

UTILIZING LOCAL HISTORICAL SOURCES IN SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING MOTIVATION AT SMP NEGERI 1 CENTRAL HALMAHERA

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ABSTRACT

Social Studies learning often relies heavily on textbooks, which can reduce student motivation and disconnect them from their real-world environment. Utilizing local history resources in Central Halmahera offers a highly contextual alternative. This study aims to analyze the forms, methods, and influence of local historical sources on students' learning motivation in Social Studies classes at SMP Negeri 1 (Central Halmahera). This qualitative descriptive study involved Social Studies teachers, students, and community figures as purposively selected informants. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review, and subsequently analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results identified four categories of local historical sources utilized: oral (origin stories from customary leaders), material (artifacts and historical sites), written (which remain limited), and environmental. The implementation of the group investigation strategy successfully shifted students' positioning from passive recipients to active information seekers. The findings indicated an increase in students' engagement across six observed motivation-related indicators: attention, active participation, curiosity, enthusiasm, persistence, and concern. Supporting factors included active community involvement and students' emotional proximity to the material, whereas hindering factors comprised scarce written literature and time constraints. Conclusively, local history integration facilitates knowledge construction through direct environmental interaction, strengthening intrinsic motivation based on social constructivism principles. It is strongly recommended that regional governments and schools collaborate to document local history and develop school-based archives to ensure sustainable contextual learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a vital tool for personal development: it helps individuals acquire knowledge, cultivate character, and understand their social environment. The educational process is not limited to the acquisition of academic knowledge;

students are also expected to develop an understanding of their own identity, history, and culture, as well as an appreciation of society. Social studies is one of the subjects that plays a key role in fostering these competencies (Azis, 2023; Fauziah et al., 2022).

Social Studies instruction at the junior high school (SMP) level encompasses various dimensions of human life, including history, geography, economics, sociology, and culture. Consequently, Social Studies education should not be exclusively oriented toward textbook mastery, but must also contextualize learning materials within the students' lived experiences and surrounding environment. The Social Studies curriculum guidelines position local history and regional toponymy as subjects that facilitate students in analyzing the interconnections among the past, present, and future (Lim & Perono Cacciafoco, 2021).

Local history constitutes a subset of national history, encompassing various events, prominent figures, localities, traditions, heritage, and the collective experiences of a specific regional community. In the context of the Central Halmahera Regency, local history can be examined through various community-based sources, such as historical sites, cultural artifacts, oral traditions, customary practices, toponyms, documents, historical objects, and the testimonies of local figures or historical actors. These resources possess significant potential to be developed as Social Studies learning materials that are deeply intertwined with the students' daily lives (Abdullah et al., 2024).

The use of local history educational resources is crucial, as teaching materials based on the immediate environment make the learning process more contextual and meaningful. Students do not merely engage in rote memorization of historical figures, places, and dates; rather, they are empowered to observe, investigate, inquire, gather information, conduct interviews, and correlate past events with contemporary societal life (Fardi, 2022). Furthermore, local history exploration can be initiated from the students' immediate surroundings, including family history, school history, regional history, and the historical trajectories of trade or cultural exchange within their locality (Trinidad et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, in the practical implementation of Social Studies instruction, the utilization of local learning resources has yet to be optimized. The pedagogical process remains predominantly teacher-centered, relying heavily on textbooks as the primary source of information (Kenna & Russell, 2015). This condition inherently leads to a lack of variety and monotony in Social Studies learning, creating a disconnect from the realities of the students' lives. Numerous studies indicate that the underutilization of historical resources situated within the students' environment correlates with low interest, diminished motivation, and a lack of student engagement in history education.

Learning motivation is a critical factor that significantly influences educational success. Highly motivated students tend to participate more actively in the learning process, exhibit greater curiosity, demonstrate persistence in completing assignments, and show resilience when confronting difficulties (Luo, 2024). Conversely, low learning motivation is often characterized by a lack of attentiveness, passivity during discussions, a reluctance to ask questions, and an excessive reliance on the teacher's explanations.

Using local history teaching materials is an effective way to boost motivation in social studies. Teaching materials directly related to students' local contexts are usually more readily accepted and retained due to their emotional relevance and connection to real-life experiences (Zakaria et al., 2024). For instance, students can investigate the toponymy of a specific area, village history, community artifacts, local traditions, or the narratives of regional figures through direct observation, documentation, and interviews. Such activities transform students into active subjects of learning, rather than mere passive recipients of information (Koutsoukos et al., 2023).

