
PROBLEMS OF STUDENT COMPETENCY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY EDUCATION AND STUDENTS' HISTORICAL AWARENESS OF THE UTILIZATION OF HISTORICAL SITES

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore students' historical awareness is the understanding of individual aspects, ideas, thoughts, desires, and memories related to historical events or historical sites found in various regions. Students' historical awareness also includes a dimension of knowledge that leads to individual competencies. This study utilised qualitative research, employing historical methods. The population consisted of 350 students, while the sample size for this study was 23 students. The data collection techniques used were primary data, including interviews, document analysis, and artefacts, while the secondary sources were books and documents. The data analysis techniques used were heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. The results of the study show that the problem of the competence of students of the History Education and historical awareness study program lies in the lack of knowledge about local historical sites as a whole. In other words, the problem of lack of interest in reading also affects knowledge of local historical sites, and the low value of students' historical awareness was also seen in previous studies. The contribution of this research lies in sharpening the perspective in looking at the historical awareness of students from the fundamental perspective of the interests of History Education students.

Keywords

Historical Awareness, History Education, Sites, Problem.



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INTRODUCTION

The historical awareness of history education students is an important aspect in building the professional competence of prospective educators, especially in areas that have a rich cultural heritage and historical sites such as Aceh (Sulhan, 2019). Globally, research shows that students' engagement with historical sites plays a role in developing a collective identity as well as a critical understanding of the past (Wineburg, 2021). However, in the national context, many studies highlight the weak use of historical sites as a learning medium, including in Aceh, which has high-value historical heritage (Suryadi, 2019). The results of initial observations at Syiah Kuala University show that some students majoring in History Education have not maximized the use of historical sites as a learning resource, even though historical awareness is an integral part of their professional competence (Trianto, 2019). The emptiness of previous research emphasized more cognitive aspects without delving into the direct experiences of students. This research aims to understand the problem of students' competence and historical awareness through a qualitative approach, as well as contribute to strengthening the theory of historical awareness and local site-based learning practices (Zainuddin, 2021).

In Aceh, the existence of historical sites such as the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, Indrapatra Fort, and Dutch colonial heritage sites should be contextual learning spaces that enrich the understanding of History Education students. However, a number of local studies have found that students still face limitations in linking empirical experiences in the field with theoretical understanding in the classroom (Nugroho & Marzuki, 2020). The lack of use of historical sites is not only related to the lack of student initiative, but also to institutional support factors, curriculum, and learning methods that are still predominantly text-based (Putra, 2021). In fact, site-based history learning is able to foster historical thinking skills, social empathy, and cultural identity awareness (Seixas & Morton, 2020). Therefore, this research is important to explore the experiences of students, how they interpret the value of Aceh's historical sites, as well as identify obstacles that hinder the optimization of their competence and historical awareness.

Local history is one of the important aspects of learning history because it provides a contextual understanding that is close to the lives of students. The use of historical sites as learning resources can increase students' involvement and appreciation of cultural heritage, as well as train their critical and analytical thinking skills (Safitri & Lina, 2024). In the context of Aceh, historical sites such as the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, colonial heritage forts, and the tombs of sultans have

great potential to be used as an environment-based historical learning medium. However, students' ability to optimize these learning resources is greatly influenced by their academic and pedagogic competencies. Academic competence emphasizes mastery of material and scientific thinking skills, while pedagogic competence is related to the skills of designing, managing, and evaluating meaningful learning (Marlina, 2021).

