



The Utilization of Bahal Portibi Temple as a Social Studies Learning Resource at SMPN 1 Halongonan

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pemanfaatan Candi Bahal Portibi sebagai sumber pembelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (IPS) di SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan, Kabupaten Padang Lawas Utara. Candi Bahal merupakan situs cagar budaya yang bernilai edukasi tinggi dan berpotensi besar untuk diintegrasikan ke dalam proses pembelajaran kontekstual. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data yang meliputi observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Candi Bahal memiliki nilai sejarah, budaya, dan arsitektur yang sangat relevan untuk mendukung pembelajaran IPS, khususnya dalam aspek sejarah dan budaya lokal. Namun, pemanfaatannya masih terbatas karena keterbatasan infrastruktur, rendahnya kesadaran guru, dan kurangnya dukungan dari lembaga pendidikan. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan strategi integratif dan kolaboratif antara sekolah, masyarakat, dan pemerintah untuk mengoptimalkan pemanfaatan situs sejarah lokal sebagai media pembelajaran yang efektif dan bermakna.

Kata Kunci: Candi Bahal, Sumber Belajar, IPS, Pembelajaran Kontekstual, Budaya Lokal.

Abstract

This study aims to examine the use of the Bahal Portibi Temple as a source of Social Science (IPS) learning at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan, North Padang Lawas Regency. The Bahal Temple is a historical heritage site with high educational value and great potential for integration into the contextual learning process. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing data collection techniques that include observation, interviews, and documentation. The study's results demonstrate that the Bahal Temple possesses historical, cultural, and architectural values that are highly relevant to support social studies learning, particularly in aspects of local history and culture. However, its use is still limited due to limited infrastructure, low teacher awareness, and a lack of support from educational institutions. Therefore, an integrative and collaborative strategy is needed between schools, the community, and the government to optimize the use of local historical sites as an effective and meaningful learning medium.

Keywords: Bahal Temple, Learning Resources, Social Studies, Contextual Learning, Local Culture.

Introduction

Social Sciences (IPS) in schools have a strategic role in shaping the character and ability of students to understand the social reality around them. The primary goal of social studies learning is to develop students' social sensitivity to various societal problems, foster a positive mental attitude towards addressing social inequality, and enhance skills in overcoming

daily life challenges (Nanggala, 2020). Social studies learning not only teaches theoretical concepts, but also emphasizes the relationship between social, historical, and cultural phenomena with human life and its environment (Farris, 2024; Şeker, 2023)

According to Rizky (Nasution & Ponidi, 2025), social studies education focuses on

various aspects of people's social lives, whereas social sciences are sciences that focus on human life activities. In this case, the social sciences encompass a comprehensive study that is simplified in schools for learning purposes. By instilling moral values in students, we become social beings. It is covered from the perspective of time, encompassing both the past, present, and future.

For social studies learning to be effective and meaningful, contextual, real-world, and relevant learning resources are necessary. Teachers are required to be more creative in designing learning strategies, including in the selection of learning methods, materials, and resources that are relevant to student needs and the times (Cendanu & Bramasta, 2023). One of the strategies considered effective in increasing students' understanding and interest in social studies materials, especially history, is to utilize environment-based learning resources, such as historical sites in their vicinity.

One of the potential sources of historical learning that has not been optimally utilized is the Bahal Temple site, located in Bahal Village, Padang Bolak District, North Padang Lawas Regency. Bahal Temple is a historical heritage consisting of three temple complexes, namely Bahal Temple I, II, and III, which have high historical and cultural value. Unfortunately, the existence of this site has not been fully utilized as a learning medium in schools, including SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan, which is located nearby. The use of the Bahal Temple as a learning resource can provide a more concrete, interactive, and meaningful learning experience for students. Through the right approach, such as the use of interactive learning media, documentaries, historical maps, miniature temples, and educational visit activities, students can more easily understand the historical and cultural values of the local community in their lives. This kind of learning not only enriches students' insights, but also fosters a sense of belonging to local cultural heritage and fosters awareness of the importance of preserving historical sites.

