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# Leveraging Local Islamic Heritage for History Learning: An Experiential Learning Perspective in Seberang Kota Jambi

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## Abstract

**Objective:** The purpose of this study is to explore the use of local Islamic historical heritage in Seberang Kota Jambi as a historical learning medium with an experiential learning theory approach developed by David Kolb. **Theoretical Framework:** David Kolb's theory of experiential learning, emphasizes the learning cycle through direct experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. **Literature Review:** This study may include studies of experiential learning theory, the importance of culturally context-based learning, as well as previous studies on the use of local cultural heritage in education. **Method:** The method applied is a qualitative descriptive approach with participatory observation techniques and in-depth interviews conducted at the As'ad Islamic Boarding School, involving teachers, students, and community leaders. **Results:** The results of the study show that the integration of historical artifacts such as ancient manuscripts, the Yellow Book, the tomb of scholars, and the old mosque building in the learning process creates a concrete and meaningful learning experience, while increasing student engagement, historical understanding, and cultural and spiritual awareness. **Implications:** these findings emphasize the importance of preserving local cultural heritage as part of the development of contextual learning methods that are relevant to students' lives. **The novelty:** of this study lies in the concrete integration between the historical heritage of local Islam and the theory of experiential learning in the context of pesantren education, which has not been raised much in previous studies.

**Keywords:** local wisdom, history learning, experiential learning, local heritage, seberang kota jambi.

## INTRODUCTION

Seberang Kota Jambi, located in the sub-districts of Pelayangan and Danau Teluk, is a historic area rich in Islamic cultural heritage. Since the 15th century, this region has served as a center for the spread of Islam in Jambi. In 1716 CE, a scholar from Turkey, Ahmad Salim (also known as Datuk Paduko Berhala), settled in the Arab-Malay Village and taught Islamic sciences such as the Qur'an, Tafsir, Fiqh, Tawheed, and Sufism to the local community. Later, in the 20th century, Islamic education flourished in this area. Madrasah Nurul Islam in Tanjung Pasisir and Madrasah Nurul Iman in Ulu Gedong, both founded in 1915, became the first centers of Islamic education in the city of Jambi. This area became known as a "santri village" due to the presence of ancient mosques, the tombs of religious scholars, and the

enduring religious and cultural traditions of the Arab-Malay community. Traditions such as the celebration of Ashura, Nisfu Sha'ban, grave pilgrimage, and artistic performances like Zapin dance and Gambus music reflect the fusion of cultural, religious, and communal values [1], [2].

Pondok Pesantren As'ad, located in Olak Kemang, Danau Teluk Subdistrict, Jambi City, is one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Jambi Province, established in 1951 by K.H. Abdul Qodir Ibrahim. This pesantren not only functions as a center for religious education but also plays a vital role in preserving the local Islamic historical heritage. Within the pesantren environment, there are various historical artifacts such as classical Islamic manuscripts, kitab kuning (traditional Islamic books), and religious traditions still practiced today, including pilgrimages to scholars' graves and commemorations of Islamic holidays. However, in school history lessons, the teaching approach remains largely conventional and lacks direct student engagement with historical experiences. This has resulted in low student interest and historical awareness. A study by Muntamah and Seprina shows that the development of local history-based learning media, such as dioramas, can increase student interest in history as a subject [3].

Previous studies also indicate that the development of e-modules based on local wisdom and Islamic historical heritage in Seberang Kota Jambi has been effective in enhancing students' historical awareness through a more contextual and interactive approach [4]. Learning approaches that integrate local wisdom can strengthen students' understanding of their history and culture [5]. In this context, Kolb's experiential learning theory becomes highly relevant. This theory emphasizes the importance of direct experience in the learning process, involving a cycle of concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation [6]. By utilizing local Islamic historical heritage as a learning medium, students can directly engage in authentic learning experiences that encourage deeper reflection and improved conceptual understanding [7].

