizing sustainable education (Suharningsih and Fathoni, 2025).

According to a 2023 UNESCO report, the quality of education in Indonesia ranks 69th out of 209 countries. However, when compared to other ASEAN countries, the quality of education in Indonesia remains low and does not compare favorably to that of other nations, such as Singapore, which ranks 1st. This situation acts as a barrier to developing high-quality human resources a key factor in national development, particularly in achieving quality education (Anggraini and Nugraheni, 2024). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) consist of 17 goals that form a sustainable development strategy by combining various efforts to address global issues for a prosperous future by 2030.

Education is one of the goals of the SDGs, as reflected in Global Goal 4, which focuses on ensuring the availability of quality, inclusive, and equitable education for all. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of providing lifelong learning opportunities that are accessible to everyone without discrimination (Anggraini and Nugraheni, 2024). SDGs 4 comprises 10 targets covering quality education, with the primary objective outlined in Target 4.7: integrating knowledge and skills at all levels of education. Furthermore, the goal is to ensure that all children can complete free primary and secondary education and have access to affordable vocational training by 2030 (Lim *et al.*, 2022).

Teachers play a strategic role in national development and the advancement of civilization as they navigate the ever evolving dynamics of social, economic, and technological change. As high quality human resources, teachers are expected to play an active role in exercising leadership in various situations, both in the learning process with students and in professional interactions with fellow teachers. In addition, teachers also serve as agents for transmitting noble moral and cultural values, as well as role models who can set positive examples for students and the surrounding community (Wahyudin, 2020).

Teacher welfare is a key pillar of educational quality and student success. Currently, teacher welfare in Indonesia remains low, and their workload is not commensurate with their dedicated service. Teacher welfare includes, among other things, adequate salaries, promotions, career security, and relationships among educators. Teacher welfare is a crucial factor in the delivery of educational services, as a fair incentive system is expected to encourage teachers' commitment to providing optimal educational services. It appears that these aspects have not yet been fully realized in the lives of teachers today. Therefore, this study aims to examine the current state of teacher welfare in Indonesia and efforts to improve it as a driving force for quality education aligned with the SDGs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative descriptive study using the systematic literature study (library research) method; that is, the study aims to obtain theoretical data by studying and reading literature related to the research problem and organizing it based on relevant topics so that the research objectives are

achieved. The implementation of this study aims to collect accurate information and data with an emphasis on literature review, gathering information from various national and international sources, using keywords such as "welfare teacher," "SDGs," "quality education," and "sustainable development" from research reports published in the last six years. The analysis process involves an in-depth review of the selected sources, the extraction of key information, and the synthesis of findings to identify gaps and opportunities in integrating sustainable development into teacher welfare. The quality and relevance of each source are assessed using predetermined criteria, including methodological clarity, the strength of the arguments, and the contribution to the field of study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education is vital to human survival because every human action is closely linked to education. Education is not merely about attending school and acquiring knowledge; rather, it is a process of developing personal qualities such as ways of thinking, attitudes, character, and language that contribute to one's own life as well as to society. A good education can serve as a foundation for a country to improve the quality of its human resources. Sustainable development significantly influences life today while taking into account future needs. Furthermore, in the National Long Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025–2045, improving the quality of education is a key priority in national development planning. These efforts align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4: Quality Education.

There are 17 SDGs designed to address global issues ranging from social, economic, and governance aspects to environmental protection by 2030. One of the SDGs is Quality Education, which is included in the indicators for SDG 4. Global Goal 4 aims to ensure and prioritize the provision of quality and inclusive education, and to provide learning opportunities for everyone regardless of age (Anggraini and Nugraheni, 2024). In efforts to achieve the SDGs targets in the field of education, it is important to recognize that character education is a key factor in achieving the SDGs. Furthermore, improving the quality of education can help students understand life values such as justice, equality, and care for the environment (Indriasari *et al.*, 2024).

Brawijaya University's SDGs website (Brawijaya, no date) outline several targets for achieving SDG 4, including ensuring that every child has access to quality and affordable early childhood care and education, primary and secondary education, vocational education, and higher education. The next goal is to eliminate gender disparities in education, provide child-friendly and safe educational facilities, and, finally, increase the number of qualified teachers so that the learning process can be more effective.

