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Analysis of Students' Learning Difficulties in History Classes at Al-Khairaat Ampibabo Senior High School

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A B S T R A C T

History education plays an important role in developing students' critical thinking skills, character, and national values. However, many students still perceive History as a difficult and less engaging subject because it often requires memorizing numerous facts, such as historical figures, dates, and events. This study aims to identify and describe the learning difficulties experienced by students and to analyze the factors contributing to these difficulties in the History subject at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that students experienced difficulties in understanding materials that required extensive memorization, recalling historical figures, dates, and events, and maintaining concentration during lessons. Many students also demonstrated low interest in History because they considered the subject monotonous and overloaded with content. In addition, the midday class schedule often caused fatigue and drowsiness, while an unconducive classroom environment reduced students' focus and participation. The study found that learning difficulties were influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors included low learning motivation, limited interest in the subject, and ineffective study habits. External factors consisted of limited variation in teaching methods, insufficient learning resources, and classroom conditions that did not adequately support effective learning.

1. Introduction

In the context of education, learning serves as a key component that engages students in the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and positive values (Yulianto, 2025). History learning plays a crucial role in developing critical

thinking skills, shaping character, and instilling national values in students (Supriyanto & Setiawati, 2018; Astri, 2020). However, history learning is still often perceived as difficult and boring due to rote-memorization-based content, such as the names of historical figures, dates, and events. This situation leads to low student interest, motivation, and participation in the learning process (Nadhita, 2021; Piani, 2023). In addition to internal factors, learning difficulties are also influenced by external factors, such as monotonous teaching methods, a reliance on lecture-based instruction, limited learning resources, and an unproductive learning environment (Rusmianis, 2023).

Similar issues were found at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo in Parigi Moutong Regency. Based on initial observations, students tend to be passive, easily bored, and have difficulty understanding history material, especially during afternoon classes. Limited learning resources and a lack of variety in teaching methods also affect student learning outcomes. Daily test data show that many students still score below the minimum passing grade, particularly in 10th grade. Therefore, an analysis of students' learning difficulties and their underlying causes is necessary to identify appropriate solutions for improving the effectiveness of history instruction. Analysis is the process of breaking down and grouping raw data into information that is easy to understand and interpret. Analysis is conducted by identifying key components of the data so that specific patterns can be identified and organized systematically. Consequently, the results of the analysis provide meaningful insights and facilitate the drawing of concise and clear conclusions.

The study of history is the process of learning about various events in human life from the past that relate to the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of society. History is not merely about memorizing dates and figures; it also provides an understanding of life values, such as nationalism, courage, tolerance, and the spirit of struggle. According to Churri (2013), history is a subject that examines significant events from the past in human life. Meanwhile, Anis (2016) explains that history education aims to develop critical and creative thinking skills, foster curiosity, and strengthen national identity. Furthermore, history education can also shape social attitudes and foster an appreciation for diversity (Sapriya, 2012). History education is useful for raising awareness of the importance of learning from the past and for understanding how to present history effectively so that it is engaging and not boring (Muhtarom, 2020).

Difficulties in learning history are obstacles that students face in understanding, remembering, and applying historical material during the learning process. Reid (1986) explains that learning difficulties are usually evident when students fail to complete academic tasks. Students with learning difficulties generally have normal intelligence but face obstacles in certain subjects, resulting in learning outcomes that fall below their potential. Ahmadi (2003) states that learning difficulties are a condition in which students cannot learn optimally, caused not only by intellectual factors but also by non-intellectual factors. Furthermore, Syah (2009) explains that the factors causing learning difficulties consist of internal and external factors. Internal factors include students' interests, motivation, and psychological

conditions, while external factors include the family environment, school, teaching methods, and social conditions.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that difficulties in learning history are influenced by various interrelated factors, both within the students themselves and in their surrounding environment. These difficulties result in low levels of understanding, motivation, and learning outcomes among students in history classes. These obstacles are believed to reduce students' enthusiasm for learning, particularly when it comes to overcoming their learning difficulties (Imran, 2025).