From a social constructivist perspective, the inclusion of local historical sources in social studies education can be viewed through the lens of Vygotsky's idea that learning occurs through social interaction, language, and inclusion within a culturally defined environment. Students construct knowledge not merely by receiving information from teachers, but through interaction with peers, teachers, community members, and cultural resources within their social environment. In this context, local historical sources provide meaningful cultural and historical contexts that enable students to negotiate interpretations, compare different accounts, ask questions, and construct knowledge collaboratively. The teacher therefore functions not only as a transmitter of historical information but also as a facilitator who provides guidance and scaffolding within students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This theoretical perspective provides a basis for examining how direct interaction with

local historical sources and collaborative learning activities may foster students' active engagement and motivation in Social Studies learning (Silalahi, 2019).

Beyond boosting learning motivation, the utilization of local historical sources can also foster a sense of regional belonging, cultural appreciation, historical awareness, respect for community figures, and a commitment to preserving cultural heritage. Local learning resources such as historical sites, traditions, and the community environment assist students in realizing that various regional events intricately weave national history (Jakubovská & Jakubovská, 2023). Consequently, Social Studies education functions as a medium for both reinforcing local identity and cultivating national character.

SMP Negeri 1 of the Central Halmahera Regency possesses the opportunity to develop local history-based Social Studies learning by leveraging the environmental and cultural potential indigenous to the Central Halmahera region. However, the utilization of these resources requires systematic investigation, particularly concerning the types of resources employed, the strategies for their implementation, student engagement, the pedagogical challenges faced by teachers, and the subsequent shifts in student motivation following local history-based instruction (Jurs et al., 2024). Initial data regarding students' learning motivation can be obtained through direct observation, interviews with teachers and students, and an analysis of documentation reflecting learning outcomes (Rahman & Maulana, 2024).

Based on the aforementioned rationale, utilizing local history learning resources holds profound relevance for Social Studies education at the junior high school level. Unlike previous studies that generally examine local history as a basic learning material or instructional medium, this study focuses on the utilization of local historical sources available in Central Halmahera and the mechanisms for using them to foster student learning motivation. These educational resources serve not only as supplementary materials to textbooks but also as contextual learning media that bridge the Social Studies curriculum with the students' living environment. This study aims to analyze the types of indigenous historical sources used in social studies instruction; the strategies employed by teachers to integrate them into the learning process; student reactions and engagement in the classroom; and the factors facilitating or hindering the use of these sources, using *SMP Negeri 1 Halmahera Tengah* as a case study.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach and a descriptive design to explore the practice of using local historical sources in Social Studies (IPS) instruction at SMP Negeri 1 (Central Halmahera Regency) (Istakri et al., 2024). The use of a qualitative research design is considered appropriate because the aim of this study is to understand how teachers and students identify and integrate local historical sources, as well as how they comprehend them within the natural context of classroom learning. The study focused on the forms of local historical sources used in instruction, the strategies employed by teachers to integrate these sources, students' responses and learning engagement, and the factors supporting and hindering their utilization.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Kabupaten Halmahera Tengah. The research site was selected because the school provides a relevant context for examining the integration of local historical sources into Social Studies learning and because the surrounding area contains local historical, cultural, and environmental resources that can be incorporated into instruction.

Participants and informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in, or knowledge of, local-history-based Social Studies learning. The participants consisted of Social Studies teachers, students who participated in the learning activities, and community members who possessed knowledge of local historical sources and traditions. Classroom observations involved 26 students across four learning meetings, while seven students participated in semi-structured interviews. Community figures were included as informants to provide contextual information regarding local historical narratives, cultural practices, historical sites, and other locally available historical sources.

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. First, observations were conducted over four class sessions to determine how teachers integrated local historical sources into their social studies instruction and how students responded to these learning activities. Particular attention was given to students' motivation-related behaviors, including attention, active participation, curiosity, enthusiasm, persistence, and concern.

Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Social Studies teachers, seven students, and relevant community informants. The interviews explored the types of local historical sources used in learning, the strategies employed to integrate these sources, students' experiences and responses, and the supporting and hindering factors encountered during implementation. Interviews with community informants also focused on the historical narratives and cultural knowledge associated with the local sources utilized in the learning process.

Third, documentation was used to complement the observational and interview data. The documents included teaching materials, student worksheets and reports, photographs of learning activities and historical sources, and other relevant records associated with the implementation of local-history-based Social Studies learning. The combination of observation, interviews, and documentation enabled comparison across different data sources (Noble & Smith, 2015). The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data analysis was conducted iteratively throughout the research process.