Research by Rahmi shows that implementing the experiential learning model can enhance student engagement, deepen subject comprehension, and develop the critical and creative thinking skills needed to face future challenges. This model is also effective across various levels of education, including in the context of learning about local Islamic history [8]. These findings are supported by research conducted by Saifullah at MTs Raudatus Sholeh Probolinggo, which revealed that the use of the experiential learning model in Islamic Cultural History education can improve students' critical thinking skills [9]. In that study, the teacher designed lessons that actively involved students through direct experience, reflection, and experimentation, ultimately increasing their understanding and engagement in the learning process [10].

This research seeks to explore how integrating local Islamic historical heritage into history learning can holistically enhance students' historical awareness and cultural understanding. Through an experiential learning approach, students do not merely learn history as a body of information but also experience and internalize the values embedded in that cultural heritage. This not only enriches their learning experience but also fosters a sense of love and care for local cultural heritage [11].

The study on utilizing local Islamic historical heritage as a medium for history learning from an experiential learning theory perspective in Seberang Kota Jambi addresses a critical gap in the intersection between cultural heritage, Islamic education, and innovative pedagogical practices. In an era where formal education often emphasizes standardized content, local historical identity, and cultural relevance are frequently overlooked. This research emphasizes the urgent need to reconnect students with their immediate historical environment, particularly one that reflects their Islamic cultural and spiritual roots [12].

The importance of this study lies in its potential to revitalize the teaching of history by making it more contextual, engaging, and meaningful. Seberang Kota Jambi, as one of the oldest Islamic settlements in Sumatra, is rich in historical landmarks such as ancient

mosques, pesantren, tombs of Islamic scholars, and remnants of royal Islamic governance. Yet, these resources remain underutilized in formal education. By applying experiential learning theory, this research proposes a dynamic approach where learners not only absorb historical facts but engage with them through lived experiences, critical reflection, and direct interaction with heritage sites [13].

The implications of this study are both educational and cultural. Educationally, it offers an alternative model that promotes active, student-centered learning, which can foster critical thinking, cultural appreciation, and stronger historical awareness. Culturally, it contributes to heritage preservation by embedding historical understanding in the consciousness of the younger generation. The study also supports curriculum development that is more inclusive of local Islamic narratives, strengthening identity and values-based education [14].

The novelty of this research lies in its unique combination of three key dimensions: (1) a focus on *Islamic historical heritage* at the local level; (2) the application of *experiential learning theory* in history education; and (3) the contextual setting of *Seberang Kota Jambi*, which has been relatively unexplored in academic literature. Unlike previous studies that tend to generalize Islamic history within broad national or global scopes, this research brings attention to micro-historical narratives and their pedagogical value. This localized, experiential approach not only adds depth to the teaching of Islamic history but also serves as a model for other regions rich in cultural heritage. In essence, this research contributes a fresh, grounded framework for enriching Islamic education through history learning rooted in place, experience, and identity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of local historical heritage into educational practices has garnered increasing attention among scholars and educators aiming to enhance student engagement and contextual understanding of history. In regions with rich Islamic heritage, such as Seberang Kota Jambi, historical sites offer a tangible connection to the past and present, providing a fertile ground for the application of experiential learning theory in history education [15].

Seberang Kota Jambi, known for its Islamic historical roots dating back to the arrival of early Muslim traders and scholars in Sumatra, holds significant educational potential. Sites such as ancient mosques, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), royal tombs, and traditional Islamic architecture serve as living classrooms that allow students to witness and interact with history directly [16]. These locations are not merely remnants of the past but are vibrant cultural assets that continue to influence the religious and social fabric of the community. Incorporating such heritage into history learning can bridge the gap between abstract textbook content and real-life experiences, creating a more meaningful and lasting educational impact [17].

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), introduced by David Kolb, provides a theoretical framework for this approach. ELT emphasizes learning through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation [18]. Applying this model in the context of Islamic historical heritage allows learners to actively engage with historical narratives, reflect on their significance, connect them with broader historical themes, and derive personal and communal insights [19]. For example, visiting the Sultan Thaha Syaifuddin Mosque or the tombs of early Islamic scholars can stimulate discussions on the Islamization of the Malay world, the role of religious leadership, and the evolution of Islamic education [20].