There is a body of empirical data that provides an overview of how students' academic competence and pedagogical aspects of the campus influence their ability to utilise Aceh's historical sites as learning resources at Syiah Kuala University (USK). For example, a survey of 127 students in the History Education Study Programme at FKIP USK found that there was a positive and significant relationship between understanding tsunami sites as learning resources (variable X_1) and students' historical awareness (variable Y), with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.197$ and $t = 2.245 > t_{0.05} = 1.656$ ($p < 0.05$) (Suryana, 2014). The same study showed that interest in learning history (variable X_2) had no significant relationship with historical awareness ($r = 0.063$; $t = 0.707 < 1.656$). In terms of concrete academic competence, another study reported that the degree of correlation between the Grade Point Average (GPA) of USK History Education students and their comprehensive exam scores was only 13.5%. Meanwhile, campus institutions are also making efforts to strengthen pedagogical competencies, for example, by providing training to 50 USK lecturers to improve their pedagogical competencies. This combination of data indicates that students who have a sufficient understanding of historical sites (part of academic competence) tend to be better able to utilise these historical sites as learning resources, but this potential is still limited by other aspects of academic competence (such as suboptimal GPAs) and pedagogical support from institutions. Therefore, to improve students' ability to utilise Aceh's historical sites as learning resources, it is necessary to strengthen students' academic competencies (both knowledge of historical methodology and understanding of the local context of the sites) and improve campus pedagogy, for example, by strengthening lecturers, learning methods, and integrating visits to sites into the curriculum.

Several studies indicate that barriers to increasing students' historical awareness of the preservation and utilisation of historical sites in Aceh arise from internal and external factors. Internally, the results of a survey of students in the History Education Study Programme at Syiah Kuala University show that understanding of tsunami sites has a positive correlation with historical awareness ($r = 0.197$; $t = 2.245 > 1.656$), while interest in learning history does not show a significant

relationship ($r = 0.063$; $t = 0.707 < 1.656$), indicating that limitations in methodological knowledge and a lack of learning motivation are real obstacles. Meanwhile, externally, research on the East Coast of Aceh shows that historical heritage sites have not been properly mapped, and the poor physical condition of these sites poses a challenge in building historical awareness among the community. This points to the lack of optimal support in terms of facilities and preservation policies (Anis et al., 2024). Thus, the institutional environment, such as campus facilities, access to historical sites, and local government policies, is closely related to students' ability to internalise and utilise historical sites as meaningful learning resources.

There is evidence showing that there is a positive correlation between history-based learning practices and the formation of cultural identity and local values in Aceh. For example, research in eastern Aceh found that introducing and identifying cultural heritage buildings and sites in the region can build historical awareness (Rahman & Riyani, 2020). In the context of university students, educational visits to historical sites in Aceh, such as those conducted by students from Bumi Persada University to Indrapatra Fort, Putroe Phang Park, the Tomb of Syekh Abdurrauf Syiah Kuala, and the Aceh Museum, have been shown to foster a love for cultural heritage and a more tangible understanding of local historical values. Thus, the more frequently and effectively students integrate historical sites into their learning process through field trips, artefact analysis, and interpretive discussions, the stronger their potential to strengthen Aceh's cultural identity and instill local values in themselves. However, to date, there is no specific quantitative data measuring the correlation between students' historical awareness and site-based learning practices in Aceh. Therefore, although the correlation appears to be positive, the magnitude and strength of the effect still require further research. Therefore, it is important to examine the extent to which students of the Department of History Education, Syiah Kuala University, are able to utilize Aceh's historical sites through the synergy of academic and pedagogic competencies that they are proficient in (Rahmawati & Amaliah, 2020).

(Sulistiyono & Rochwulaningsih, 2023) The results of the study show that Indonesia, as a pluralistic nation-state, has been vulnerable to national integration since its inception because it was born from ethnic, religious, and social status diversity, not from uniformity. Historical studies conducted show that nationalism in the early twentieth century proved to be effective as a unifying force for the nation in fighting colonialism, but in the contemporary era, this nationalism has weakened so that it is less able to face the challenges of globalization, neoliberalism, and increasing

symptoms of disintegration in the form of ethnic, religious, and regional conflicts. Therefore, this study recommends the need for the revitalization of nationalism or what is referred to as Wave II Nationalism, which is an idea of nationality that not only relies on historical romanticism, but emphasizes political and economic independence, builds real equality of destiny, and prioritizes an inclusive socio-cultural approach so that national insight can function again as a source of inspiration and driving force in maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State Republic of Indonesia.

