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Factors of Learning Difficulties of Students in Science Subjects for Class VII A And VII B at SMP Negeri 19 Palu

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the factors of learning difficulties in science subjects at SMP Negeri 19 Palu. This research used a qualitative research method. The data collection technique used was a questionnaire on factors of student learning difficulties. The results show that internal factors affected 36% of students who did not experience difficulties and 64% of students who experienced learning difficulties. Meanwhile, external factors affected 46% of students who did not experience learning difficulties and 54% of students who experienced learning difficulties. It can be concluded that there are factors of learning difficulties in science subjects at SMP Negeri 19 Palu.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a deliberate, systematic, and planned effort aimed at changing or developing desired behaviors. Schools, as formal institutions, serve as key mechanisms in achieving these educational goals. Through schools, students are expected to learn various subjects with the ultimate goal of improving their academic performance (Thaib, 2019; Selvianita et al., 2024). According to the Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, education is an intentional and planned effort to create a learning environment that allows students to actively develop their potential in spiritual, self-control, social, national, and state aspects (Suciati, 2020).

Slameto, as cited in Hasibuan (2018), states that learning is a process whereby an individual makes an effort to acquire new behavioral changes as a result of their own experiences through interaction with their environment. Learning is a form of mental or psychological activity that occurs

through active interaction with the environment, leading to changes in knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes. These changes are relatively constant and have a lasting impact.

Learning, in essence, is a mental activity that is not directly observable. The changes occurring within an individual during the learning process are not always visible but can be inferred from observable behavioral changes (Trinova, 2019). Learning is a fundamental process in the development of human knowledge and personality, where changes in behavior lead to achievements that benefit human life (Simbolon, 2019; Supriyatman et al., 2024). Thus, learning involves individual efforts to achieve significant behavioral changes through interaction with their environment.

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (Dewi, 2020) defines learning disabilities as follows: Learning disabilities refer to a group of difficulties manifested as significant challenges in skills and abilities such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical skills. These disorders are intrinsic and are believed to be caused by dysfunctions in the central nervous system (Muhaiba, 2018).

However, in practice, many students face learning difficulties that hinder their achievement of optimal learning outcomes. Learning difficulties refer to conditions where there are obstacles impeding the achievement of expected learning results. These difficulties can arise from various factors, including physiological, psychological, school environment, family, and community influences (Dalyono, 2018; Maftukhah, 2019). Students experiencing learning difficulties may show a significant gap between their expected and actual academic performance (Cahyono, 2019).

At SMP Negeri 19 Palu, preliminary observations indicate a decline in academic performance in the subject of Science, particularly in classes VII A and VII B. Many students are achieving scores below the minimum competency threshold of 75, highlighting factors impacting classroom learning. This research identifies several contributing factors, such as students' lack of focus during lessons and disciplinary issues, including frequent classroom absences without proper permission.

Therefore, it is essential to conduct an in-depth study of the factors causing learning difficulties in Science subjects at SMP Negeri 19 Palu. This study aims to identify the main factors affecting students' learning outcomes and provide recommendations for improving the learning process. A better understanding of the causes of learning difficulties is expected to lead to more effective measures for enhancing students' academic performance and creating a more conducive learning environment.

METHOD

The research will employ a qualitative research method, specifically utilizing a descriptive research approach. Descriptive research is a type of study aimed at describing phenomena or events systematically and accurately, capturing them as they are (Harefa, 2022a).

The formula for percentage according to Sujidono (2018) is:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100 \%$$

Where:

P is the percentage of the frequency of respondent answers.

F is the frequency of the respondent's answer.

N is the total number of respondents or sample size.

According to Arikunto (2010), the criteria for assessing the level of difficulty experienced by students can be seen in Table 1. This table is used to determine the level of difficulty encountered by students based on the following Likert scale a sssessment weights:

Table 1. Likert Scale Assessment Weights

Percentage Interval	Criteria
81% - 100%	Very High Difficulty
61% - 80%	High Difficulty
41% - 60%	Moderate Difficulty
21% - 40%	Low Difficulty
0% - 20%	Very Low Difficulty

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The factors influencing student learning difficulties are categorized into Internal Factors (those originating from within the individual) and External Factors (those originating from outside the individual).

Table 2. Data on Learning Difficulties for Internal Factors

Learning Difficulty Factor	Question Numbers and Indicators	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		Yes (+)	No (-)	Yes (+)	No (-)
1. Physical Factors	1. Illness	23	39	38	63
	2. Health	23	39	38	63
2. Psychological Factors	3. Intelligence	22	40	35	64
	4. Talent	25	37	40	59
	5. Interest	21	41	34	66
	6. Motivation	20	42	34	68
Total		134	238	217	383

Table 2 shows that the percentage value for the "Yes" indicator is 217, and for the "No" indicator, it is 383.