Based on a literature review, there are several studies relevant to this research. Supriyanto's (2018) study analyzed students' learning difficulties in history instruction on the topic of early humans in Indonesia, focusing on internal and external factors affecting student academic achievement. Furthermore, Piani's (2023) study examined students' learning outcomes in history as well as the factors causing learning difficulties, such as motivation, teaching methods, and limitations in facilities and infrastructure. Additionally, Nadhita's (2021) study discussed students' difficulties in history learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly regarding online learning, learning motivation, and limitations in learning resources. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the types of learning difficulties students experience in understanding history at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo, as well as to analyze the factors that cause students' learning difficulties in history classes at that school.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive methods. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of students' learning difficulties in history based on the natural conditions occurring within the school environment. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding the meaning, processes, and experiences of research subjects through the collection of data in the form of words, actions, and relevant documents (Moleong, 2018). The descriptive method is used to systematically describe the history learning situation, the forms of learning difficulties experienced by students, and the factors that influence these difficulties without applying specific treatments to the research subjects. This approach allows the researcher to obtain a comprehensive picture of the history learning problems occurring at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo (Sugiyono, 2021).

The research design used was a case study. A case study was chosen because this research focuses on a specific location, namely Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo, which has unique characteristics related to history education. A case study aims to examine a phenomenon in depth within a real-world context to yield a comprehensive understanding of the issue under investigation (Yin, 2018). According to Walidin (2015), qualitative research is a research process to understand human or social phenomena by creating a comprehensive and complex picture, presented in the form of words, and conducted in a natural setting. With a

case study design, researchers can examine the conditions of history learning, classroom interactions, and the factors that influence students' learning difficulties in depth. Therefore, the research results are expected to accurately represent the actual conditions of history learning at the school.

This study was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo, Ampibabo Subdistrict, Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi. The location was chosen because of students' learning difficulties in history and the limited learning facilities and infrastructure that support the focus of the study. The research was conducted from February 11–18, 2026. Data collection techniques in this study included interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain comprehensive data through triangulation (Creswell, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to identify students' learning difficulties, learning motivation, and barriers to learning history. Observations were used to directly observe learning activities and the condition of facilities and infrastructure (Sugiyono, 2021). Documentation was used to supplement the data through student grades, attendance lists, syllabi, lesson plans, and other school documents.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument (human instrument), supported by interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2021). These instruments are used to collect data on students' learning difficulties in history classes. The data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews and observations of 10th and 11th-grade students as well as history teachers. Secondary data was obtained from school documents such as student grades, attendance lists, syllabi, lesson plans, and data on facilities and infrastructure to support the primary data (Moleong, 2018).

The research subjects consisted of 25 students each from grades 10 and 11, as well as a history teacher. Students were selected through purposive sampling based on those who experienced difficulties learning history, had low grades, and were less active in class (Sugiyono, 2021). The history teacher was chosen as the primary informant because of their direct involvement in the learning process. The data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The analysis was conducted continuously from data collection until the study was completed to ensure valid and systematic conclusions.

3. Result and Discussion

Overview of the Research Location

Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo is a private educational institution under the auspices of a foundation established pursuant to Ministry of Religious Affairs Decree No. 045 of 1990, dated December 25, 1990. The madrasah's status was subsequently formalized through Establishment Decree and Operational Decree

No. 253 of 2021. The madrasah is located in Ampibabo Utara Village, Ampibabo Subdistrict, Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi.