(Puguh, 2017) with the results of research that Semarang culture, which was formed from the historical interaction of various communities in Semarang City, has a wealth of art and traditions such as Semarang Gambang Gambang, karawitan, macapat, Semarang batik, as well as traditional dhugdheran and Semarang style bridal ceremonies, but its existence is still experiencing ups and downs and has not been able to occupy a significant position on the national cultural stage. Preservation and development efforts have been carried out through community initiatives, educational institutions, and local governments, including the formation of art groups, cultural festivals, and socialization through mass media, but these programs are considered less systematic, unsustainable, and tend to be sporadic (Amboro, 2022). This study confirms that the marginalization of Semarang culture occurs due to the dominance of Javanese culture in Surakarta and Yogyakarta, which is prioritized in national cultural politics, so the author recommends the need for a consistent and long-term-oriented cultural policy strategy so that Semarang culture can survive, develop, and be recognized as an important part of Indonesian cultural identity.

The results of a study conducted by (Latifah et al., 2024) show that the use of visual media in the form of images and videos is effectively able to increase the knowledge of grade V students of MI Muhammadiyah Cipetir about historical events. Through the Classroom Action Research (PTK) method, which was carried out in two cycles, it was found that there was a significant increase in student learning completeness, from 70% in the initial condition to 93.3% after the application of visual media. These findings confirm that visual media not only increase students' conceptual understanding but also foster interest, attention, and creativity in the learning process. Thus, visual media-based learning innovations can be used as a relevant strategy to improve the quality of Social Science learning, especially history materials in elementary schools.

(Setiawan, 2023) In his research, "Historical Consciousness of Students in Relation to Historical Sites in Indonesia," he highlights the low historical awareness of students towards local heritage sites. The results show that although historical sites have high academic and cultural value,

most students only view them as tourist attractions or cultural symbols without associating them with formal history learning. The researchers concluded that the weak integration of historical sites into the educational curriculum caused students to lack the critical analytical skills to understand the historical value of the site.

A study entitled "Students' Low Historical Awareness on Local Historical Sites in Aceh" found that students' historical awareness in Aceh of sites such as the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque and Indrapatra Fort is still low (Nurhayati, 2021). The researcher noted that most students only knew the site in general, without understanding the meaning of the struggle, the social context, or its relevance to local identity. The results of the study show that low interest in reading local history and the dominance of popular information sources from the internet are the main factors that weaken students' historical awareness.

Higher education policies, both at the global level, such as the OECD and the European Union, and nationally through SN-Dikti, emphasize the importance of competency-based learning outcomes that include students' analytical, critical, and cultural abilities. Theoretical discourse on competence, as formulated by (Mubarok et al., 2021). (Rizaldi & Qodariyah, 2021), and (Tyansha et al., 2022) explain that competence is the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that need to be developed in the educational process. In the context of historical studies, strengthening student competencies can be realized through learning based on primary sources, such as historical sites and archives. Sites such as Borobudur Temple, Fort Rotterdam, and archive collections at ANRI are not only objects of historical study but also function as learning laboratories that encourage students to develop critical, interpretive, and reflective thinking skills. Thus, there is a clear continuity between higher education policy, competency theory, and the use of historical sites as a medium for the formation of student competencies.

The novelty of this research lies in the combination of two important aspects in history education, namely student competence (as an achievement of higher education policy) and students' historical awareness (as a cognitive-affective result), which is directly related to the use of historical sites as a primary source of learning. Most previous research only discussed student competence in a theoretical framework or simply evaluated history learning in the classroom. However, this research provides a new approach by positioning historical sites as contextual learning laboratories, where students' competencies are tested and their historical awareness constructed through hands-on experience. Thus, this research contributes to the development of a history education model that

not only emphasizes the achievement of generic competencies but also builds students' emotional, cultural, and critical connection to the nation's historical heritage.

METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative study about examining "Student Competency Problems of the Department of History Education and Student History Awareness on the Utilization of Aceh Historical Sites at Syiah Kuala University". The data in the study on the influence of the academic and pedagogical competence of History Education students at Syiah Kuala University on their ability to utilise historical sites in Aceh as learning resources consists of quantitative and qualitative data obtained from measurements and field findings. Quantitative data includes student learning outcomes, academic competency scores (such as GPA and grades in history methodology courses), and questionnaire results that measure the level of students' ability to integrate historical sites into learning activities. This data is numerical and can be analysed statistically to see the relationship or correlation between variables. Meanwhile, qualitative data includes the results of interviews, observations, and students' reflective notes that describe how they understand, design, and implement learning based on historical sites in Aceh. The primary data sources came directly from students of the History Education Study Programme at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Syiah Kuala University, as the research subjects, while the secondary data sources were obtained from campus academic documents, field learning activity reports, previous research archives, and literature related to history education and the preservation of historical sites in Aceh. Thus, the data in this study is not only in the form of collected information, but also empirical evidence that can be processed to answer research questions scientifically and measurably.

The population consisted of 350 students, while the sample size for this study was 23 students. The presentation of data is presented systematically so that it is easy to understand; it can be in the form of tables, graphs, narratives, or excerpts from interview results. The researcher conducts a critical analysis of the historical awareness of historical sites by referring to relevant theories. This analysis not only explains what happened, but also why it happened within the framework of the theory. Furthermore, the researcher also juxtaposed his findings with several related studies to show similarities, differences, and the contribution of the research to previous studies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In the context of history learning in higher education, student competence is not only measured by the ability to master historical theories and concepts, but also by awareness and utilization of local historical resources available in the surrounding environment. Syiah Kuala University, which is located in Aceh, has its own special privilege because it is surrounded by various historical sites that reflect the long journey of the Acehnese people, both in political, cultural, and religious aspects. The data in this study were obtained directly through in-depth interviews with students of the History Education Study Programme at Syiah Kuala University (USK) as the primary data source. Interviews were conducted with a number of active students from various batches to obtain factual information about their academic and pedagogical competence levels, as well as how this affects their ability to utilise historical sites in Aceh as learning resources. Through these interviews, the researcher obtained qualitative data in the form of students' views, experiences, and reflections on how they relate the historical theories learned in class to field learning practices at historical sites such as Indrapatra Fort, Syiah Kuala Tomb, Aceh Tsunami Museum, and Putroe Phang Phang.

Table 1. Problems of Student Competency of the Department of History Education and Student Historical Awareness towards the Utilization of Aceh Historical Sites in Universitas Syiah Kuala

No	Student Knowledge	Evidence of Aceh Historical Sites	Students' Interest in Reading
1	Many students only know in general about Acehnese heroes without delving into their historical context.	The site of the Tomb of Sultan Iskandar Muda is often mentioned but rarely visited academically.	Low, as can be seen from the few students who read local historical literature.
2	Students' understanding of the chronology of Aceh's historical events is still limited.	Indrapatra Fort and Kuta Lubok are understood as tourist attractions, not historical learning resources.	Tend to only read popular internet sources, not academic works.
3	Students are less likely to associate historical sites with the relevance of learning national history.	The Baiturrahman Grand Mosque is understood as a cultural icon, but the historical context of the struggle is often overlooked.	Interest in reading increases when it is associated with contemporary issues or popular narratives.
4	Lack of critical analysis of local historical sources.	Ancient Acehnese manuscripts and hikayat manuscripts are rarely used in student research.	Interest in reading only arises when assigned, not from personal awareness.

Source: Interview Results 2025

Table 1 shows that the competence of students of the Department of History Education, Syiah Kuala University, still faces a number of obstacles, both in terms of knowledge, use of historical sites, and interest in reading. Student knowledge is generally superficial, limited to major figures and events without delving into the broader context. This has implications for the low ability to connect Aceh's historical sites, such as tombs, forts, and historical mosques, as a rich source of learning. These sites are more often seen as cultural icons or tourist destinations, rather than academic references. The low interest in reading of students, who tend to rely only on popular sources, is also an obstacle to building a more critical and in-depth historical awareness of Aceh's historical heritage.