However, in practice, the use of historical sites, such as the Bahal Temple, still faces various obstacles. The low awareness of the community and the government regarding the importance of the site as part of an educational and cultural heritage, as well as the limited capacity and initiative of teachers in integrating local learning resources into the learning

process, are significant challenges in themselves. Schools still tend to use traditional and textual learning approaches, so history lessons feel abstract and less interesting for Shiva.

This problem can be analyzed through the theoretical approach of constructivism, which emphasizes that knowledge is not something that is passively transferred from teacher to student, but is actively constructed by students through interaction with their environment. From a constructivist perspective, direct and contextual experiences play an important role in helping students construct an understanding of a concept (Azzahra et al., 2025). Thus, integrating the Bahal Temple as a historical learning resource in social studies subjects will provide students with opportunities to actively learn, explore the real environment, and relate the subject matter to the social and cultural realities around them.

Constructivist theory also places teachers as facilitators who play a role in designing meaningful and challenging learning experiences, one of which is by using an environment-based learning approach. When teachers invite students to observe historical relics firsthand, analyze information from primary sources, and reflect on the meaning of local culture, the learning process becomes more lively, relevant, and memorable. With this approach, history learning is no longer abstract and boring, but becomes a fun learning experience that builds students' awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage (Azzahra et al., 2025).

Thus, the use of the Bahal Temple as a learning resource in social studies education aligns with the principles of constructivism, specifically active, contextual, and meaningful learning. This research aims to explore the potential and effectiveness of utilizing local historical sites in enhancing students' understanding of historical materials, cultivating an appreciative attitude towards local culture, and promoting learning innovations that are more creative and relevant to contemporary needs (Azzahra et al., 2025). It emphasized the need to conduct a study on the extent to which the Bahal Temple site can be utilized as a source of historical learning at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan. This research aims to explore the potential of the Bahal Temple as a learning medium that can enhance historical understanding, foster appreciative attitudes towards cultural heritage, and improve the overall quality of social studies learning.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was chosen because it is relevant to understand in depth how the process of utilizing local historical sites, in this case, the Bahal Temple, is used as a social studies learning resource at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan. As explained by Moleong (Murdiyanto, 2020), a qualitative approach allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena from the perspective of the actors or participants involved in them. This research is also natural and produces descriptive data in the form of oral and written words from the informants observed and interviewed (Hasibuan et al., 2022; Wicaksana & Rachman, 2018).

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan, Halingunan District, North Padang Lawas Regency. The selection of the location was carried out purposively because this school is not far from the Bahal Temple site, which is the main object of the study. The informants in this study consisted of school principals, social studies teachers, students, as well as community leaders and site managers of the Bahal Temple, who were selected for their direct involvement in the context of locally-based social studies learning. Data collection was conducted through observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to gain firsthand insight into the learning process and the involvement of teachers and students in utilizing the Bahal Temple as a learning resource. Interviews are used to explore information related to the informant's experiences, views, and understanding of the use of historical sites in learning. Meanwhile, documentation includes the collection of photos, field notes, and school documents related to history learning activities (Sugiyono, 2020).

Secondary data were obtained from various literature sources, including books, journals, educational documents, and other references that support the research analysis. All data collected were analyzed through three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Mouwn, 2020). Data reduction is carried out by filtering relevant information, and the presentation of data is arranged in the form of a narrative. Conclusions are drawn based on the patterns and meanings of the thoroughly analyzed data. To ensure the

validity of the findings, this study uses triangulation techniques, namely source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. The triangulation was conducted to assess the consistency and validity of data obtained from various sources and data collection methods.

Result and Discussion

This study aims to investigate the use of the Bahal Temple site as a source of historical learning, efforts to optimize it, and the obstacles encountered during the process. The data was obtained through in-depth interviews with social studies teachers, principals, and students of SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan.

