

Transforming Ethnopedagogic-Based Learning of Maluku History to Improve Student Understanding and Engagement

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ABSTRACT

History education is crucial in shaping students' cultural identity and historical awareness. However, conventional memorization-based methods often fail to enhance students' understanding and engagement, especially in regional contexts such as Maluku. Although previous studies have discussed the theoretical value of ethnopedagogics, empirical research on its effectiveness in regional history education remains limited. This study addresses that gap by evaluating an ethnopedagogic approach integrating local cultural values into history learning. Using a quasi-experimental design without a control group, the study involved 120 high school students in Ambon City. Data were collected through historical comprehension tests, classroom observations, and interviews. Paired t-tests measured changes in historical understanding, while ANOVA analyzed behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement differences. Results showed statistically significant improvements: comprehension scores increased from a pre-test mean of 57.5 (SD = 4.2) to a post-test mean of 77.5 (SD = 3.8) ($t(119) = 4.32, p = 0.002$), and engagement indicators improved significantly ($F(2,118) = 5.21, p = 0.001$). These findings provide empirical evidence supporting the integration of ethnopedagogic methods into Indonesia's history curriculum. The study highlights how culture-based, experiential learning enhances student engagement, fosters critical understanding, and strengthens cultural identity. Further research with broader and comparative designs is recommended.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ethnopedagogic approach, which integrates local cultural values into history learning, offers a promising solution to the limitations of conventional, memorization-based instruction that often lacks contextual relevance. As an approach that connects historical content with the cultural experiences of local communities, ethnopedagogics holds significant potential for enhancing the effectiveness of history education (Sakti et al., 2024). This model is expected to increase students' interest in history by linking historical narratives to students' lived realities while reinforcing their cultural identity. In the context of Maluku, this pedagogical transformation is particularly urgent due to persistent challenges

in history learning, including low student engagement and limited comprehension of historical material. The dominance of rote learning methods and the lack of culturally relevant resources make it difficult for students to connect historical events to their identities and everyday lives.

An instructional approach that fosters cognitive engagement and cultural relevance is needed to address these challenges. Ethnopedagogics offers such a framework by embedding Moluccan cultural values into history teaching strategies. However, despite its theoretical appeal, empirical research on the effectiveness of ethnopedagogic approaches in history education—particularly in regional contexts like Maluku—remains limited. Culture-based approaches in education have been discussed extensively in various studies, particularly for their role in enhancing learning effectiveness. Integrating local cultural values into the curriculum can improve student understanding by presenting material that resonates with their experiences (Azahary & Fatimah, 2024; Sukmadinata, 2012). These studies suggest that history education linked to local culture fosters deeper understanding and enables students to connect past events to their identities. Yet, most of this research remains conceptual and does not test the practical impact of ethnopedagogics in specific regional contexts.

Gunardi et al. (2024) demonstrated that ethnopedagogic approaches can enhance students' historical understanding and emotional attachment to the material (Gunardi et al., 2024). They found that culture-based learning encourages active student involvement through interactive activities such as cultural discussions, oral history exploration, and history-themed games. However, their work primarily focuses on general history learning without exploring how ethnopedagogics can be tailored to regional histories like Maluku, which features rich oral traditions and strong community-based social structures. This research seeks to fill that gap by exploring the application of ethnopedagogics in teaching Moluccan history and analyzing its impact on students' historical understanding and engagement. It also adds an empirical dimension through quantitative methods and direct classroom observation.

As noted by Dokolamo (2022), history instruction in Maluku continues to be dominated by memorization-based approaches and fails to connect historical content with the local cultural context (Dokolamo, 2022). While several studies have examined ethnopedagogics in history education, no comprehensive research has systematically investigated its application in teaching Maluku history or measured its impact on student engagement and comprehension. The teaching of Maluku history in the national curriculum remains generic and often overlooks the integration of local cultural values. As a result, students struggle to relate regional history to their local identities. The prevailing emphasis on memorization over contextual understanding further contributes to low student engagement (Djono, 2022; Suntana & Priatna, 2023).

Although some studies have addressed the benefits of culture-based learning in other subjects, such as language and the arts, few have explicitly examined the effects of ethnopedagogics on students' historical understanding (van Straaten et al., 2018). This study seeks to bridge that gap by analyzing how the transformation of history education through ethnopedagogics can enhance students' historical knowledge and engagement in Maluku. This research contributes significantly to developing local culture-based history education models in Indonesia, particularly for Moluccan history. As an approach that embeds cultural values into the learning process, ethnopedagogics offers a meaningful solution to the long-standing problems of disengaged, memorization-driven history instruction (Abdullah et al., 2024; Selasih & Sudarsana, 2018). This study's findings are expected to confirm the effectiveness of ethnopedagogics in enhancing historical understanding and engagement and provide a practical implementation model for integration into the national curriculum.