Moreover, this method supports multiple learning styles—visual, kinesthetic, and auditory—by providing diverse stimuli. Through guided tours, role-playing, reenactments, or collaborative projects, students become participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients [21]. These activities encourage critical thinking, empathy, and a deeper appreciation for cultural identity. When students walk through the corridors of a centuries-

old mosque or listen to oral histories from local elders, they experience history not as distant facts but as a living narrative that informs their present identity and values [22].

Additionally, the use of local Islamic historical heritage in education fosters a sense of ownership and pride among students. It affirms their cultural and religious identity while promoting intergenerational dialogue and the preservation of community memory. This place-based education strategy also aligns with contemporary educational goals that emphasize character-building, civic responsibility, and multicultural understanding [23].

However, the effectiveness of this approach relies on careful planning, teacher preparedness, and community involvement. Educators must be equipped with adequate historical knowledge and pedagogical strategies to guide meaningful experiential learning [24]. Collaboration with local historians, religious leaders, and cultural institutions is essential to ensure accuracy, relevance, and sustainability. Moreover, educational authorities should support the development of curricula and learning resources that integrate local heritage meaningfully [25].

In conclusion, utilizing local Islamic historical heritage as a medium for history learning in Seberang Kota Jambi, through the lens of experiential learning theory, presents a powerful approach to cultivating historical awareness, cultural identity, and critical thinking among students. By grounding education in lived experiences and local context, history becomes more accessible, relevant, and transformative for learners. As Islamic heritage continues to shape the region's identity, its incorporation into education represents not only a pedagogical innovation but also a commitment to preserving the past for future generations.

## METHODOLOGY

The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the utilization of local Islamic historical heritage as a medium for history learning through the lens of experiential learning theory at Pondok Pesantren As'ad, located at Jl. K.H.A. Qodir Ibrahim No. 45, Olak Kemang Subdistrict, Danau Teluk District, Jambi City [26]. Data were collected through participant observation of history learning activities that integrated elements of local Islamic historical heritage, as well as in-depth interviews with history teachers, students (*santri*), and local community leaders [27]. The data were analyzed thematically, following the steps of data reduction, data display, and conclusion, to understand how the experiential learning approach can be applied within the context of history education at the pesantren [28].

**Table 1. Research Methodology Overview**

Component	Description
Research Approach	Qualitative Descriptive
Research Focus	Utilization of Local Islamic Historical Heritage as a Medium for History Learning
Theoretical Framework	Experiential Learning Theory (David Kolb)
Research Location	Pondok Pesantren As'ad, Jl. K.H.A. Qodir Ibrahim No. 45, Olak Kemang Subdistrict, Danau Teluk District, Jambi City
Subjects of Research	History teachers at Pondok Pesantren As'ad Students ( <i>santri</i> ) Local community leaders ( <i>tokoh masyarakat</i> )
Data Collection Methods	Participant Observation of history learning activities In-depth Interviews with key informants
Data Collection Focus	Integration of Islamic historical heritage into history learning

	Perceptions and experiences of teachers, students, and community leaders
Data Analysis Technique	Thematic Analysis: 1. Data Reduction 2. Data Display 3. Drawing Conclusions (Verification)
Expected Outcome	Understanding the practical application and impact of experiential learning in history education within an Islamic boarding school context
Research Instruments	Observation Checklist Interview guide/questions Field notes
Time Frame	Adjusted based on field availability (typically during history learning sessions and community-based heritage activities)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During one month of participant observation at Pondok Pesantren As'ad and its surrounding areas, the teaching of local Islamic history was characterized by the introduction and exploration of well-preserved historical artifacts located in Seberang Kota Jambi, particularly in the Pelayangan and Danau Teluk subdistricts. These artifacts include classical manuscripts, kitab kuning (traditional Islamic books), ancient mosque buildings, the tombs of prominent Islamic scholars, and sacred heirlooms stored in the pesantren's archive room.