The Utilization of the Bahal Temple as a Learning Resource

Social studies teacher Mrs. Helmi Yanti stated that the Bahal Temple has high educational value, not only in terms of local history, but also as a representation of past cultures relevant to the material about the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom and cultural heritage. However, the use of this site in learning is still incidental and has not yet become an integrated part of the curriculum. Activities carried out include limited field visits, independent observations, and project tasks such as creating historical reports and posters. The principal supports the use of the Bahal Temple in social studies learning. According to him, the site offers a genuine learning experience for students and has been incorporated into the school's annual work plan. The form of learning activities includes observation, questions and answers, documentation, and presentations.

One of the students at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan, named Heri Amansyah, stated that learning history through a visit to the Bahal Temple is more engaging and easier to understand than just studying in class. They admitted that they had learned about the Bahal Temple in social studies lessons, although some had never visited the location in official school activities.

Efforts to Optimize the Utilization of the Bahal Temple

Mrs. Helmi Yanti also suggested several strategic steps, including the development of site-based learning modules, regular scheduled visits, collaboration with temple managers, and teacher training in contextual learning. She also

encourages students to participate in creative projects, such as vlogs, short documentaries, and preservation campaigns. The principal stated that the school has prepared an annual work plan that encourages teachers to capitalize on local opportunities.

Regarding Mrs. Nismawati Siregar, the principal of SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan, she explained that support is provided in the form of funding, coordination with parents, and the provision of basic facilities. Optimization strategies include integrating character values, reflective assignments, and student empowerment to create works such as school newsletters and documentation videos. Students also suggested ways to make learning activities on the site more interactive, such as through tour guides, historical simulations, or cultural exhibitions that involve their direct participation. It is considered more effective and engaging than conventional lecture methods.

Obstacles to the Utilization of the Bahal Temple

There are several obstacles to using this site, namely limited time and funds, according to Mrs. Helmi Yanti, who identifies these as the main obstacles. The dense academic calendar and lack of cost support mean that visits can only be made once or twice a year. Accessibility, such as poor road conditions and remote locations, is also a significant obstacle, especially during the rainy season. The lack of on-site facilities, such as toilets, shelters, and educational information boards, was conveyed by all informants as an obstacle to the comfort of educational activities. Teacher awareness and competence are essential, as not all teachers are accustomed to environment-based learning. Therefore, training and support among teachers are essential. The limitations of cleanliness and location management, as conveyed by students, also impact comfort when studying in situ. Scattered garbage and unmaintained conditions are a concern.

Based on this data, the use of the Bahal Temple at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan has begun but remains limited and has not been fully integrated into the curriculum. Optimization efforts require cross-party collaboration and strengthening support from schools, the community, and the government. Technical and non-technical obstacles are the primary challenges in making the Bahal Temple a vibrant and sustainable source of historical learning.

The use of the Bahal Temple site as a learning resource in social studies education at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan is an environment-based educational approach that integrates local historical and cultural values into the classroom learning process. This research shows that, although utilization has not been carried out optimally and systematically, teachers and students have demonstrated enthusiasm and an awareness of the importance of historical sites as contextual and meaningful learning media.

In practice, the use of the Bahal Temple is generally carried out through field trips carried out by social studies teachers (Helmi Yanti) and their students. This activity was conducted as part of the history *learning materials*, particularly those related to the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms in the archipelago. During the visit, students were invited to observe the temple's structure, carve reliefs, and hear explanations about the historical background of the Bahal Temple from resource persons or accompanying teachers. The teacher of social studies (Helmi Yanti) said as follows:

"... Bahal Temple is instrumental as a medium for learning history because there children can see firsthand the form of past relics, not just from textbook pictures. They are easier to understand Hindu-Buddhist civilization because they can touch and observe directly..."

This utilization allows students not only to learn history from abstract textbooks, but also from concrete experiences that give a profound impression. This aligns with constructivist theory, which emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through experience and interaction with their surrounding environment. From the student side, enthusiasm for learning activities outside the classroom is very high. One of the grade VIII students, Riki Wahyu, revealed:

"... If you learn history at Bahal Temple, it is more exciting. We can observe the temple's shape directly and take pictures while studying. It feels very different than just reading in a book..."