Moreover, this research can serve as a reference for designing history education policies more responsive to local wisdom. History teachers in various regions can adapt the findings to develop more interactive, relevant, and culturally grounded teaching models. This study contributes to the academic discourse on ethnopedagogics and practical efforts to revise curriculum and teacher training to better reflect Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape. Specifically, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of ethnopedagogics in improving students' historical understanding and engagement in Maluku.

Previous studies have focused on its application in other disciplines, such as language and arts, without explicitly addressing its impact on history education. Therefore, this research seeks to close that gap by investigating the transformation of history learning through ethnopedagogics in Maluku, both in content understanding and active student participation.

This study aims to analyze how ethnopedagogic-based history learning can improve student comprehension and engagement in Maluku. It will assess the effectiveness of this approach in delivering historical content, evaluate changes in student interest, and identify practical challenges in its implementation. The scope includes schools in Maluku that offer history instruction, with a particular focus on the use of ethnopedagogic methods. Data will be collected through observations, teacher and student interviews, and analysis of the effectiveness of culture-based instructional strategies. The results are expected to inform the development of a more inclusive and culturally responsive history curriculum and improve Indonesia's overall quality of history education.

2. METHODS

This research employed a quasi-experimental design using pre-test and post-test measures without a control group to assess the impact of ethnopedagogic-based history learning in authentic classroom settings. This design was selected due to ethical and logistical considerations, as it was not feasible to exclude students from receiving a potentially beneficial learning intervention within the same institutional environment. Furthermore, collaboration with schools and local education authorities emphasized inclusive participation over random assignment. The study applied rigorous internal comparisons by examining within-group changes over time to address the absence of a control group. Pre-test and post-test data were analyzed to determine statistically significant improvements. In addition, data triangulation was conducted by integrating qualitative sources—interviews and classroom observations—to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings. While this design limits the ability to establish causality and generalize the results beyond the study context, it provides a practical and context-sensitive evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness.

The study employed various materials and instruments specifically designed to capture the transformation of ethnopedagogic-based history learning to support this evaluation. The primary materials included culturally contextualized Maluku history modules, local tradition-based visual media, and oral historical narratives collected from community elders. The instruments consisted of (1) a historical comprehension test administered as both pre-test and post-test, (2) a student engagement questionnaire, (3) semi-structured interview guides for teachers and students, and (4) observation sheets for tracking student engagement throughout the learning process. The student engagement questionnaire was developed based on the academic engagement framework, encompassing three key dimensions: (1) behavioural engagement, (2) emotional engagement, and (3) cognitive engagement. The instrument included 20 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), assessing indicators such as frequency of participation in history discussions, interest in Maluku history, and emotional connectedness to the content.

Content validity was evaluated by three experts in history education and educational psychology. Construct validity was tested using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), which indicated that all items had factor loadings greater than 0.60, confirming satisfactory construct validity. The questionnaire also demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha of $\alpha = 0.85$ for the overall scale. Subscale reliability was also strong: behavioural engagement ($\alpha = 0.82$), emotional engagement ($\alpha = 0.87$), and cognitive engagement ($\alpha = 0.83$). Questionnaires were administered before and after the ethnopedagogic intervention to capture changes in student engagement. The resulting data were analyzed using paired t-tests to determine statistically significant differences between pre-and post-intervention engagement levels (Mahardika et al., 2023).

2.1. Sample Preparation Process

This study employed a purposive sampling method to select 120 secondary-level students (grades XI and XII) from three high schools in Ambon City. The selection of these schools was based on several inclusion criteria: (1) the schools had implemented the Moluccan history curriculum, (2) they demonstrated an openness to integrating ethnopedagogic-based learning methods, and (3) their history teachers had participated in prior training on ethnopedagogical approaches. These schools were also selected to reflect institutional diversity in Ambon, encompassing both public and private schools and varying degrees of engagement with local cultural practices. The sample size of 120 students was adequate to ensure sufficient statistical power for quantitative analysis using paired t-tests and ANOVA. Nonetheless, purposive sampling introduces potential bias, as participants were not randomly selected and may not fully represent the entire population of high school students in Ambon or beyond. To address this limitation, the study strategically included schools from different educational backgrounds and community settings to maximize internal diversity. This approach was intended to strengthen the ecological validity of the findings and offer a more comprehensive representation of student experiences within the context of Moluccan history education.

