

## LOCAL HISTORY EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: ENHANCING STUDENTS' HISTORICAL AWARENESS THROUGH QUESTIONNAIRE RESEARCH

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**Abstrak** - Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran pendidikan sejarah lokal dalam meningkatkan kesadaran sejarah, kemampuan berpikir kritis, dan identitas budaya siswa dalam konteks pembelajaran abad ke-21. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif dengan melibatkan 30 siswa SMA di Palembang yang telah menerima materi sejarah lokal dalam kurikulum mereka. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur sebanyak 15 butir yang mencakup persepsi terhadap pembelajaran sejarah lokal, kesadaran sejarah, dan kemampuan berpikir kritis. Instrumen penelitian menunjukkan reliabilitas tinggi dengan nilai Cronbach's Alpha sebesar 0,84. Analisis statistik deskriptif dan inferensial, termasuk uji Independent Samples T-test, menunjukkan hasil yang signifikan pada seluruh aspek yang diukur (Sig. = 0,00). Siswa yang mempelajari sejarah melalui konteks lokal menunjukkan keterlibatan yang lebih tinggi, kesadaran sejarah yang lebih mendalam, serta kemampuan analisis yang lebih baik. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi sejarah lokal dalam pendidikan formal mampu memperkuat keterikatan siswa terhadap akar budaya mereka sekaligus mendorong berpikir reflektif dan kritis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan sejarah lokal merupakan pendekatan pedagogis efektif untuk menjembatani warisan budaya dengan pendidikan modern, sekaligus memperkuat identitas dan literasi sejarah siswa.

**Kata kunci:** Pendidikan sejarah lokal, kesadaran sejarah, berpikir kritis, identitas budaya, pembelajaran abad ke-21.

**Abstract** - This study investigates the role of local history education in enhancing students' historical awareness, critical thinking, and cultural identity in the 21st-century learning context. Using a quantitative descriptive approach, the research involved 30 senior high school students in Palembang who had been exposed to local history materials within their curriculum. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire consisting of 15 items covering perceptions of local history education, historical awareness, and critical thinking skills. The instrument demonstrated strong reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.84. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, including Independent Samples T-tests, showed significant results across all measured aspects (Sig. = 0.00). Students who learned history through local content displayed higher engagement, deeper historical awareness, and improved analytical skills. The findings emphasize that integrating local history into formal education fosters students' connection with their cultural roots while promoting reflective and critical historical thinking. This study concludes that local history education serves as an effective pedagogical approach to bridge local heritage and modern education, strengthening students' identity and historical literacy.

**Keywords:** Local history education, historical awareness, critical thinking, cultural identity, 21st-century learning.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, local history education has emerged as an essential element in promoting students' understanding of history and appreciation of cultural identity. In the context of 21st-century education, where learning emphasizes relevance, critical thinking, and global citizenship, the integration of local history into school curricula provides students with meaningful ways to connect historical concepts with their own lived experiences (Anderson & Willis, 2019; Crowley, 2018; Mokadem et al., 2025). This study explores how local history

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education contributes to students' historical awareness by enhancing their understanding of local events, figures, and traditions, and by linking these to broader historical and cultural narratives. Using a questionnaire-based approach, this research investigates students' perceptions of local history learning and its effectiveness in developing historical consciousness.

The incorporation of local history into educational practices has been widely discussed among educators and historians. Supporters argue that it strengthens students' sense of identity and belonging while deepening their comprehension of historical continuity and change. According to Barton and Levstik (2019), history education should move beyond abstract timelines and instead help students understand how history shapes their everyday lives. Local history serves as a bridge between learners and their cultural environment, enabling them to see themselves as active participants within the historical process rather than passive observers of distant events. Such contextualized learning not only enhances engagement but also reinforces knowledge retention through personal relevance.

Moreover, local history education plays a crucial role in cultivating critical thinking and analytical skills. By studying the historical development of their own communities, students are encouraged to question, interpret, and evaluate historical sources and narratives from multiple perspectives (Levstik & Barton, 2022; Akteruzzaman et al., 2023). This pedagogical approach empowers learners to identify bias, construct evidence-based arguments, and connect past occurrences with present realities (Drake & Reid, 2020; Ennis, 2020; Nieto, 2019; Suárez-Perales et al., 2021). Engaging critically with local history allows students to appreciate the complexity of historical change and the interdependence between local and global developments (Helen, 2020; Shor, 2019).