Knowledge of History Education Students Regarding Historical Sites in Aceh

As the next generation of the nation, students majoring in History Education have an important role in preserving cultural heritage, including historical sites spread across various regions, one of which is in Aceh. The knowledge of students majoring in History Education about Aceh's historical sites reflects the extent of their awareness and appreciation of the historical and cultural values contained in them. To answer this question, it is given in the form of an instrument that is specially made to find out the knowledge of students majoring in History Education about historical sites in Aceh. Students' Historical Awareness is an important element in knowing the number of sites understood by History Education students. The narrative can be seen in the following table;

Table 2. Knowledge of the History of Aceh Historical Sites

No.	Name	Semester	Origin	Positive Narrative of Historical Sites	Negative Narratives of Historical Sites
1.	MM	Empat/IV	Aceh Utara	Saya tahu beberapa lokasi situs bersejarah di Aceh, yaitu, Benteng Indra Parta, Makam Iskandar Muda dan Rumah Aceh, Rumah Cut Nyak Dhien, yang semuanya berbeda di Aceh Besar dan Banda Aceh.	Ada banyak situs yang tidak saya ketahui, terutama situs yang berada di luar konteks yang saya sebutkan, misalnya di Aceh tengah, saya cenderung tidak mengetahuinya, saya baru mendengar situs puntah Putri.
2.	RS	Delapan/VII	Benar-benar Meriah	Berdasarkan apa yang saya ketahui tentang situs bersejarah di Aceh, antara lain, Putri Pukes, atau split, makan kerkoff. Potong Makam Meutia, Benteng Cakra Dunia, Makam Iskandar Muda. dan beberapa situs lainnya,	Kurangnya pengetahuan saya tentang situs sejarah di Aceh karena, saya sangat tidak tertarik membaca buku sejarah, jadi saya tahu sedikit.
3.	JA	Empat/IV	Banda Aceh	Tahun lalu saya mengunjungi	Pengetahuan saya yang

				beberapa situs bersejarah di daerah tempat saya tinggal, antara lain cagar alam Gunongan, situs benteng kuta kaphee, Benteng Indra Parta, Makam Iskandar Muda, dan makam Meah II.	terbatas tentang situs sejarah Aceh selain kedua wilayah ini karena keterbatasan bacaan yang saya baca sehingga berdampak pada pengetahuan ini.
4.	SATU	Empat/IV	Aceh Utara	Beberapa situs bersejarah yang saya ketahui antara lain makam raja Aceh-Bugis, makam Teuku Umar, benteng kerajaan Trumon, dan benteng Kuta Batee.	Terlepas dari apa yang saya sebutkan sebelumnya, saya tidak tahu tentang situs lain, karena pengetahuan terbatas yang saya gali dari kelas sekolah menengah saya.
5.	HA	Empat/IV	Lhokseumawe	Saya telah mendengarkan beberapa situs bersejarah di daerah tempat saya tinggal, yaitu makam Malikussaleh, Gua Jepang, monumen Tgk Cot Plieng, dan makam prajurit Tgk Cot Pling,	Kurangnya bacaan yang saya baca berdampak pada pengetahuan saya tentang situs sejarah sangat minim sehingga terbatas hanya pada daerah saya.
6.	FI	Empat/IV	Aceh Besar	Saya tahu beberapa situs sejarah di Aceh, antara lain situs Batee Raya, situs benteng Kuta Gle, lalu saya juga mengenal meligoe bireun, selain kerkoff, benteng Indra Parta, Masjid Tuha Indrapuri.	Pada dasarnya saya hanya mendengar, kemudian terbatasnya akses ke lokasi membuat saya tidak mengunjungi situs-situs bersejarah tersebut.