Ethical considerations were rigorously addressed in the research process. Ethical approval was obtained from the affiliated university's institutional review board before data collection. Informed consent was secured from all participants and their legal guardians after providing clear explanations about the research objectives, procedures, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. Participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and that they could withdraw from the study without penalty. Although the results may not be generalizable to all regions, they provide valuable insights into implementing ethnopedagogic models in localized educational contexts. Future research using random or stratified sampling across multiple provinces is recommended to enhance the generalizability and robustness of findings.

2.2. Research Design

This study used a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test approach without a control group. The research subjects consisted of 120 high school students in Ambon City who were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in Maluku history subjects. Pre-test and post-test instruments were developed to measure students' historical understanding before and after applying ethnopedagogics. The test consisted of 25 multiple-choice questions and five essay questions that focused on students' ability to understand historical concepts, relate historical events to the Maluku cultural context, and analyze the impact of history on modern life. Three history and education experts tested the instrument's content validity to ensure conformity with curriculum standards and measurement objectivity. Meanwhile, the instrument's reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha with the result of $\alpha = 0.82$, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

The pre-test was administered one week before the ethnopedagogic learning intervention began, while the post-test was administered after all learning sessions were completed over four weeks. The pre-test and post-test used the same questions to control for test difficulty variables, except for some variation in the essay questions to avoid memorization effects. The pre-test and post-test results were analyzed using a paired t-test to determine significant differences in students' historical understanding before and after the intervention.

2.3. Parameters and Measurement Techniques

This study measured two primary parameters:

1. Students' understanding of Maluku history is assessed through multiple-choice questions and essay items designed to evaluate students' comprehension and ability to relate historical events to local cultural contexts.

- Students' level of engagement in learning was measured using a triangulated approach involving classroom observations, student interviews, and a structured engagement questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on the academic engagement framework and comprised 20 items on a 5-point Likert scale covering behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement dimensions.

Additional qualitative insights were gathered from:

- Teacher interviews focus on their perceptions of the ethnopedagogic approach.
- Observation notes highlighting implementation challenges and contextual responses.

To improve clarity and readability, the measurement instruments used in this study are summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Measurement Instruments Used in the Study

Instrument	Type	Purpose/Measured Construct	Format/Method	Sample Items or Indicators
Historical Comprehension Test	Quantitative	Students' Understanding of Maluku History	25 multiple-choice + 5 essay questions	"Explain the significance of the Pela Gandong system."
Student Engagement Questionnaire	Quantitative	Behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement	20 items, 5-point Likert scale	"I enjoy discussing Maluku history in class."
Classroom Observation Sheet	Qualitative (structured)	Real-time student engagement and interaction patterns	Observational checklist and narrative field notes	Student participation during traditional game reenactments
Interview Guidelines (Students)	Qualitative	Students' reflections on the learning process and motivation	Semi-structured interviews	"How did the cultural elements in history class affect you?"
Interview Guidelines (Teachers)	Qualitative	Teacher perception and implementation challenges	Semi-structured interviews	"What were the challenges in applying the ethnopedagogic model?"

2.4. Statistical Analysis and Data Validation

This study employed quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches to ensure a comprehensive and robust interpretation of the data.

2.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to assess the effectiveness of the ethnopedagogic-based learning intervention. Two statistical techniques were applied:

- Paired t-tests were used to analyze the difference in students' historical understanding before and after the intervention. This test measured changes in mean scores from pre-test to post-test for the same group of students (N = 120), thereby evaluating the direct impact of the learning model on students' cognitive outcomes.
- One-way ANOVA was employed to examine variations in student engagement across different dimensions—behavioural, emotional, and cognitive—as measured by the engagement questionnaire. This analysis identified statistically significant differences among the three

engagement categories following the intervention, thus offering a more nuanced understanding of how students responded across affective and participatory domains.

3. The combination of paired t-tests and ANOVA was chosen to address two distinct but related questions: (a) whether the intervention led to significant cognitive gains in historical understanding, and (b) whether it influenced different aspects of student engagement in varied ways.

2.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

Data from teacher and student interviews and classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis proceeded through the following stages:

1. Data Familiarization: Verbatim transcription and repeated reading of interview data.
2. Initial Coding: Identifying key segments relating to student engagement, cultural understanding, and instructional impact.
3. Theme Development: Grouping of codes into broader themes such as “increased motivation through cultural relevance” and “pedagogical challenges.”
4. Theme Validation: Triangulation of findings with observation notes and quantitative data to ensure consistency.
5. Theme Definition: Clarification and labelling of final themes supported by illustrative quotes from participants.
6. Reporting: Final synthesis presented as narrative insights into the learning process and student-teacher experiences.