During data reduction, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials were selected, systematized, and coded according to their relevance to the research objectives. These initial codes were then consolidated into broader categories reflecting the types of local historical sources, instructional strategies, student responses, and supporting and hindering factors. For the analysis of learning motivation, students' observed behaviors and interview statements were organized into six indicators: attention, active participation, curiosity, enthusiasm, persistence, and concern.

During data display, the coded information was organized into narrative descriptions and tables to identify recurring patterns and relationships among the data. Findings from classroom observations were compared with students' and teachers' interview accounts as well as relevant documentary evidence. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the interpretation of recurring patterns identified across various data sources and a comparison of the findings with the theoretical framework and previous research.

The trustworthiness of the findings was strengthened through methodological and source triangulation. Observation data were compared with interview accounts from teachers, students, and community informants, while documentary evidence was used to complement and cross-check the information obtained through observation and interviews. Particular attention was given to discrepancies in local historical narratives, especially where oral accounts provided different versions of dates or events. In such cases, the researchers compared available testimonies with photographs, documents, and physical evidence where available before drawing conclusions.

The indicators of learning motivation used in this study were adapted from the theories of (Sardiman, 2004) and (Dimiyati, 1999) subsequently operationalized into six indicators: attention, active participation, curiosity, enthusiasm, persistence, and concern. These indicators served as a framework for observation and a guide for coding interview data, rather than as outcomes assumed from the outset.

Prior to data collection, this study obtained approval from the relevant institutional ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all adult participants. Conducted in strict accordance with institutional ethical clearance and school administrative permissions, this study secured informed consent for student quotes, protected participant identities via pseudonymous coding, ethically managed photographic documentation to preserve privacy, and securely stored all interview data in encrypted, access-restricted repositories. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed throughout the study: code names are used in place of participants' real names in interview excerpts and research reports. All collected data are used exclusively for academic and research purposes and are processed in accordance with ethical principles governing research involving human subjects.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Observations and interviews identified four categories of local historical sources utilized by Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* or IPS) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Kabupaten Halmahera Tengah: oral sources, material sources, written sources, and environmental sources. These findings are more specific than general categorizations because each source is inherently tied to the local context of Central Halmahera.

The most frequently utilized oral sources are the origin stories of *Fritu* Indigenous Community, obtained through interviews with customary leaders (*tokoh adat*). A Social Studies teacher (T-1) explained:

"I typically instruct the students to interview customary leaders in Nurweda Village. He possesses comprehensive knowledge regarding the origin of the name *Fritu* and the historical livelihood of the community prior to the construction of the trans-highway. Consequently, the students acquire narratives that are absent from textbooks." (Social Studies Teacher/T-1, interview, July 2026)

The identified material sources encompass colonial cannons at Weda Fort, traditional fishing implements, the Fagogoru traditional house (*rumah adat*). Students observed these artifacts either directly or through photographic documentation prepared by the teacher. Available written sources remain limited. Another teacher (T-2) acknowledged:

"Books concerning the history of Central Halmahera are exceedingly rare. There are, at most, a few documents in the village office and old photographs preserved by residents. Therefore, I typically assign students to take notes from the informants' accounts, which we subsequently cross-reference with the few available resources." (Social Studies Teacher/T-2, interview, July 2026)



Figure 1. Learning activities at SMP Negeri 1 Halmahera.

Sources: Researcher's Documentation, 2026

Teacher Strategies in Integrating Local Sources into Social Studies Learning

Based on observations conducted over 4 meetings, the teacher implemented a group investigation learning model utilizing the following stages:

1. Orientation and Apperception

The teacher initiated the lesson by displaying a photograph of *Jere Legae Loi Luteng* and asking the students if they were familiar with the history of the site. Out of the 26 students observed, 16 students raised their hands and indicated that they had visited or heard stories about the location.

2. Data Collection

The students were divided into 3 groups. Each group was assigned a specific task: Group 1 interviewed community figures regarding *Fritu* Community, Group 2 documented *Jere Legae Loi Luteng* (Sacred burial site), Group 3 examined written sources at Were Village. The teacher (T-1) explained:

"I do not immediately narrate the history. I provide them with worksheets, and then they proceed to conduct interviews or observations. I merely accompany them and guide their questions if they are confused. If I continuously lecture, they will fall asleep."