Source: An Interview with Students 2025

Based on Table 2 shows six main things, first, the diverse understanding of historical sites in Aceh, the MM respondent knows several locations of historical sites in Aceh, namely, the Indra Parta Fort, the Iskandar Muda Tomb and the Aceh House, the Cut Nyak Dhien House, which are all located in Aceh Besar and Banda Aceh, besides that the MM respondent does not know the existence of more sites, especially the two areas. Second, the Respondent stated that some of the historical sites in Aceh that he knew included Putri Pukes, Atu Belah, Kerkhoff's Tomb, Cut Meutia's Tomb, Cakra Donya Fortress, and Iskandar Muda's Tomb. Even though he has known some of these important sites, his knowledge is still limited. This is due to the lack of interest in reading history books, so the information obtained is limited to what has been heard or seen from other sources. The lack of interest in historical reading is one of the main obstacles in understanding more deeply the historical sites of Aceh (Setiawan, 2023). Third, the JA Respondent explained that he had visited several historical sites in the area where he lived, including the Gunongan Cultural Heritage, Kuta

Kaphee Fort, Indra Partitiona Fort, Iskandar Muda Tomb, and Meurah II Tomb. The visit gave me a hands-on experience that helped me get to know the local history in a more real way. However, my knowledge of Acehese historical sites outside the two areas is still very limited. The limited literature or information sources that I consume show the importance of the availability of more varied and interesting learning media so that the public, including myself, can more easily access and understand the historical heritage of the region at large (Pertiwi, 2021).

Fourth, according to JA, the historical sites that I know include the Tomb of the King of Aceh-Bugis, the Tomb of Teuku Umar, the Fort of the Trumon Kingdom, and the Fort of Kuta Batee. My knowledge of such sites generally comes from learning in school and information I hear in general. However, apart from what has been mentioned, there are no other historical sites in Aceh. This is due to the limited knowledge I gained while in high school, where the history material taught tends to be limited and not in-depth, especially about local history (Siregar & Priyono, 2019). The lack of exploration and utilization of additional sources of information also played a role in my narrow understanding of Aceh's historical sites. Fifth, the HA respondent said that he had visited or knew several historical sites, such as the Malikussaleh Tomb, Japanese Cave, the Tgk Cot Plieng Monument, and the Tomb of the Tgk Cot Plieng Soldier are all very important historical relics in their area (Septiyantono, 2021). However, limitations in access to or interest in reading historical materials cause the knowledge to be limited only to these local sites. Sixth, his knowledge of several historical sites in Aceh, such as the Batee Raya Site, Kuta Gle Fort, Meligoe Bireuen, Kerkhoff, Indra Parta Fort, and Tuha Indrapuri Mosque, shows an interest in local history, although it is still limited to the information heard. Unfortunately, limited access to locations is a major obstacle in deepening the understanding of these sites (Mubarok et al., 2021).

Evidence of Acehese Historical Sites and the Limited Reading Interest of Students Majoring in History Education Towards Acehese Local History Materials

Historical sites in Aceh are cultural heritage that have important value for the identity and historical journey of the Acehese people. The preservation of these sites, such as forts, old mosques, royal tombs, and colonial relics, is not only aimed at maintaining the physical integrity of the buildings, but also preserves the historical, cultural, and local wisdom values contained in them. In the midst of modernization and development, preservation efforts are a shared responsibility so that future generations can continue to learn and know their historical roots. The local historical sites in Aceh can be found in several forms.

Table 3. Drawing Forms of Local Historical Sites in Aceh

Location	Historical Sites of Aceh in the traditional period		
Aceh Besar			
	Figure 1. Source: https://www.noa.co.id/cagar-budaya-indra-patrabenteng-kokoh-peninggalan-kerajaan-hindu-di-aceh/	Figure 2. Source: https://www.tempo.co/hiburan/62-tempat-bersejarah-di-aceh-jadi-situs-cagar-budaya-564389	Figure 3. Source: https://www.kompas.com/stori/image/2023/09/03/09000579/sejarah-benteng-iskandar-muda-peninggalan-kerajaan-aceh?page=1
Banda Aceh			
	Figure 4 Source: https://www.kabarwajo.id/menilik-jejak-raja-raja-dinasti-bugis-yang-pernah-memerintah-di-kesultanan-aceh-darussalam/	Figure 5 Source: https://www.ajnn.net/news/menelusuri-kandang-xii-pemakaman-keluarga-sultan-aceh-abad-ke-16-masehi/index.html	Figure 6 Source: https://www.rmolaceh.id/menelusuri-jejak-kejayaan-aceh-di-makam-sultan-iskandar-muda-dan-gunongan
Aceh Tengah			
	Figure 7 Source: https://www.goodnewsfromindonesia.id/2023/02/27/artefak-prasejarah-di-loyang-mendale-jejak-peneguh-kebhinekaan	Figure 8 Source: https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2024/09/15/misteri-legenda-putri-pukes-destinasi-wisata-sejarah-yang-memikat-wisatawan	Figure 9 Source: https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2019/03/25/dua-gua-di-aceh-tengah-loyang-mendale-dan-loyang-ujung-karang-dijadikan