2.4.3 Data Triangulation and Validation:

Multiple data sources—test scores, questionnaires, interviews, and observation records—were triangulated to ensure analytical validity. In addition, inter-researcher reliability checks were conducted to ensure consistency in the coding and interpretation of qualitative data. This mixed-methods approach was designed to increase the findings' credibility, depth, and trustworthiness.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Students' Understanding of History

The results showed a significant increase in students' Understanding of Maluku history after implementing ethnopedagogic-based learning. This can be seen from comparing pre-test and post-test scores on various historical skills measured. As shown in Figure 1, all aspects of historical understanding improved after the intervention. The average score before the intervention showed that students' experience was still relatively low, with pre-test scores ranging from 55 to 60. However, after applying ethnopedagogic-based learning methods, the post-test scores increased significantly, ranging from 75 to 80. In addition, students better understood various aspects of Moluccan culture, such as the *pela gandong* system (brotherhood between villages), the tradition of hitting the broom, and the role of Kapitan Pattimura in the struggle against colonialism. Before the intervention, their understanding of these cultural aspects was rote and limited to essential information. However, after using the ethnopedagogic approach, students could connect historical events with more profound social and cultural meanings. Students' understanding of history can be seen in Figure 1 below.

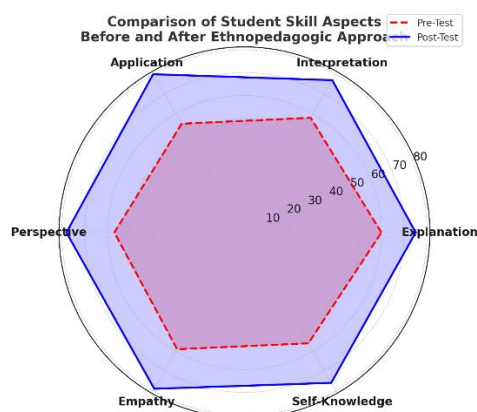


Figure 1. Students' Understanding of Maluku History

Based on the data obtained, the application aspect demonstrated the highest increase, rising from a pre-test score of 55 to a post-test score of 80. This statistically significant improvement indicates that the ethnopedagogic approach enabled students to contextualize and apply historical concepts more effectively in real-life situations. For instance, participants demonstrated the ability to explain how the idea of *pela gandong* remains relevant for maintaining social harmony in contemporary Maluku and how *cakalele* functions not only as a traditional war dance but also as a symbol of bravery and regional identity. Empathy and perspective also experienced considerable improvement, which increased from 59 to 79 and 57 to 78, respectively. The increased empathy reflects how a culture-based learning approach enables students to understand historical events through more personal and emotional lenses. After the intervention, students showed a deeper appreciation for the sacrifices of Maluku fighters during the colonial era and recognized the continued relevance of those heroic values in the present.

The improvement in perspective illustrates students' enhanced capacity to interpret history from multiple viewpoints, especially regarding its relevance to current social dynamics. Understanding history through a local lens encouraged students to develop critical thinking skills in analyzing the connections between past events and present-day realities (Mujiyati et al., 2019). For example, they could relate the role of the sea in the historical spice trade to Maluku's current position as a region with maritime potential. These statistically significant improvements across key dimensions of historical understanding confirm that the ethnopedagogic approach was associated with increased student engagement and learning outcomes. As emphasized by Alia (2024), integrating local cultural values into classroom learning enhances comprehension and cultural identity, thereby strengthening students' connection to the subject matter (Alia, 2024).

During the implementation process, students engaged with Maluku's history through various learning resources, including formal textbooks, orally transmitted folklore, and experiential activities such as participation in traditional games like *pukul sapu*. They also discussed how Maluku's cultural values could be applied in modern life. As a result, history was no longer perceived merely as a static collection of facts to be memorized but as a dynamic and living component of personal and communal identity (Alia, 2024). These findings indicate that ethnopedagogic-based learning can serve as an effective alternative for enhancing the quality of history education, particularly in regional contexts such as Maluku. By integrating local culture, teachers are better positioned to present historical content in relevant, engaging, and meaningful ways. This model also allows students to develop higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis and interpretation, while fostering a more profound sense of connection to their cultural heritage.