Initially, teachers were viewed merely as instructors, now their role has shifted to that of mentors and learning managers for students. Teachers play a crucial role as cornerstones in the learning process (Khayati *et al.*, 2020). Teacher welfare is a key pillar of educational success. Teacher welfare is divided into two categories: material and non-

material welfare. Material welfare consists of salary, allowances, and incentives, while non-material welfare involves meeting psychological and spiritual needs to foster a sense of safety and peace of mind in the workplace. Teachers' current welfare remains low and is not commensurate with their workload. According to data from katadata website (Millati, 2026), teachers' salaries in Indonesia are very low compared to those in other Southeast Asian countries. Singapore ranks first, with teacher salaries ranging from approximately Rp35 million to Rp66.3 million, followed by Brunei Darussalam, where teacher salaries range from approximately Rp31.6 million to Rp50.6 million per month. For example, the salaries of civil servant teachers in Indonesia range from Rp2.5 million to Rp6 million per month, depending on their rank and years of service, while the salaries of contract teachers are very low, ranging from Rp300 thousand to Rp2 million per month.

According to a study (Hutasuhut *et al.*, 2025), there are challenges in improving teachers' welfare. First, teachers' salaries remain low, resulting in incomes that are insufficient to meet their basic living needs, many teachers seek side jobs to supplement their income. Second, a heavy workload forces teachers to divide their focus from their primary duty of teaching due to other obligations, such as administrative tasks as homeroom teachers, supervising extracurricular activities, or serving as school administrators. Finally, a lack of school facilities can hinder learning activities. For example, in urban schools, facilities are well-equipped with science and technology (IPTEK), making learning activities more interactive and broadening students' perspectives on global developments through technology. In contrast, schools in remote areas of Indonesia or those classified as 3T regions still lack technological facilities, such as computers and internet access, which prevents teachers and students from engaging in learning activities to their full potential.

By 2025, the Development and Revitalization Program had been implemented in 16,167 educational institutions. The Learning Digitization Program, which involves the provision of digital interactive whiteboards (PID), had been distributed and implemented in more than 288,000 educational institutions. Based on a study (Lestari *et al.*, 2026), on the role of digital interactive whiteboards in elementary school students' learning motivation, it was found that the use of digital interactive whiteboards increased students' average enthusiasm scores from 58.2% to 76.5%, In terms of student engagement, the level of active participation and creativity reached 78% when students used the boards in learning activities such as media players, interactive quizzes, and animations.

To improve the quality and welfare of teachers, the government provides a scholarship of 3 million rupiah per semester to teachers who do not yet hold a Diploma IV or Bachelor's degree through the prior learning recognition (RPL) program. In 2025, scholarships will be allocated to 12,500 teachers, and in 2026, to 150,000 teachers. Deep Learning, Guidance and Counseling, Coding and Artificial Intelligence, and English. Teacher welfare is being improved through certification, with the amount of the allowance having been increased and now transferred directly each month. Contract

teachers also receive monthly incentives. Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, Directorate of Teachers and PMPK (Publikasi, 2025).

The government must establish policies or regulations governing standards for salaries, incentives, and allowances particularly for contract teachers at every level of education in accordance with their expertise, competencies, and work experience. In addition, the government must allocate funds from the State Budget (APBN) and Regional Budget (APBD) to support the development of contract teachers' organizations in order to improve the quality and welfare of teachers (Hutasuhut *et al.*, 2025). The government needs to implement policies and strategies focused on addressing various issues in the education sector, as this represents a major investment in realizing inclusive and sustainable education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Education is vital to human survival because every human action is closely linked to education. The Indonesian government has formulated the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025–2045, in which improving the quality of education is a key priority in national development planning. These efforts align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4: Quality Education. Teacher welfare is a key pillar of educational success. Teacher welfare is divided into two categories: material and non-material. Teacher welfare in Indonesia remains low, particularly as the salaries received are not commensurate with the workload. The government must establish policies or regulations governing the standards for salaries, incentives, and allowances for contract teachers at every level of education, in accordance with their expertise, competencies, and work experience.

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