The experience shows that historical site-based learning not only enhances students' understanding but also fosters their sense of interest and active involvement in the learning process. Students not only become passive listeners but also take on the role of small researchers, conducting observations, interviews, and documenting their findings in the

field. However, the use of the Bahal Temple still faces various significant obstacles.

Some of the obstacles identified in this study include the limited school budget to finance field visits, the strict curriculum that limits learning time, and the lack of supporting facilities at the site location, such as shelters, educational information boards, and sanitation facilities. Furthermore, it was also said by the Social Studies Teacher (Helmi Yanti) as follows:

"... The academic calendar is very tight, and the school's budget is also limited. Visits to the Bahal Temple are only permitted once per school year. That still has to be helped by the school committee and the parents of the students..."

Meanwhile, another informant, Juwita Salwa, a grade VIII student at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan, revealed that geographical factors are one of the challenges in learning. The location of the Bahal Temple, which is quite remote, and the condition of the damaged road during the rainy season pose a physical obstacle to learning activities at the site. Additionally, the lack of special learning modules that integrate local historical sites, such as the Bahal Temple, into social studies subjects is also an obstacle. Teachers still rely on national textbooks that do not specifically address the site. As a result, efforts to relate subject matter to local contexts rely primarily on the creativity of teachers. In this case, the teacher's awareness and ability to apply a contextual approach are crucial.

"... If it rains, the road to the Bahal Temple is slippery and muddy. We find it difficult to attend, and sometimes it is canceled; not all teachers understand how to relate the material to local potential. There must be training or workshops so that we are better prepared to use historical sites in learning..."

However, the school showed efforts and commitment in supporting the use of the Bahal Temple. The principal (Nismawati Siregar) stated that educational visit activities have become part of the school's annual program, although the frequency is still limited. Furthermore, the use of the Bahal Temple as a learning resource has excellent potential for improvement through various strategies. One of the proposed strategies is the use of digital media such as documentary videos, virtual simulations, or multimedia-based thematic projects. This approach not only overcomes physical and budgetary constraints but also opens up more creative and inclusive learning opportunities.

The involvement of the community and site managers is also an important aspect. Interviews with temple custodians revealed that they are willing to assist with the educational process if the school invites their cooperation.

"... We have included it in the school's annual work plan. Every year, social studies teachers take students to visit there at least once. However, it needs support from all parties so that it can become more routine and effective. So far, there have not been many schools that come regularly. However, we are open if the school is interested in studying history here. We can help explain the origin of the temple and the meaning of the reliefs..."

By involving local communities, learning is not only informative but also fosters a collective consciousness that preserves cultural heritage. This educational activity is also the first step to make the historical site a shared learning space between the school and the community. In terms of learning theory, this approach is highly relevant to contextual learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the subject matter and students' real-life experiences. As stated by Simon et al. (2023), social studies learning should not only focus on theoretical concepts, but also build relationships between students and their environment, making learning more meaningful and sustainable.

Based on information from each of these informants, it can be concluded that the use of the Bahal Temple as a social studies learning resource at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan shows great potential in improving the quality of contextual, active, and characterful history learning. Although various obstacles remain, the enthusiasm and awareness of teachers, students, and schools indicate a positive direction in the development of learning based on local culture. In the future, greater support is needed from various parties to ensure that this utilization runs optimally and sustainably, and becomes an inspiring learning model in other schools with a similar cultural heritage.

This study aims to determine how to utilize the Bahal Portibi Temple as a source of historical learning at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan, as well as to identify the optimization efforts and obstacles encountered during the process. Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, the researcher concluded that the use of this historical site has great potential but remains underutilized systematically.