Over the years, madrasahs have implemented several national curricula, ranging from the 1984 Curriculum, the 1994 Curriculum, the 2004 KBK, the 2006 KTSP, to the 2013 Curriculum. Based on interviews with the madrasah principal, the madrasah will continue to use the 2013 Curriculum until 2026 because the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires readiness in terms of school resources and administration. The madrasah's vision is to become an educational institution that excels in the development of knowledge, faith, and noble character. To realize this vision, the madrasah carries out its mission through improving the quality of learning, fostering religious character, developing teacher competencies, and creating a conducive learning environment. The list of interview questions can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Interview Questions

No	Interview with a History Teacher
1	Why do some students still struggle with learning history?
2	What is the primary factor causing students to struggle with learning history?
3	Are the teaching methods and models used appropriate for the students' characteristics?
4	How does the school environment affect the effectiveness of history instruction?
5	Does the family environment also influence students' learning difficulties?
6	What are the most common challenges faced in teaching history?
7	What efforts have been made to address students' learning difficulties in history?
	Student Interview
1	Why do you find it difficult to understand history?
2	Which aspects of history lessons most often confuse you?
3	Does the way the material is presented help you understand historical events, or does it make it harder for you?
4	To what extent do the available learning resources help you understand history?
5	In your opinion, has history education so far focused more on memorization or on understanding?
6	Does the classroom atmosphere affect your concentration when studying history?
7	How does your home environment influence your history study habits?
8	Do you feel you have the opportunity to ask questions or express your opinions during history lessons?
9	What do you think needs to be improved to make history lessons easier to understand?

The research subjects consisted of the madrasah principal, two history teachers, and students in grades 10 and 11 of social studies. Based on observations, learning facilities such as classrooms, desks, chairs, whiteboards, and history textbooks were adequately provided, but history learning media were limited. Student activity during history lessons demonstrated a fairly good level of attention and responsiveness, although student engagement in the learning process remained relatively low.

Types of Learning Difficulties Experienced by Students in Understanding History at Madrasah Aliyah Aliyah Aliyah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo

Observations and interviews indicate that students in grades 10 and 11 of social studies at Madrasah Aliyah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo still experience various

difficulties in understanding history. These difficulties include understanding concepts and the cause-and-effect relationships between historical events, memorizing the names of figures and dates of events, and low concentration due to an unconducive classroom environment. Furthermore, the lecture-dominated learning method makes students quickly bored and makes it difficult to grasp the material in depth.

Figure 1. Interview with Mrs. Rahmawati., S.Pd.i as a history teacher at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo

The results of the observations also show that some students scored below the minimum passing grade, both in 10th-grade Social Studies and 11th-grade Social Studies. This situation indicates that students' understanding of the history material remains relatively low. Based on interviews, the history teacher stated that students' low interest in learning is one of the main causes of their learning difficulties. Ms. Rahmawati, S.Pd.I, stated that:

"Many students view history as merely memorization, so they fail to grasp the content and meaning of the material."

A similar point was made by Ms. Jamila, S.Pd, who noted that:

"Some students still face learning difficulties due to a lack of attention during class and rarely reviewing the material at home."

Learning difficulties are also evident in students' ability to recall historical facts such as figures, dates, and key terms. Many students admitted to frequently forgetting material they had previously studied. Ahmad Fauzan stated, "I often forget the names of historical figures and the dates of events, so I get confused when answering." This indicates that students' memory retention for factual material remains low. Additionally, rote-learning approaches cause students to become bored quickly and lose focus. Dimas added, "If I don't review at home, I forget the material quickly." Thus, the factor of review plays a significant role in students' understanding.

In addition to cognitive aspects, psychological factors also influence students' learning difficulties. Some students lack confidence and have little interest in history. Andika Saputra stated, "I'm not very interested because history feels irrelevant to my life." This causes students to pay less attention to the teacher's explanations during class. A lack of self-confidence also makes students reluctant to ask questions when they do not understand the material. This situation reinforces the fact that students' motivation to learn remains low in history classes for 10th and 11th-grade Social Studies students.

Classroom environment factors also contribute to students' learning difficulties. Based on observations, a hot and unconducive classroom environment makes it difficult for students to concentrate. Reza Ananda stated, "I have trouble focusing because my classmates often talk in class." Additionally, the teacher's voice, which is sometimes unclear, also hinders understanding of the material. Rina Safitri added, "The teacher's explanations sometimes don't reach the back of the classroom." This indicates that physical conditions and the learning environment significantly influence students' level of understanding of history material.