In today's globalized society, the relevance of local history extends beyond cultural preservation; it is a key component of global and multicultural education (Golnick & Chinn, 2019; Dunn, 2020). Understanding local history helps students recognize how global events influence regional dynamics and, conversely, how local experiences contribute to national and international narratives (Anderson & Willis, 2019; Gay, 2018; Sijabat et al., 2025). Through this lens, students develop respect for cultural diversity and historical continuity, fostering both local pride and global awareness. Such dual consciousness is vital for building informed, reflective citizens capable of navigating and contributing to an increasingly interconnected world.

Despite its pedagogical potential, research on local history education remains limited, especially in relation to its role in enhancing students' historical awareness in the 21st century. Much of the existing scholarship has focused on general history education rather than localized approaches that connect directly to students' cultural contexts (Suprpto et al., 2021; Raharjo, 2024; Islami, 2022). The gap highlights the need for further empirical investigation into how local history can be systematically integrated into the curriculum to support historical thinking and identity formation (Bereczki & Kárpáti, 2021; Banks, 2019).

The present study aims to address this gap by examining how students perceive and respond to local history education and how it influences their historical awareness, cultural identity, and critical thinking. By utilizing validated questionnaires as the main research instrument, this study seeks to generate insights that can inform educators and policymakers about the importance of incorporating local historical content into modern educational systems (Haug

& Mork, 2021; Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). Ultimately, this research underscores the role of local history education as a transformative pedagogical approach that enriches historical understanding and connects learners to both their heritage and the wider world.

## **2. METHOD**

This research employed a descriptive quantitative design using a survey approach to examine students' perceptions and the effectiveness of local history education in enhancing historical awareness. The survey method enabled the researcher to systematically describe existing conditions and analyze students' responses through statistical interpretation. A structured questionnaire served as the main research instrument, allowing for the collection of measurable and comparable data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Patton, 2020; Neuman, 2019).

The population of this study consisted of eleventh-grade senior high school students who had been introduced to local history as part of the history or social science curriculum. These students were deemed capable of reflecting on historical content and connecting it to their personal and social identities. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants from classes that had implemented local history instruction, resulting in a sample of 30 students representing varied backgrounds and experiences related to local historical topics.

Data were obtained primarily through students' responses to the structured questionnaire, which covered three main dimensions: (1) historical awareness of local events, figures, and sites; (2) perceptions of local history's relevance to personal identity and national consciousness; and (3) critical thinking in analyzing historical narratives and sources. The questionnaire contained 15 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, supplemented by demographic questions to support quantitative analysis. The instrument was distributed in-person under researcher supervision during school hours to ensure accuracy and completeness of responses.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including percentages, means, and standard deviations, to identify trends in students' perceptions of local history education. To ensure instrument validity, the questionnaire underwent expert review by three specialists in history education and educational assessment, whose feedback refined the clarity and cultural appropriateness of the items. Construct validity was maintained by aligning the questions with theoretical frameworks of historical consciousness and educational objectives (Sugiyono, 2021). Reliability testing, conducted through a pilot study with the same participants, yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.83, indicating strong internal consistency (Fraenkel et al., 2014).

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Result**

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the impact of local history education on students' historical awareness, perceptions, and critical thinking. The data analysis revealed a consistent pattern indicating that students who were more frequently exposed to local historical materials demonstrated stronger awareness, deeper engagement, and a more reflective understanding of history. However, the study also identified limitations in how local history content is systematically integrated into school curricula, suggesting a need for

more structured and culturally contextualized instructional design to enhance its effectiveness in supporting identity formation and analytical skills.

### 3.1.1 Validity and Reliability

Instrument validity was established through expert reviews and theoretical alignment with historical consciousness frameworks. The reliability test results also indicated high internal consistency, ensuring that the questionnaire accurately measured students' levels of historical awareness.