First, related to the formulation of the problem **"How is the use of the Bahal Temple site as a source of history learning at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan?"**, the results of the study show that the use of the Bahal Temple has been carried out through incidental educational visits, mainly in learning history about the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom. Social studies teachers integrate direct observation activities into the Bahal Temple site to strengthen students' understanding of the subject matter. Students are assigned the task of documenting the results of the visit and compiling reports in the form of written documents or presentations. This process provides a more meaningful learning experience, as students can witness firsthand historical relics that they have only learned about in textbooks. As expressed by Mrs. Helmi Yanti, a social studies teacher:

"... Bahal Temple is instrumental as a medium for learning history because children can see firsthand the relics of the past, not just from textbook pictures...."

Second, answering the formulation of the problem **"How are efforts to optimize the use of the Bahal Temple site as a source of history learning?"**, the results of the study indicate that the school, especially social studies teachers and principals, have shown initiative in including visits to Bahal Temple as part of the annual work program. Students also expressed their hope that history learning can be developed more creatively, such as through making vlogs, miniature temple exhibitions, or historical simulations in the classroom. However, there is no specific learning module or lesson plan (RPP) that structurally integrates this local potential into the social studies curriculum. Optimization efforts can be carried out through the development of locally based teaching tools, the use of technology such as learning videos and documentaries, and teacher training on environment-based learning. As explained by the principal, Nismawati Siregar, he stated:

"... We have included it in the school's annual work plan. Every year, at least once, a social studies teacher takes students to visit there..."

Third, related to the formulation of the problem **"What are the obstacles faced in the use of the Bahal Temple site as a learning resource?"**, this study found that the most dominant obstacles were the limited school budget to finance visits, tight learning times, inadequate infrastructure conditions towards the

site, and minimal supporting facilities at the temple location. Additionally, not all teachers possess the necessary competence and awareness to utilize historical sites as an effective learning medium. As for a student, Heri Amansyah revealed the obstacles they often experienced, namely:

"... If it rains, the road to the Bahal Temple is slippery and muddy. We had a hard time getting there, and sometimes it was cancelled...."

This obstacle is compounded by the lack of external support, such as the tourism and culture office, which should play a role in providing educational facilities on-site and facilitating cooperation with educational institutions. Thus, the use of the Bahal Temple as a social studies learning resource at SMPN 1 Halongonan has had a positive impact on the learning process, especially in improving students' understanding of local history and culture. However, to achieve optimal utilization, collaboration between schools, local governments, site managers, and the surrounding community is needed, as well as the development of a systematic, creative, and potential-based learning strategy.

The theory of constructivism, which has its roots in the thought of Jean Piaget and was further developed by figures such as Lev Vygotsky, states that knowledge is actively shaped by individuals through direct interaction with the environment and meaningful learning experiences (Alfadhilah, 2025). In the context of learning, this theory emphasizes the importance of active student engagement, contextual learning, and knowledge building through real-life experiences and social collaboration. Constructivism holds the view that students are not passive recipients of information, but active actors who construct their knowledge through interaction with the surrounding world (Bustomi & Astuti, 2024).

The study's findings regarding the use of the Bahal Temple as a social studies learning resource at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan indicate a tendency that aligns with the principles of constructivism. However, its application is not entirely optimal or integrated.

Contextual and Real-Experiences Based Learning

The use of the Bahal Temple in history learning activities demonstrates an effort to bring students out of the classroom environment and provide a contextual and realistic learning experience. The statement by social studies teacher Mrs. Helmi Yanti, who highlighted the educational value of the Bahal Temple as a representation of past cultures, as well as its material on the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom, was in line with a constructivist approach that emphasized the importance of local context and authentic experiences in building students' understanding.

Field visits, direct observations, and projects, such as creating historical reports and posters, are examples of *experiential learning* strategies. This aligns with David Kolb's view in the experiential learning cycle, which posits that concrete experiences serve as the starting point of learning. Thus, learning through visits to the Bahal Temple site provides students with opportunities to actively experience, reflect, and build meaning on the material learned personally.