Another difficulty arises in understanding cause-and-effect relationships in historical events. Eleventh-grade social studies students admitted to having trouble explaining social, economic, and political impacts in a coherent manner. Sultan Agung said, "I often have trouble distinguishing one event from another." This indicates that students' ability to think chronologically remains low. In addition, the continued dominance of lecture-based teaching methods makes students less active in developing their own understanding. Teachers also noted that limited learning resources are a major obstacle in the history teaching process.

Overall, the research findings indicate that students' learning difficulties are influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include a lack of motivation, poor memory retention, and a lack of the habit of reviewing lessons. Meanwhile, external factors include teaching methods, classroom conditions, and limited learning resources. Ms. Rahmawati stated, "Students still view history as merely memorization, so they fail to grasp its meaning." Therefore, improvements to learning strategies are needed to make them more varied and interactive. The hope is that students will become more active, understand the material well, and achieve learning outcomes in line with the Minimum Competency Standards (KKM).

Factors Contributing to Students' Learning Difficulties in History at Al-Khairaat Ampibabo Senior High School

Based on the results of observations and interviews at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo, it was found that difficulties in learning history are influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include low interest in learning, lack of focus, fatigue, low self-confidence, and the habit of not reviewing material at home. Meanwhile, external factors include a teaching method that remains predominantly lecture-based, insufficient use of learning media, a hot and noisy classroom environment, and student absenteeism during the learning process.

The observation results indicate that some students are less active, easily bored, and struggle to understand chronological and conceptual material. Additionally, the use of a lecture method without varied media causes students to lose concentration quickly. These findings are supported by students' opinions stating that history lessons would be easier to understand if teachers used images, videos, or group discussions in the learning process. One student stated that "if the learning process only uses the lecture method without interesting images or examples, they quickly feel bored and have difficulty grasping the content" (Interview with a 10th-grade Social Studies student, February 16, 2026).

Figure 2. The 10th-grade Social Studies and 11th-grade Social Studies classes during a history lesson at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo

In addition, the learning environment also affects students' comprehension. Some students reported having difficulty concentrating due to the hot and noisy classroom atmosphere. Reza Ananda stated that "the classroom is often noisy and uncomfortable, and the hot temperature makes it hard for me to focus when the teacher is explaining the material" (Interview, February 16, 2026). History teachers also acknowledge that a variety of teaching methods is essential to prevent students from losing attention during lessons. Mrs. Rahmawati, S.Pd.I, stated that "students' focus can be disrupted if teaching methods are not varied" (Teacher interview, February 16, 2026).

Figure 3. Interview process with 11th-grade social studies students at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo

Thus, it can be concluded that the factors causing difficulties in learning history at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo stem from a combination of internal student factors and external factors related to the learning environment. Therefore, the use of more varied teaching methods, engaging learning media, and the creation of a conducive classroom atmosphere are necessary to improve students' understanding of history material.

Discussion

Types of Learning Difficulties Experienced by Students in Understanding History at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo

Based on the results of a study conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo, several types of learning difficulties were identified that students experience in understanding the History subject, namely difficulty memorizing the names of historical figures and dates of events, understanding historical chronology, and connecting past events with current conditions. In addition, students also had difficulty understanding historical terms that they considered unfamiliar and hard to grasp. This situation caused some students to lose interest and become easily bored during history lessons.

Learning difficulties are also influenced by students' low levels of focus during the learning process. The dominant teaching method, which relies heavily on lectures, makes students less active and hinders their ability to grasp the material deeply. One student stated that "history lessons feel difficult because there are so many things to remember, such as the names of historical figures and the years of events" (Student interview, February 15, 2026). Additionally, another student noted that "if the explanation is too fast and lacks learning materials, the content becomes hard to understand" (Student interview, February 16, 2026). These findings indicate that the use of teaching methods that lack variety also impacts students' understanding of history content.