Observations revealed that the history teacher utilized these artifacts as primary media to bring history lessons to life. For instance, in one learning session, students (santri) were directly taken to the pesantren's storage room where kitab kuning and ancient manuscripts were kept. The teacher explained the origin of these texts, their contents, and their relevance to the development of Islam in Jambi since the 15th century. The Santri was introduced to the scholarly and spiritual values contained in the texts while also being encouraged to understand the social and cultural context of the past. This process was followed by interactive discussions to deepen the student's understanding.



**Figure 1. Observations Class**

In an in-depth interview, Ustadz Ahmad Yani, a history teacher at Pondok Pesantren As'ad, explained:

*“We deliberately introduce Santri to original artifacts such as ancient manuscripts and kitab kuning, not just ordinary textbooks. This is so they feel that history is real*

*and alive, not just a story. For example, when we show them an original manuscript written by scholars of the past, the students can feel how great their struggle was in writing and spreading Islamic knowledge. It makes them appreciate our cultural heritage more and motivates them to learn.”*

Beyond written artifacts, the teacher also guided students on pilgrimages to the graves of notable scholars. At these sites, the students not only learned oral history but were also invited to reflect on the spiritual values and devotion of the scholars. This activity aimed to strengthen the students’ emotional connection to local Islamic history. Ustadz Ahmad added:

*“These graves are living evidence of the history and dedication of our local scholars. By taking the students on pilgrimages and praying there, we hope they can emulate the character and spirit of the scholars not just memorize their biographies.”*

From the students’ perspective, Aisyah, who had studied at the pesantren for three years, enthusiastically shared her experience:

*“I enjoy learning history by seeing the old objects like kitab kuning and manuscripts kept in the pesantren. Sometimes we’re also taken on pilgrimages to scholars’ graves. That makes me feel closer to history and our predecessors. It’s like learning history not only from books but in the real world. It makes me proud and eager to preserve this heritage.”*

These interviews show that the students experience the learning process not merely as theoretical or abstract content from books, but as a real and meaningful encounter that emotionally and culturally connects them to the heritage of local Islamic history. By directly engaging with artifacts like kitab kuning and manuscripts and participating in pilgrimages to scholars’ graves, the students gain a more authentic and lively learning experience.



**Figure 2. Pilgrimages to the Graves**

A local community leader, Mr. H. Ridwan, who is also active in preserving local culture, offered his view:

*“The pesantren’s teaching method is very appropriate because it uses original artifacts as learning sources. This not only teaches history but also preserves culture and strengthens faith. Today’s youth can directly experience the values passed down by our scholars. We hope this method can also be adopted in public schools so that local history doesn’t disappear over time.”*

This statement affirms that using original artifacts as educational media in the pesantren is a highly effective and relevant method. It not only serves as a tool for factual historical teaching but also plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage and strengthening spiritual values among the younger generation. By directly accessing these artifacts and the legacy of the scholars, the youth can grasp the depth of inherited

spiritual and cultural values, making the learning process more meaningful and reflective of their identity.

In addition, ancient mosques located around Seberang Kota Jambi are frequently visited by students and the wider community. Observations showed that visits to these historic mosques were also used as part of field-based learning. The history teacher explained the mosques' architectural features, their past social functions, and their role as centers of Islamic education and da'wah since the era of the Malay-Jambi kingdom. These visits served as a concrete means to understand the central role of Islam in shaping local cultural identity.

The findings from the observations and interviews indicate that history learning that integrates local historical artifacts and pilgrimage practices not only enhances students' knowledge but also fosters a strong emotional attachment and cultural identity. This approach cultivates an awareness that history is not something abstract or distant, but a living part of life that must be understood, appreciated, and preserved [29].

The learning approach implemented at Pondok Pesantren As'ad aligns with Kolb's theory of experiential learning. Kolb defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" [30]. In his four-stage cycle of Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation the Concrete Experience stage serves as a crucial starting point. This direct experience enables learners to engage with real-life situations, which then become the basis for reflection and the development of new concepts [31].