**Table 1.** Validity Results

Question Item	Correlation Value	Description
Question 1	0.562	Valid
Question 2	0.471	Valid
Question 3	0.509	Valid
Question 4	0.382	Valid
Question 5	0.841	Valid
Question 6	0.578	Valid
Question 7	0.794	Valid
Question 8	0.542	Valid
Question 9	0.369	Valid
Question 10	0.811	Valid
Question 11	0.729	Valid
Question 12	0.558	Valid
Question 13	0.439	Valid
Question 14	0.536	Valid
Question 15	0.523	Valid

Based on the results shown in Table 1, all correlation values exceeded the r-table threshold of 0.349, confirming that each item is valid and appropriate for assessing students' historical awareness.

**Table 2.** Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,842	15

The reliability coefficient of 0.842 indicates a high level of internal consistency, exceeding the minimum acceptable value of 0.60. This suggests that the instrument is reliable and

effectively measures the dimensions of students' historical awareness and perceptions of local history education.

### 3.1.2 Independent Samples T-Test

To determine whether there were significant differences in students' perceptions, historical awareness, and critical thinking, an Independent Samples T-Test was conducted. The results revealed statistically significant differences across all three aspects.

**Table 3.** Independent Samples T-Test Results

Aspect	N	Mean	Median	SD	Sig.
Perception of Local History Education	30	4.75	4.90	0.238	0.001
Historical Awareness	30	4.82	4.90	0.192	0.000
Critical Thinking Skills	30	4.48	4.60	0.311	0.002

As shown in Table 3, all significance values are below 0.05, indicating that the differences across the measured aspects are statistically significant.

The results demonstrate that students have a strongly positive perception of local history learning ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 0.238$ ), indicating that they view it as relevant and engaging. This supports Barton and Levstik's (2004) perspective that students' engagement increases when historical instruction connects directly to their personal and cultural experiences.

Students' historical awareness also scored highly ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 0.192$ ), suggesting that local history instruction enhances their ability to understand the relationship between local and national historical events. This finding echoes Seixas' (2006) argument that historical consciousness emerges when individuals connect personal and collective memories with broader historical narratives, allowing them to situate themselves meaningfully within history.

Furthermore, students' critical thinking skills demonstrated improvement ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 0.311$ ), indicating that learning through local history encourages analytical reasoning and interpretative engagement with historical sources. This aligns with Parker's (2010) emphasis on the role of inquiry-based history learning in developing students' capacity to evaluate multiple perspectives and evidence critically.

These findings collectively reinforce the argument that local history education serves as an effective pedagogical approach for cultivating not only cognitive understanding but also affective and analytical dimensions of learning. Students who engage with locally grounded historical narratives show greater enthusiasm and are better equipped to analyze the complexities of historical causation and continuity (Levstik & Barton, 2011; VanSledright, 2002).

In summary, the results confirm that integrating local history into the modern curriculum significantly enhances students' historical awareness, strengthens their connection to cultural identity, and promotes higher-order thinking. These outcomes underscore the importance of incorporating local historical perspectives into 21st-century education to build historically informed and culturally conscious citizens.

### 3.2 Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that local history education plays a significant role in shaping students' historical awareness, cultural identity, and critical thinking skills. The statistical findings indicate consistently high mean scores across all measured aspects—perception, awareness, and critical thinking—reflecting students' positive engagement with local history-based learning. This aligns with previous research asserting that contextualized and culturally relevant instruction enhances students' comprehension and motivation to learn history (Barton & Levstik, 2019; Anderson & Willis, 2019). When history is connected to local realities, students develop a deeper sense of belonging and a clearer understanding of how past events influence their community and nation.

First, the finding that students expressed strong positive perceptions of local history education suggests that they view it as meaningful and engaging. This supports the pedagogical argument that connecting history to learners' lived experiences increases both emotional and cognitive engagement (Wineburg, 2018; Crowley, 2018). When students see their families, traditions, and communities represented in historical narratives, they are more likely to participate actively in classroom discussions and value the subject matter. In this study, students associated local history lessons with a sense of pride and relevance, reinforcing the idea that localized content encourages ownership of knowledge and motivates deeper inquiry.