di-akhir-pekan	situs-nasional
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Table 3 illustrates three main points. First, the historical site located in Aceh Besar, where it can be seen that in the Aceh Besar region there are three different things, namely the bull senses parta, where the bull has great historical value for the people of Aceh as a strategy in defending from enemy attacks. In addition, there is also a building for places of worship, namely a building with a punden pattern like one of the icons in Aceh, with its classic building. Then the next image is the site of the Iskandar Muda bull, which is an important figure in the perspective of the Acehnese people (Novarizky, 2020). As stated in Table 3, Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the preservation of the site by the government for historical relics. Second, a local historical site located in Banda Aceh, the fourth picture is the preservation of the tomb of the Bugis dynasty that once ruled in Aceh. This is one of the important things because every visitor must always stop by the historical tomb. Then the fifth image is the tomb of the kings of Kendang XII, which also has an important role in the history of the Banda Aceh region. The sixth picture is the tomb site of the king of Aceh Darussalam, which has a very large historical value. As stated in Table 3, Figures 4, 5, and 6 show the existence of a place of historical sites and a very large cultural preservation value (Rosdiana, 2022). Third, the Loyang Mendale Site and Loyang Ujung Karang are two important archaeological sites located in Central Aceh Regency. These two sites hold very valuable prehistoric relics and are evidence of the existence of ancient human civilizations in the Gayo highland region. Loyang Mendale is known for the discovery of thousands of years old ancient human skeletons as well as artifacts such as pottery, stone tools, and jewelry, which show the lives of past people who had a sedentary lifestyle and simple technological capabilities (Tamba, 2025). Meanwhile, Loyang Ujung Karang also offers archaeological finds that strengthen the suspicion that this area has been a center of cultural activity since prehistoric times (Purwanti et al., 2023). The existence of these two sites is not only important for the world of science but also has educational value and potential for the development of historical and cultural tourism in Aceh (Halbwachs, 2022).

Low Interest in Reading Among Students Majoring in History Education in Aceh in Local History Material

The low interest of students majoring in History Education in Aceh's local history books is one of the serious challenges in efforts to preserve and inherit cultural values and regional identity. Although local history contains important information about the struggles, local wisdom, and social development of the Acehnese people from time to time, many students majoring in History

Education are less interested in studying it in depth. The narrative can be described in the following table.

Table 4. Reading Interest of Students Majoring in History Education Towards Aceh Local History Materials

No.	Name	Age	Interest in Reading History Books	Interest in Non-Historical Books
1.	RZ	20	Saya sangat kurang membaca buku-buku sejarah Aceh, karena banyak buku sejarah, terutama sejarah lokal, yang sulit dipahami.	Saya lebih suka membaca novel yang mudah dipahami dan lebih terkait dengan konteks saat ini
2.	YU	20	Membaca buku sejarah Aceh bagi saya membosankan karena buku sejarah memiliki teks yang relatif tidak mudah dipahami.	Beberapa kali saya berkunjung ke gramedia tetapi saya tidak pernah mencari buku sejarah melainkan mencari cerita pendek atau buku lain dalam bentuk cerita.
3.	MN	20	Saya suka materi sejarah, tetapi hanya mendengarnya di kuliah, saya tidak pernah membeli buku sejarah tetapi saya sering menonton film dokumenter sejarah.	Menurut saya, buku sejarah kurang menarik dan cenderung berisi narasi yang panjang.
4.	PO	20	Meskipun saya sudah mengambil jurusan Ilmu Sosial sejak SMA, saya tidak tertarik membaca buku sejarah, sulit untuk dipahami, menurut saya beberapa buku sejarah telah diterjemahkan.	Lebih tertarik untuk membaca buku lain, misalnya buku yang mudah dipahami, seperti buku sosiologi dan lainnya.