Table 3. Data on Learning Difficulties for External Factors

Learning Difficulty Factor	Question Numbers and Indicators	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		Yes (+)	No (-)	Yes (+)	No (-)
1. Family Factors	1. Parenting Style	30	32	48	51
	2. Parent-Child Relationship	23	39	37	63
	3. Parental Guidance	28	34	45	55
	4. Home Environment	25	37	40	59
	5. Family Economic Status	20	42	32	68
2. School Factors	6. Teacher Preparation	26	36	42	58

Learning Difficulty Factor	Question Numbers and Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
3. Environmental Factors	7. Teacher-Student Relationship	30	32	48	51	
	8. Curriculum Standards	38	24	61	38	
	9. Teaching Methods	21	41	34	66	
	10. Learning Resources	19	43	30	69	
	11. Classroom Conditions	30	32	48	51	
	12. Curriculum	32	30	51	48	
	13. Discipline and School Timing	25	37	40	59	
	14. Electronic/Non-Electronic Media	40	22	64	35	
	15. Electronic Media	29	33	47	53	
	16. Social Peers	21	41	34	66	
	17. Neighbors	39	23	63	37	
	18. Community Activities	34	28	55	45	
	Total		510	606	819	972

Table 3 shows that the percentage value for the "Yes" indicator is 819, and for the "No" indicator, it is 972.

Table 4. Average Learning Difficulties for Each Factor

Indicator	Average	Total	Amount
Internal Factors	36	64	100%
External Factors	46	54	100%
Total	82	118	200%

Table 4 indicates that the average value for the "Yes" indicator for internal and external factors is 82, while the average value for the "No" indicator is 118.

Table 5. General Data on Learning Difficulties

Indicator	Average	Total	Amount
Learning Difficulties	41	59	100%

Table 5 shows that the average value for learning difficulties in general for the "Yes" indicator is 41, and for the "No" indicator is 59.

Discussion Analysis of Factors Affecting Student Learning Difficulties

Health Issues

Students experiencing frequent health problems often have weakened physical conditions and reduced motivation. These health issues can interfere with cognitive processes, making it difficult for students

to engage effectively in lessons. Regular absences due to health problems result in gaps in learning, further compounding difficulties.

Intelligence

Intelligence levels can impact learning difficulties. Students with lower levels of intelligence may find it harder to grasp complex concepts and may struggle with learning in general. These difficulties are often more challenging to address compared to other factors.

Attention and Concentration

Effective learning requires good concentration and attention. Students who struggle with maintaining focus may not perform well academically. A lack of concentration can result in poor learning outcomes, making it crucial for students to cultivate good study habits and attention skills. **Motivation**

Motivation is a critical internal factor affecting learning. Without intrinsic motivation, students may lack the drive to engage deeply with their studies. Strong motivation can enhance learning performance and persistence. Dalyono (2020) highlights that motivation significantly influences learning success. Therefore, fostering motivation, especially through personal goals and future aspirations, is essential for improving academic achievement.

Teaching Methods

The way teachers deliver lessons greatly influences student learning. Teachers must be well-prepared and adept at presenting material effectively. Poor teaching methods or inadequate preparation can create learning difficulties. Students may disengage if teaching methods are unappealing or if teachers lack the ability to explain content clearly. An emotional or punitive teaching approach can also negatively affect students' attitudes toward learning.

Teaching Materials

The availability and variety of teaching materials impact learning. Insufficient textbooks or resources can lead to a reliance on monotonous lecturing, which can disengage students. Utilizing diverse teaching aids can make learning more engaging and help students better understand and retain information.

Classroom Environment

A well-maintained classroom environment supports learning. Issues such as inadequate facilities or lack of learning materials can hinder student progress. A positive, well-organized classroom environment fosters better learning experiences.

Family Environment

The economic status and educational involvement of a student's family can significantly affect learning. Economic constraints may limit access to educational resources. Moreover, the quality of parenting, including the level of parental involvement and support, influences academic performance. Moore (2022) notes that parental involvement and the quality of home education are crucial for student success. Dalyono (2018) also emphasizes that busy parents who cannot provide adequate supervision or support can contribute to learning difficulties.

Peer Influence

Friends and social interactions impact learning. Positive peer relationships can enhance academic motivation and performance, while negative influences can have the opposite effect. Ensuring that students engage with supportive peers and have proper social guidance is important for their academic development.

Recommendations to Address Learning Difficulties

Parental-School Cooperation

Strong collaboration between parents and teachers is essential. Regular consultations between parents and teachers help monitor student progress and address issues promptly. Parents should participate actively in school activities and stay informed about their child's academic performance.

Provision of Learning Materials

Ensuring that students have access to necessary learning materials is vital. Students with complete and appropriate learning tools are likely to perform better than those lacking essential resources.

Support for Home Learning

Parents should assist their children with homework and review material at home. Supervising study sessions, regulating leisure activities, and periodically checking on academic progress can enhance understanding and retention of lessons.

Creating a Supportive Home Environment

A calm, safe, and nurturing home environment supports effective learning. Parents should strive to create a positive atmosphere that fosters academic success and emotional well-being.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Factors that influence students' learning difficulties at SMP Negeri 19 Palu are internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are factors that originate from the students themselves which greatly influence students' learning difficulties, such as physical factors and psychological factors. While external factors are factors that originate from outside the students themselves such as family factors, school factors, and environmental factors.

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