3.2. Student Engagement in Learning

The results showed that implementing the ethnopedagogic approach significantly improved students' engagement in learning Maluku history. As shown in Figure 2, all aspects of student engagement experienced a considerable increase after the intervention. Before applying the ethnopedagogic approach, student engagement was relatively low, with a score range between 54 to 60. This indicates that history learning that previously used conventional methods could less attract students' interest and build active participation in understanding historical material. Student engagement in learning can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Comparison of Student Engagement Before and After Ethnopedagogic Approach

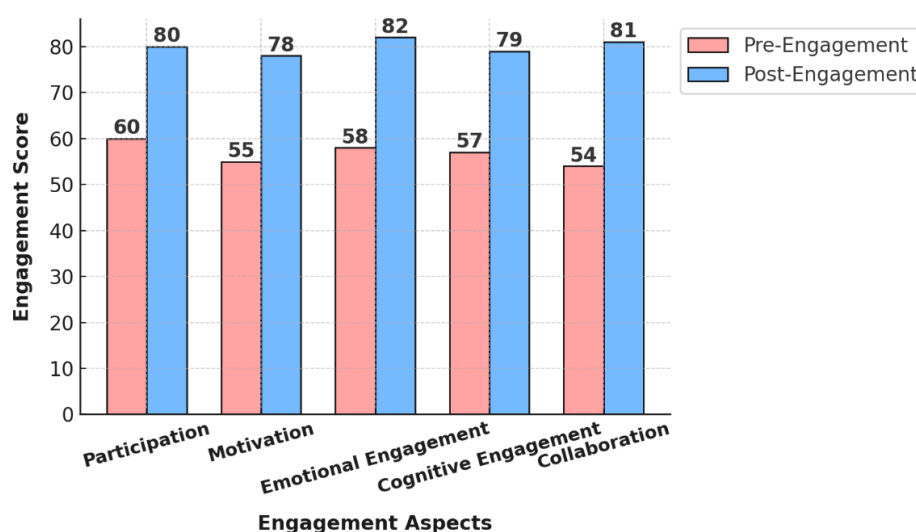


Figure 2. Student engagement in learning

After implementing the ethnopedagogic approach, students' engagement scores increased significantly to a range of 78 to 82, indicating that the method demonstrated statistically significant improvements in fostering students' participation, motivation, and emotional and cognitive engagement. Among all dimensions, emotional engagement showed the most notable gain, rising from 58 to 82. This suggests that the learning model helped students form a deeper emotional connection to the historical context, mainly when history was presented not as abstract facts to be memorized but as narratives linked to cultural values familiar since childhood. For instance, students were more enthusiastic and emotionally invested when studying *pela gandong*, a system still embedded in their social life. Further analysis revealed that all dimensions of engagement increased significantly following the ethnopedagogic intervention. Student participation rose from 60 to 80, reflecting greater involvement in classroom discussions, historical simulations, and culture-based project work. This improvement can be attributed to the shift toward interactive and experiential pedagogies, including historical reconstruction through traditional games and storytelling by local elders. Motivation also increased from 55 to 78, showing that students became more interested in history when it was delivered in a culturally relevant and personally meaningful way. Previously considered difficult and disconnected from real life, history became a subject that resonated with students' identities and lived experiences.

Regarding cognitive engagement, scores improved from 57 to 79, indicating that students began to apply higher-order thinking skills in analyzing historical content. They moved beyond linear understanding of events, demonstrating the ability to connect history with broader socio-cultural and economic contexts. For example, students could compare the role of spices in colonial-era trade with Maluku's current maritime economic potential. Likewise, the collaboration dimension increased significantly from 54 to 81, indicating that students were more inclined to collaborate, share insights,

and construct historical meaning jointly. This was evident in activities such as community-based cultural documentation projects, interviews with traditional leaders, and group discussions—initiatives that enhanced historical comprehension and fostered social awareness and a stronger sense of belonging. The consistent increase across all dimensions confirms that the ethnopedagogic model is associated with measurable improvements in student engagement, especially in culturally rooted learning environments (Hidayat et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2020). A key factor contributing to this result is the integration of local cultural values into history instruction. Presenting history as part of students' identity and community life makes the material more accessible and meaningful. In learning about Pela Gandong, for example, students did not simply study its theoretical development—they also discussed its relevance in daily life with community members, gaining insight into how historical systems still operate in present society.

This experiential learning process helped cultivate historical knowledge and values such as tolerance, solidarity, and appreciation for diversity, which are central to the goals of character education. Setiawan et al. (2024) state that ethnopedagogy fosters respect for cultural diversity by embedding local values into the learning experience (Setiawan et al., 2024). These findings imply that the ethnopedagogic approach can serve as an effective alternative for increasing student engagement in history learning. The observed rise in participation and motivation indicates a shift in students' perception of history—from a rote-based subject to a personally relevant and intellectually engaging. Furthermore, increased cognitive and collaborative engagement points to developing critical thinking and interpersonal competencies necessary for holistic education. Ethnopedagogy contributes to academic progress and supports the formation of culturally aware and socially responsible learners. Given these benefits, ethnopedagogic methods have strong potential to be scaled across the education system, particularly in history subjects that are often perceived as abstract or uninteresting. Educators can foster an intellectually grounded and culturally conscious generation by presenting history as an extension of students' lives and heritage. As Selasih & Sudarsana (2018) concluded, this approach strengthens learners' appreciation of their historical roots. It equips them to preserve their cultural legacy as future agents of the nation's identity (Selasih & Sudarsana, 2018).