The statements of students, such as Heri Amansyah, who mentioned that learning history through direct visits is more interesting and easier to understand than the traditional lecture method in the classroom, reinforce the validity of the constructivist approach in this context. Direct interaction with historical sites enables *meaningful learning*, as students connect new information to their prior experiences and knowledge.

The Role of Teachers as Facilitators and Collaborators

In constructivist theory, teachers no longer serve as the sole source of knowledge, but rather as facilitators who design learning situations that allow students to build their knowledge. The efforts made by Mrs. Helmi Yanti, such as the development of site-based modules, teacher training in contextual learning, and encouraging creative projects like *vlogs* and *documentaries*, reflect the shift in the role of teachers from teachers to supervisors and facilitators.

Similarly, support from the principal in the form of an annual work plan and the provision of facilities demonstrates an understanding that meaningful learning requires a collaborative support structure. The strategy of integrating character values, reflective tasks, and empowering students to produce creative works,

such as newsletters and video documentation, is a practice that supports the principle of social constructivism, as stated by Vygotsky, that social interaction and cultural mediation are essential to students' cognitive development.

Active Participation and Social Construction of Knowledge

The active participation of students in learning activities, such as observation, question-and-answer sessions, documentation, presentations, and the development of ideas to create historical simulations and cultural exhibitions, is a tangible manifestation of participatory learning that is at the core of constructivism. By providing space for students to contribute to designing and carrying out learning activities, teachers and schools provide opportunities for students to construct knowledge socially through cooperation, discussion, and collaboration.

Student involvement in this process not only enhances conceptual understanding but also shapes social skills and critical thinking. This is consistent with Vygotsky's concept of *the zone of proximal development* (ZPD), where students can achieve a higher level of understanding through guidance from adults and interaction with peers (Damanik et al., 2025).

Implementation Constraints: Structural Challenges to Constructivist Learning

Despite progressive efforts, the use of Bahal Temple in social studies learning still faces various obstacles, both technical and non-technical. Limited time, funds, accessibility, and a lack of on-site facilities are the primary obstacles to implementing site-based contextual learning. These barriers, if not addressed, can undermine the essence of constructivist learning, as students miss out on the opportunity to experience firsthand and actively build understanding through interaction with real objects.

In addition, the lack of teacher training and competence in implementing an environment-based approach indicates that not all educators are ready to carry out constructivist roles effectively. The theory of constructivism requires high pedagogical readiness from teachers, both in designing experiential learning activities and in guiding students through the process of reflection and meaning construction. Therefore, continuous support is needed in the form of training, collaboration between teachers,

and school policies that encourage learning innovation.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the use of the Bahal Temple as a social studies learning resource at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan has contained the main principles in constructivism theory, especially in the aspects of contextual learning, active student involvement, the role of teachers as facilitators, and the construction of knowledge through real experience. However, the implementation of this theory is still partial and faces various challenges that need to be addressed systematically.

Efforts to optimize the use of Bahal Temple should focus on comprehensive integration into the curriculum, enhancing teacher capacity, strengthening collaboration among stakeholders, and providing facilities and infrastructure that support site-based learning. With a constructivist approach, the Bahal Temple can serve as a learning resource that not only enriches students' historical knowledge but also fosters critical thinking skills, appreciation for local culture, and a spirit of preserving the nation's cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Based on the research results on the Utilization of Bahal Portibi Temple as a Social Studies Learning Resource at SMP Negeri 1 Halongonan, it can be concluded that the Bahal Temple site has been used as a source of historical learning through educational visit activities that provide direct learning experiences for students. This activity enables students to understand historical material in a more contextual and meaningful way. However, this utilization is still incidental and has not been optimally structured in the learning curriculum. Optimization efforts can be carried out through the development of locally based modules, teacher training, and the use of digital media. The obstacles faced include budget limitations, inadequate access to infrastructure, and a lack of facilities at the site location. However, both teachers and students showed high enthusiasm for using the Bahal Temple as a potential learning resource to foster historical understanding and a love for local culture among students.

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