Research indicates that Concrete Experience is effective in enhancing students' critical thinking skills [32]. It is considered an essential initial stage in Kolb's learning cycle, as it provides the foundation for reflection and conceptual development. Concrete Experience enables students to connect theory with practice [33]. Through the use of historical artifacts and pilgrimage activities, students not only gain theoretical knowledge but also direct experience that deepens their understanding of local Islamic history. At Pondok Pesantren As'ad, students are directly involved in activities such as studying ancient manuscripts, classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), and other historical artifacts. Pilgrimages to the graves of Islamic scholars also provide firsthand experiences that enrich their understanding of local Islamic history. According to Kolb, Concrete Experience is the initial stage in the experiential learning cycle, where learners engage directly in activities that provide real experiences [34]. At this stage, learning is based on the active involvement of learners through concrete experiences, allowing them to feel and internalize the learning process directly.

After experiencing these activities, students are guided to reflect on their experiences in the Reflective Observation stage. Here, they do not merely recall the concrete experiences but also analyze and understand their feelings and reactions to those experiences. This stage includes discussions and Q&A sessions. Such interactions serve as tools to explore deeper understanding [35]. Through these discussions, students can express their views, listen to others' perspectives, and compare their personal experiences with those of peers or teachers. This helps them view situations from various angles, enriching the reflection process. This stage allows students to observe and contemplate their experiences and to identify key aspects of the local Islamic history they have studied. Reflective Observation helps learners understand their experiences from multiple perspectives. With appropriate strategies, this stage can serve as an effective tool for character development and enhancing the quality of education in pesantren [36].

A study conducted at Pondok Pesantren Rohmatul Ummah showed that applying the Experiential Learning method led to significant improvements in students' independent life skills, such as decision-making and time management. Group discussions enabled them to reflect on daily experiences and connect them with the values taught at the pesantren [37]. The reflection process allows students to integrate Islamic values into their daily lives. By

reflecting on their experiences and learning through a religious lens, they can reinforce their understanding and application of Islamic teachings in their actions. This aligns with reflective learning approaches, which have proven effective in improving understanding and the implementation of religious values in learners' lives [38].

The Abstract Conceptualization (AC) stage in Kolb's experiential learning cycle is the phase in which learners process the reflected concrete experience into systematic and theoretical abstract concepts. By abstracting their experiences, students can develop the ability to analyze and solve problems more effectively. At this stage, students are asked to connect the experiences they have reflected upon with theoretical concepts of Islamic history, thus forming a deeper and more structured understanding. They develop insights into the role of artifacts and pilgrimage activities in the context of local Islamic history. This process allows them to construct abstract concepts based on the experiences they have gained [39].

The final stage is Active Experimentation (AE), which is a crucial phase where learners apply the theories and concepts they have learned to real-life situations. Students are then allowed to apply their developed understanding through active experimentation, such as creating models of historical sites, composing research reports, or designing learning activities based on local history [40]. Active experimentation enables them to test and apply the concepts they have learned in broader contexts. Research shows that the AE stage significantly contributes to enhancing practical skills and learners' understanding. For instance, a study by Morris (2020) proposed a revision to Kolb's model by emphasizing the importance of pragmatic active experimentation, where learners not only apply theory but also adapt to specific contexts and evaluate the results of their experiments for further learning. This demonstrates that through active experimentation, students can develop better problem-solving and analytical skills.

Research by Purwowododo (2024) shows that learning models based on local wisdom can improve students' metacognitive skills, learning motivation, and academic performance in Islamic Cultural History. This supports the implementation of the experiential learning approach at Pondok Pesantren As'ad, which integrates direct experiences with the study of local Islamic history [41]. These findings are reinforced by Nuriana's (2020) research, which revealed that applying the experiential learning model in history education can enhance students' historical mindedness and historical empathy. This indicates that experience-based learning not only deepens historical understanding but also fosters empathy and a stronger historical awareness among students.