3.3. Attitude and Appreciation towards Local History and Culture

Applying the ethnopedagogic approach to learning Maluku history has positively impacted students' attitudes and appreciation of local history and culture. Figure 3 shows significant improvements in five main aspects: interest in history, respect for local culture, understanding of traditions, pride in cultural heritage, and involvement in artistic activities. Attitude and appreciation towards local history and culture can be seen in Figure 3 below.

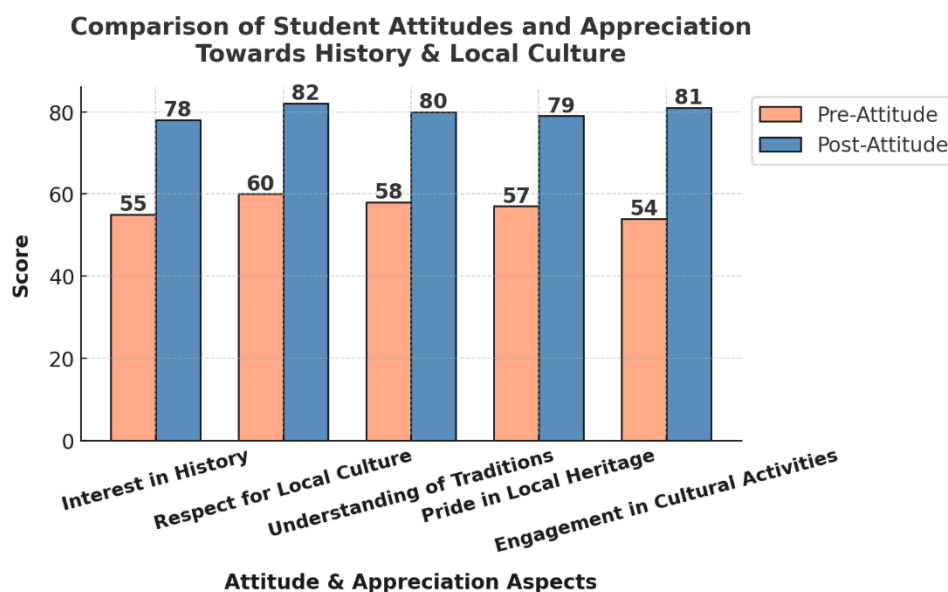


Figure 3. Students' Attitude and Appreciation towards Local History and Culture

Before the intervention, students' average scores across five attitude-related indicators ranged from 54 to 60, indicating that local history and culture had not yet been meaningfully integrated into their learning experience. However, after implementing ethnopedagogic-based learning, post-test scores increased significantly, ranging from 78 to 82. The highest gain occurred concerning local culture, which rose from 60 to 82. This statistically significant improvement suggests that students became more appreciative of Maluku's cultural values after experiencing a learning model that was contextualized and culturally embedded. Students not only studied history through textbooks but also interacted with traditional elders, learned about cultural practices like *pela gandong*, and explored the value of communal solidarity within their communities. These learning experiences helped foster a deeper awareness of preserving local culture as part of students' identity. Further analysis revealed that interest in history increased significantly, from 55 to 78. Before the intervention, many students perceived history as monotonous and heavily reliant on memorization. The ethnopedagogic approach transformed this perception by connecting historical narratives to students' personal and cultural experiences. A key factor in enhancing interest was the incorporation of folktales and local heroic stories presented through interactive and narrative-based instruction.

In addition, students' understanding of traditions improved markedly—from 58 to 80—indicating greater recognition of the cultural values embedded in traditional ceremonies, *cakalele* dances, and Indigenous musical expressions. These findings suggest that culturally integrated instructional methods help students interpret history as a record of the past and as a living cultural heritage that continues to shape their identities and communities today. Another key finding relates to the increase in pride in cultural heritage, which rose from 57 to 79. This change indicates that students became more aware of the broader historical significance of their local culture. They recognized, for example, how the colonial spice trade shaped Maluku's current cultural landscape and how local traditions contribute to the region's social and economic development. The dimension of engagement in cultural activities also improved significantly—from 54 to 81. Students became more involved in cultural events such as traditional art performances, festivals, and historical documentation projects. Notably, some began independently introducing their family and peers to Maluku's cultural traditions—demonstrating a shift in cognitive understanding, behaviour, and mindset.