Source: An Interview with Students 2025

Seeing that the interest in reading local Acehnese history books tends to be low, even though they come from an educational background that allows them to get to know history more closely. The most dominant reason is the difficulty in understanding the content of history books, which are considered to have heavy language, long narratives, and are less relevant to today's life (Selegi & Aryaningrum, 2022). RZ and YU explicitly mention that local history books are difficult to understand and boring. Even the PO who comes from the Social Sciences department stated that he was not interested in reading history books because of the translation factor and the complexity of the content. Second, on the other hand, respondents showed a higher interest in non-historical books, especially those in the form of light narratives such as novels, short stories, or social-themed books that are easier to understand (Mulyani et al., 2023). RZ and YU prefer fiction books because of their relevance to the present context and a more communicative style of language. MN also prefers to watch historical documentaries rather than reading books, which shows that audiovisual

media is considered more interesting and easy to understand by students majoring in History Education in understanding historical topics (Azis et al., 2018).

Discussion

Research data shows that students of the Department of History Education, Syiah Kuala University, still face competency problems, especially in terms of knowledge, use of historical sites, and interest in reading history. Most students only know the historical figures or events of Aceh in general, without delving into the deeper social, political, and cultural context (Permana et al., 2017). Historical sites, such as the Tomb of Sultan Iskandar Muda, Indrapatra Fort, and the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, are more often seen as cultural icons or tourist destinations, rather than as a source of learning that can enrich historical understanding (Soekamto, 2020). This has implications for the limited ability of students to relate local history to national and global history (Abdullah, 2020). According to (Cakranegara, 2020), history learning is not only oriented to memorizing facts, but also to developing historical thinking, including the analysis of sources, contexts, and significance of events. The limitations of students in utilizing historical sites show that the process of constructing historical knowledge has not been fully optimal. When compared to other studies, a similar phenomenon was also found (Winoto, 2022).

(Zainuddin, 2018) stated that history students at several universities in Indonesia tend to lack integration of historical sites in formal learning. The same thing was emphasized by (Abdullah, 2020) that low local history literacy is closely related to the lack of interest in reading and the dominance of the use of popular internet sources. In contrast, (Marlina, 2021) research shows that when students engage in field studies to historical sites, their motivation to learn and historical awareness increase significantly. Thus, the results of this study are in line with previous studies, although the context of Aceh has a rich history that should provide greater opportunities for strengthening student competence. As a reflection, the author sees an antithesis to the notion that the existence of historical sites can automatically increase students' historical awareness. In fact, without the right learning strategy, historical sites are only superficially understood (Arif et al., 2024). Therefore, an environment-based learning approach and the integration of local history literacy in the curriculum are needed (Selegi & Aryaningrum, 2022). Students are not only directed to memorize historical facts, but also to analyze, criticize, and relate events to contemporary life (Fitriani & Fatmariza, 2022). This idea is important so that the Aceh historical site really becomes a learning laboratory that strengthens academic competence while building a deeper historical awareness (Yulianti & Winarti,

2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the objectives and results of the research, it can be concluded that students of the Department of History Education, Syiah Kuala University, are still facing competency problems characterized by limited historical knowledge, low utilization of Acehese historical sites as a learning resource, and a lack of interest in reading local historical literature. This shows that students' historical awareness has not developed optimally, because historical sites are more often seen as cultural or tourist objects than as academic media. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen learning strategies that are able to encourage student involvement critically and contextually so that Acehese historical sites can really be used in improving competence while building a deeper historical awareness.

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