(Social Studies Teacher/T-1, interview, July 2026)

3. Analysis and Discussion

The groups discussed their findings, compared information across various sources, and compiled a simple report.

4. Presentation and Reflection

Each group presented their results, other groups provided feedback, and the teacher offered reinforcement while correcting any inaccurate information. This strategy demonstrates a shift in the teacher's role from an information transmitter

to a facilitator. Consequently, this student-centered approach empowers learners to actively construct their own historical knowledge through direct engagement with their local environment.



Figure 2. Discussion session with teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Halmahera Tengah
Sources: Researcher's Documentation (2026)

Student Responses and Emergent Motivation Indicators

Changes in student learning motivation were identified through observation over 4 meetings and interviews with 7 students. The data were coded based on six motivation indicators adapted from (Sardiman, 2004). The coding results are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Indicators and Observational Findings of Student Learning Motivation

Indicator	Observational Findings	Informant Quotes	Frequency of Occurrence
Attention	Students directed their gaze toward learning sources (photographs, artifacts, videos) unprompted, spontaneously noted key points.	"When the Teacher showed the photo of that sacred burial site, everyone immediately fell silent and paid attention. Usually, if we only read books, within five minutes someone is already chatting." (S-3, interview, July 2026)	Observed in 3 out of 4 meetings
Active Participation	Students raised questions without being called upon, answered peers' questions, debated the interpretation of sources.	"I asked Mr. Wahai, why the village's name is like this. My friend asked a different question. So we discussed which one was correct." (S-5, interview, July 2026)	6 students actively asked questions per meeting (previously averaged 2 students)
Curiosity	Students sought supplementary information outside school hours, asked parents at home.	"I went home and asked my grandmother whether the story we got earlier was true or not. Grandma told a different version, so I wanted to confirm it again with the teacher."	10 students reported seeking supplementary information



Indicator	Observational Findings	Informant Quotes	Frequency of Occurrence
Enthusiasm	Students exhibited joyful expressions during observation/interview activities, requested additional time.	(S-2, interview, July 2026) "It was very exciting during the interview. Not like regular learning. We felt like researchers."	Observed across all groups during field activities
Persistence	Groups completed reports despite difficulties, revised reports based on feedback.	(S-7, interview, July 2026) "Initially, it was difficult because the informant used the regional language, but we tried to translate and rewrite it. We refused to give up because this is the story of our own village."	3 out of 4 groups completed tasks on time
Concern	Students proposed site preservation, expressed a desire to introduce local history to others.	(S-4, interview, July 2026) "It would be a pity if this story were lost. I want to write about it on social media so people know the history of Weda." (S-6, interview, July 2026)	Emergenced spontaneously in 18 students during reflection

Sources: Observation and interview results, 2026

Supporting Factors

Central Halmahera Regency (*Kabupaten Halmahera Tengah*) possesses several historical sources identified in this study, including the Sacred burial site of *Jere Legae Loi Luteng*, the *Fagogoru* tradition as a customary governance system, the origin story of Village X, the tomb site of Sultan/King Y, and the spice trade route on the coast of Z. The existence of these sources enables teachers to connect Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* or *IPS*) materials with concrete, accessible evidence for students. Furthermore, customary leaders (*tokoh adat*) and community figures surrounding the school are willing to serve as informants.

As one Social Studies teacher (T-1) stated in a 2026 interview, local figures such as Mr. [informant's name] are highly receptive, always prepared for student interviews, and even preserve rare old photographs that are unavailable elsewhere. Engaging with these local sources fosters an emotional attachment among students to materials discussing their own region, contrasting with their response to national history materials, which often feel distant from their daily experiences. This contextualized learning is further bolstered by strong school policy support, as the principal grants permission to utilize time outside of instructional hours for observation and interview activities, alongside supporting the development of local history modules.

Hindering Factors

The implementation of this educational process faces several significant challenges, starting with the limitation of written sources. A Social Studies teacher (T-2) revealed in a 2026 interview that books regarding the history of Central Halmahera are virtually nonexistent in the school library and limited in the regional library, leading to a heavy reliance on oral narratives that are difficult to verify. This reliance naturally introduces another difficulty: verifying those oral sources when narrative versions vary among informants. For instance, a student (S-4) recounted being confused during field activities when different informants cited conflicting years.