These statistically significant gains across all indicators demonstrate the pedagogical value of the ethnopedagogic model in fostering meaningful and relevant learning experiences. Integrating local culture into the history curriculum enhances student engagement and helps internalize historical

values in everyday life. By situating history within existing cultural frameworks, students develop a sense of personal responsibility toward preserving that heritage (Blegur & Dyah, 2021; Saepudin et al., 2022). Moreover, findings from Dirgantari et al. (2023) reinforce that ethnopedagogic-based learning does not only improve academic outcomes but also strengthens students' cultural identity and heightens their awareness of the importance of cultural preservation amidst globalization (Dirgantari & Cahyani, 2023). One key implication of these results is that history education must extend beyond the transmission of knowledge—it must also cultivate a strong sense of cultural identity and belonging. Increased respect for cultural values and active participation in community-based learning signal students' potential as future agents of cultural sustainability.

The findings indicate that the ethnopedagogic approach holds promise for broader application in the Indonesian education system, especially in cultivating historical and cultural consciousness among the younger generation. Value-based learning rooted in local traditions can strengthen identity formation and promote a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity (Nurpratiwiningsih et al., 2023). Teachers are encouraged to develop more experiential pedagogies, including student-led fieldwork, engagement with cultural leaders, and cross-generational history projects that bridge traditional knowledge with contemporary relevance. This aligns with Mbatha & Moreeng (2024), who argue that integrating local history helps students understand and sustain cultural values within national life (Mbatha & Moreeng, 2024). Similarly, Geor et al. (2024) found that incorporating local wisdom into junior high school history and social science materials significantly enriches the student learning experience by contextualizing historical content in local realities (Geor et al., 2024).

3.4 Correlation of Student Attitude, Engagement, and Skill

The correlation analysis in Figure 4 shows the relationship between the three main variables in this study, namely student attitude towards history and local culture (Student_Attitude), student engagement in learning (Student_Engagement), and student skills in understanding and applying historical material (Student_Skills). The correlation of student attitude, engagement, and skill can be seen in Figure 4 below.

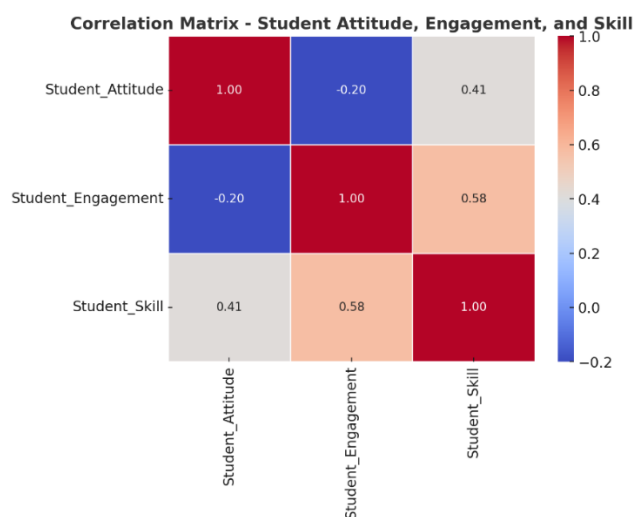


Figure 4. Correlation Matrix - Student Attitude, Engagement, and Skill

The correlation results indicate a moderate to strong positive relationship between students' engagement in learning and their skills in understanding history ($r = 0.58$). This correlation suggests that the more actively students are involved in the learning process, the more capable they become in interpreting and applying historical concepts across contexts. In the cultural setting of Maluku, engagement in history learning was notably enhanced by integrating local cultural narratives, such as folklore, the *pela gandong* social system, and the exploration of traditional practices like the historically

rich pukul sapu ritual. Participants who discussed the relevance of these traditions to contemporary life were observed to develop more potent analytical abilities in connecting historical knowledge with current social realities. These findings indicate that culture-based learning interventions are associated with statistically significant improvements in students' historical thinking skills.

In contrast, the analysis revealed a weak negative correlation between students' attitudes toward history and their engagement in learning ($r = -0.20$). This implies that although students may express positive feelings toward history and local culture, such attitudes are not always matched by active involvement in the learning process. One plausible explanation is the persistence of conventional teaching approaches that fail to engage students meaningfully. This finding highlights the need for educators to cultivate an appreciation for local culture and design experiential and participatory learning environments—for example, through student involvement in cultural festivals or historical documentation projects that empower learners as contributors.