**Table 2. Summary of Research Results**

Aspects	Contents of the Summary
Location	As'ad Islamic Boarding School, Jambi City
Method	Experiential Learning
Media	The Yellow Book, Manuscripts, Mosques, Tombs
Activities	Observation, discussion, pilgrimage, reflection
Purpose	Bringing history to life, fostering identity
Impact	Students better understand and appreciate Islamic heritage
The Role of the Teacher	Provides hands-on experience and reflection guidance
Theory	Kolb: CE, RO, AC, AE
Result	Increased empathy, historical understanding, and thinking skills

## **Analysis of Utilizing Local Islamic Historical Heritage for History Learning at Pondok Pesantren As'ad**

The research presented in this study examines the integration of local Islamic historical heritage into history learning at Pondok Pesantren As'ad, with a focus on the experiential learning approach. The investigation reveals that the teaching of local Islamic history in Seberang Kota Jambi goes beyond theoretical knowledge by engaging students (santri) in direct experiences with historical artifacts, such as kitab kuning (traditional Islamic books), classical manuscripts, and visits to ancient mosque buildings and scholars' tombs. These practices foster a deeper understanding of local Islamic history while also promoting spiritual and cultural connections.

During a month-long participant observation, the study found that the history teacher employed local artifacts as the primary media for instruction. Students were taken to the pesantren's archive, where they explored historical manuscripts and learned about their role in the development of Islam in Jambi since the 15th century. The hands-on approach provided students with a living experience of history, encouraging them to connect emotionally with the past. The teacher emphasized the significance of these artifacts, highlighting the struggles of scholars and the relevance of their work to the students' spiritual and cultural identity. This method aligns with Kolb's theory of experiential learning, which emphasizes learning through direct experience, reflection, and conceptualization [41].

The study also highlighted the role of pilgrimage visits to the graves of notable Islamic scholars. These pilgrimages allowed students to experience local Islamic history in a tangible and spiritual context. The teacher's approach aimed to instill respect for the scholars' dedication while reinforcing the cultural and religious values embedded in the history of the region. Interviews with students revealed that they felt more connected to history by physically engaging with historical objects and sites, rather than merely reading about them in textbooks.

Moreover, the research shows that this experiential method enhances not only students' academic understanding but also their historical empathy and cultural awareness. The direct engagement with historical sites and artifacts creates a dynamic learning environment where history becomes a lived experience, fostering a stronger emotional connection to the local heritage. Overall, the study concludes that incorporating local Islamic historical heritage into the curriculum through experiential learning methods has a profound impact on students' educational experience. It enriches their understanding of history while strengthening their cultural and spiritual identity. This approach is a model that can be further developed in both pesantren settings and formal schools, offering a contextualized and immersive way of teaching history that preserves and honors local traditions.

## **CONCLUSION**

The utilization of local Islamic historical heritage in Seberang Kota Jambi as a medium for history learning has proven effective in significantly enhancing student engagement, understanding, and historical awareness. Through the application of Kolb's experiential learning theory, history education at Pondok Pesantren As'ad is not only theoretical but also grounded in direct experiences that involve interaction with historical artifacts, pilgrimage activities, as well as in-depth discussions and reflections. This approach enables students to personally experience the scholarly, spiritual, and cultural values embedded in local Islamic historical heritage, while also internalizing historical concepts in a more meaningful way. The learning cycle which includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation successfully fosters emotional and cognitive connections between learners and their cultural heritage. This not only strengthens the students' cultural and spiritual identity but also serves as an effective instructional strategy for developing historical mindedness and historical empathy. Therefore, the integration of

local wisdom in history education through the experiential learning approach deserves further development, both in pesantren environments and formal schools, as a means of preserving history and culture educationally and contextually.

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### **Author Contribution**

All authors contributed equally to the conception, design, and execution of this study. Each author was actively involved in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as well as in drafting and revising the manuscript critically for important intellectual content. This research represents a collaborative effort, and all authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript. The integrity and quality of the publication reflect the joint responsibility of all contributors.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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