To address this issue, teachers instruct students on the principle of simple triangulation, which involves cross-referencing oral testimonies with available documents, photographs, or physical evidence. Additionally, time constraints due to the limited time allocation for Social Studies complicate the comprehensive implementation of these field activities, often forcing teachers to condense interviews and presentations into a single meeting. Distance and accessibility further hinder

experiential learning; as another teacher (T-1) explained, reaching certain historical sites requires taking a boat or walking a considerable distance, making it impossible to bring an entire class there regularly, so photographs and videos are utilized as substitutes.

Finally, the overall unavailability of specific teaching materials for Central Halmahera's local history places an extra burden on educators, compelling them to independently compile materials based on their own interviews and research, which ultimately demands additional time and specialized research capabilities. The main constraints identified in this study were related to source availability, instructional time, accessibility, and teachers' workload. This implies that while the potential for utilizing local history is unquestionable, its implementation requires stronger infrastructural and policy support, as well as enhanced collaboration among schools, regional governments, and customary communities.

Transformation of Student Positioning: From Passive Recipients to Information Seekers

The primary findings of this study indicate that the utilization of local historical sources alters the epistemological positioning of students within the learning process. Prior to the integration of local sources, students were positioned as passive recipients of information delivered by the teacher via textbooks. Following integration, students became active subjects constructing knowledge through observation, interviews, and source analysis.

This transformation can be viewed through the lens of Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). This approach encourages educators to prioritize dialogue and collaboration whether among students themselves or between students and teachers by regarding these interactions not as static relationships, but as ongoing processes of collaborative activity. For instance, a principal or mentor can guide novice teachers through specific tasks, thereby reducing the newcomers' reliance on more experienced colleagues and facilitating their professional development (Jardine et al., 2024). This principle applies broadly: For Vygotsky, learning is "a process based on language and conditioned by the cultural-historical context; this process takes place at three levels: the student level, the teacher level, and within the space of interaction between them." (Viesca et al., 2022).

These findings are consistent with the research of (Sakman et al., 2024), which demonstrates that local history-based Social Studies learning makes students more participatory because the material possesses direct relevance to their identities and experiences.

Motivation as a Product of Contextualization, Not Merely Stimulation

The increase in learning motivation observed in this study is not solely attributable to the learning process becoming "more interesting" or "less boring." A more in-depth analysis indicates that motivation increased due to three underlying mechanisms:

First, geographical and emotional proximity. Students study the history of the places they inhabit, the names of the streets they traverse daily, and the traditions practiced by their families. This cultivates a sense of ownership over the learning material.

Second, source authenticity. Interacting with historical artifacts, original documents, and historical actors provides sensory and cognitive experiences that cannot be replicated by textual descriptions in books. (Gavin & Coleman, 2016) asserts that learning involving direct experience yields higher retention and motivation.

Third, student agency. Students are assigned the role of "young researchers" who bear the responsibility of collecting, analyzing, and presenting information. This role fosters a sense of competence and autonomy which, according to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), serve as catalysts for intrinsic motivation.

Limitations, Implications, and Sustainability

It must be emphasized that this research focuses on learning motivation as the primary variable. Although indications of enhanced critical thinking skills (e.g., students comparing varying narrative versions) and an increased concern for cultural preservation were observed during the study, these aspects were not specifically measured and cannot be formally claimed as research findings. These aspects are more appropriately positioned as potential implications that necessitate further research utilizing corresponding designs and instruments.

This study also contributes to documenting the potential of Central Halmahera's local history as a learning resource. The identified sources, such as *Jere Legae Loi Luteng* Sites, have not been systematically documented within school

instructional materials. Student deliverables, in the form of interview reports and photographic documentation, possess the potential to be developed into a school-based local history archive, which can be utilized by teachers in subsequent academic years. To ensure sustainability, collaboration is imperative among schools, regional governments, customary institutions (*lembaga adat*), and historical communities to develop a verified and academically accountable local history module for Central Halmahera.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the utilization of local historical sources provided a contextual learning environment that was accompanied by stronger student engagement across several motivation-related indicators, including attention, active participation, curiosity, enthusiasm, and persistence. Oral, material, written, and environmental sources enabled students to engage directly with historical narratives and evidence from their own surroundings. The group investigation strategy further positioned students as active learners who collected, compared, and presented historical information.

The study suggests that the motivational value of local history lies not only in the content itself but also in the combination of contextual relevance, authentic sources, and student agency. However, these findings should not be interpreted as evidence of a statistically measured causal effect because the study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Future research could examine the same phenomenon using mixed-method or quasi-experimental designs and validated measures of learning motivation.

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