The strongest correlation observed in this study was again between student engagement and skill acquisition ($r = 0.58$), reinforcing the value of learning models that emphasize active participation. Ethnopedagogic strategies—such as reconstructing historical events (e.g., simulating Kapitan Pattimura's struggle) or conducting field explorations of heritage sites—provided students with direct and contextually relevant experiences that deepened their understanding. Additionally, the positive correlation between students' attitudes toward history and their historical comprehension ($r = 0.41$) suggests that while attitude may not drive engagement directly, it remains a supporting factor in learning effectiveness. Students with a sense of cultural pride tend to be more motivated to explore how traditional values—such as *pela gandong*, customary laws, and local artistic forms—have shaped their collective identity. However, this study also underscores that attitudinal positivity alone does not guarantee improved academic performance, especially when not reinforced by engaging instructional design. As Fahrudin et al. (2025) highlighted, experiential learning—such as field research and direct interaction with cultural stakeholders—plays a crucial role in fostering critical historical thinking (Fahrudin et al., 2025). Accordingly, pedagogical methods incorporating cultural documentation, oral history interviews, and participation in local traditions offer effective bridges between students' intrinsic appreciation of culture and their cognitive development in history.

In line with these findings, Pertiwi et al. (2024) affirm that an ethnopedagogic approach enhances students' academic understanding and strengthens their awareness of cultural preservation (Pertiwi et al., 2024). These insights point to several implications for improving history education, particularly in culturally rich contexts like Maluku:

1. Student engagement is a primary driver of historical skill development. Therefore, schools should expand participatory and experiential learning strategies—such as cultural immersion, direct observation of *pela gandong*, and analysis of the symbolic value of *cakalele*—to sustain and deepen student involvement.
2. While positive attitudes toward history are insufficient to boost engagement, they are instrumental in building student identity and interest. Learning must be situated in culturally relevant narratives, supported by digital tools and localized educational resources that bridge tradition with modernity to maximize this potential.
3. The weak or negative correlation between attitudes and engagement suggests that external factors—such as rigid curricula, teacher-centred pedagogy, or the lack of culture-based materials—may hinder students from acting on their appreciation of history. To address this, curriculum designers and educators must integrate community-based learning, leverage technological platforms, and provide opportunities for students to investigate their personal or familial historical backgrounds.

The results of this correlation analysis reinforce that student engagement in culturally grounded learning is a decisive factor in historical skill development, while attitudes serve as complementary motivators. Therefore, effective learning strategies must prioritize active, meaningful participation

while nurturing students' cultural appreciation. With such an approach, students do not merely learn about Maluku history in abstract terms; they internalize it, apply its values in daily life, and emerge as a generation equipped to sustain their cultural identity and historical awareness.

4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the ethnopedagogic approach significantly improves students' historical understanding, engagement, and appreciation of local culture in the context of Maluku history learning. Statistical analysis confirms substantial gains in students' historical comprehension – rising from 57.5 (SD = 4.2) in the pre-test to 77.5 (SD = 3.8) in the post-test ($t(119) = 4.32, p = 0.002$). Similarly, engagement metrics improved significantly, including participation (from 54 to 80), motivation (from 55 to 78), and emotional engagement (from 58 to 82) ($F(2,118) = 5.21, p = 0.001$). Students' respect for local culture and involvement in cultural activities also increased, indicating that the learning model fostered academic and socio-cultural competencies. The practical implications of these findings highlight the importance of integrating local cultural narratives into the national history curriculum. Ethnopedagogic strategies that link historical content with students' lived experiences enable deeper cognitive and emotional connections and promote critical thinking and identity development. Educators and curriculum developers are encouraged to adopt experiential, culturally responsive methods—such as community-based projects and storytelling from local elders—to enhance student engagement and meaning-making in history education.

Policy recommendations emphasize the need for institutional and systemic support to embed ethnopedagogic frameworks in formal education. This includes teacher training programs focused on culturally responsive pedagogy, developing region-specific learning resources, and aligning assessment systems with contextualized learning outcomes. Support from educational authorities is crucial for sustaining the model's implementation and expanding its reach beyond pilot contexts like Ambon. Limitations of this study include the absence of a control group, which constrains causal inference, and the limited geographic scope, which focuses solely on schools in Ambon City. The purposive sampling method, while contextually justified, may also limit generalizability. Future research should employ comparative or longitudinal designs across diverse regions to examine the scalability and long-term impacts of ethnopedagogic learning. Studies that integrate digital platforms or investigate cross-cultural adaptations could further enrich the understanding of how local wisdom can be harmonized with national education goals.

Overall, this study contributes to the scholarship of history pedagogy by offering empirical evidence that ethnopedagogic methods are associated with statistically significant improvements in learning outcomes and cultural appreciation. It also advances the discourse on culturally responsive teaching by presenting a model of instruction that is context-sensitive, student-centred, and grounded in local identity. These findings underscore the potential of ethnopedagogics as a transformative educational strategy that bridges the gap between curriculum content and students' cultural realities.

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