The findings of this study align with the view of Habsy et al. (2024), who state that learning difficulties refer to a condition in which students encounter obstacles in the learning process, resulting in outcomes that fall short of expectations, despite possessing adequate intellectual ability. These obstacles may stem from internal factors, such as motivation and concentration during learning, or external factors, such as teaching methods and the learning environment. This view is reinforced by Dewi (2020), who explains that learning difficulties are influenced by interrelated internal and external factors in the learning process.

Thus, difficulties in learning history at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo are not only caused by students' abilities but are also influenced by teaching methods, classroom conditions, and the lack of engaging learning media. Therefore, more creative, interactive, and varied learning strategies are needed so that students can more easily understand history material and be more motivated to participate in the learning process.

Factors Contributing to Students' Learning Difficulties in History at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo

Based on the results of a study at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo, the factors causing difficulties in learning history consist of internal and external factors. In the 10th-grade Social Studies class, 10 students were found to be experiencing learning difficulties, while in the 11th-grade Social Studies class, 7 students had difficulty understanding the history material. Internal factors include low interest and motivation to learn, lack of concentration, and difficulty remembering the names of historical figures and the dates of historical events. Some students view history lessons as merely rote memorization, which leads to boredom and a lack of interest in studying the subject in greater depth. One student stated that "history lessons feel difficult because there are so many things to remember" (Student interview, February 16, 2026).

In addition to internal factors, there are also external factors that influence students' learning difficulties. The dominant teaching method, which relies on lectures without engaging learning materials, causes students to be less active and easily bored. Unconducive classroom conditions, such as a noisy environment and a lack of focus when the teacher is explaining, also affect students' understanding of the material. One student stated that "the classroom is often noisy, and the hot environment makes it hard for me to focus when the teacher is explaining" (Student interview, February 16, 2026). Furthermore, limited learning materials and a lack of support for learning at home contribute to these learning difficulties.

The findings of this study align with the view of Rahmawati (2021), who states that learning difficulties are influenced by internal factors, such as low motivation and poor concentration, as well as external factors, such as teaching methods and the learning environment. This view is reinforced by Aulia (2022), who explains that learning difficulties result from the interaction between internal and external factors that influence one another throughout the learning process.

Thus, difficulties in learning history at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo are not only influenced by students' individual abilities but are also related to teaching methods, classroom conditions, and the learning environment. Therefore, comprehensive efforts are needed through the use of more varied learning methods, engaging learning media, and a supportive learning environment to improve students' understanding of history.

4. Conclusion

Students at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo face various challenges in understanding the History curriculum. These difficulties are evident in the limited ability of some students to grasp basic historical concepts, arrange events in chronological order, and systematically explain the cause-and-effect relationships of historical events. In addition, students also have difficulty remembering the names of historical figures, important dates, and conceptual historical terms. This situation impacts student learning outcomes, as there are still 10th and 11th-grade Social Studies students who have not met the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM). Based on observations and interviews, it was found that some students remain passive, ask few questions, and do not fully engage in discussions and Q&A sessions, resulting in their understanding of historical material not being fully in-depth.

Furthermore, these learning difficulties are closely tied to various factors that influence the learning process in the classroom. The continued dominance of the lecture method causes students to act primarily as passive listeners and to be less engaged in a learning process that fosters critical thinking skills. Additionally, limited use of learning media such as visual aids or supporting technology makes abstract historical material difficult to understand. Uncomfortable classroom conditions, such as high room temperatures, also affect students' concentration while studying. Compounded by the habit of some students not reviewing material at home and a lack of confidence to ask questions when they do not understand the teacher's explanation, these factors further exacerbate the emergence of these learning difficulties.

Thus, it can be concluded that the difficulties in learning history at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairaat Ampibabo result from the interaction between internal student factors and external factors in the learning process. Therefore, comprehensive improvement efforts are needed in terms of teaching strategies, the use of more varied learning media, more conducive classroom management, and increased student participation so that learning objectives can be optimally achieved and students' learning difficulties can be gradually minimized.

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