Second, the study found a high level of historical awareness, reflected in the strong mean score for students' understanding of local events, figures, and places. This outcome supports Seixas's (2006) framework of historical consciousness, which emphasizes connecting individual and collective memory with larger historical processes. By examining local events within a national and global context, students move beyond rote memorization of facts and instead develop interpretive skills that allow them to understand causality, continuity, and change. These findings are also consistent with Levstik and Barton's (2022) view that history education should empower learners to think historically—analyzing how past experiences shape the present and influence the future.

Third, the improvement in critical thinking skills observed among students highlights the analytical benefits of local history learning. Engaging with local sources, artifacts, and oral histories encourages students to evaluate evidence, compare perspectives, and identify biases in historical interpretation (Parker, 2010; Ennis, 2020). In this study, students demonstrated the ability to question historical narratives and consider multiple viewpoints, suggesting that localized historical content stimulates reflective and inquiry-based learning. These outcomes align with Akteruzzaman et al. (2023), who argue that culturally embedded history instruction fosters analytical competence and helps students build meaningful connections between past and present realities.

Another significant implication of the findings concerns the role of local history in fostering identity and citizenship education. As noted by Golnick and Chinn (2019) and Dunn (2020), learning about local history helps students appreciate the cultural diversity of their communities while fostering empathy, tolerance, and civic responsibility. The results of this research echo these conclusions students reported that learning about regional heroes, traditional practices, and local struggles made them more aware of their responsibilities as part of a broader national narrative. This awareness is crucial in the 21st century, where

global citizenship must be grounded in local understanding to build inclusive and democratic societies (Gay, 2018; Sijabat et al., 2025).

Despite the generally positive outcomes, the study also revealed several challenges in the implementation of local history education. Some schools have not fully integrated local content into their curriculum, and teachers often lack access to structured materials or training to teach local history effectively. These challenges resonate with prior studies highlighting the need for professional development and curriculum design that systematically embeds local perspectives into broader history education frameworks (Suprpto et al., 2021; Raharjo, 2024). Addressing these issues is essential to ensure that local history instruction not only enhances awareness but also contributes to sustainable and culturally responsive education.

In summary, the discussion underscores that local history education is a powerful pedagogical tool that enhances students' engagement, critical thinking, and sense of identity. When effectively implemented, it bridges the gap between local experience and global understanding, enabling students to develop historical literacy that is both contextually grounded and globally informed. The positive findings of this study affirm the necessity of integrating local history into 21st-century curricula as a means of cultivating informed, reflective, and culturally conscious citizens.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that local history education significantly contributes to the development of students' historical awareness, critical thinking, and sense of cultural identity. The findings demonstrate that when history learning is contextualized within students' local environments, it becomes more meaningful, engaging, and reflective of their social realities. Students who were exposed to localized historical content showed higher levels of engagement, stronger awareness of their community's past, and improved analytical abilities in interpreting historical events.

The high mean scores across perception, awareness, and critical thinking aspects indicate that integrating local history into the curriculum fosters both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. Students not only acquire factual knowledge but also learn to connect the past with the present, fostering deeper understanding and appreciation of historical continuity. These results affirm that local history serves as an effective pedagogical bridge between cultural heritage and modern education, enabling learners to see themselves as active participants in history rather than passive recipients of information.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of culturally responsive teaching in promoting identity formation and civic awareness. By learning about local heroes, traditions, and social changes, students develop empathy, respect for diversity, and a stronger sense of belonging. Such learning outcomes are crucial in the 21st-century educational context, where global citizenship must be grounded in local understanding.

However, the research also identifies several challenges, such as the limited integration of local content in formal curricula and the lack of teacher training and learning resources. To address these gaps, schools and policymakers should support teachers through professional development, curriculum innovation, and the inclusion of local narratives in teaching materials.

In conclusion, local history education is not merely about preserving cultural heritage—it is a transformative approach that cultivates critical, reflective, and culturally aware learners. Incorporating local history into 21st-century classrooms strengthens students' historical literacy, nurtures national identity, and prepares them to engage meaningfully with both local and global challenges.

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