

SOEHARTO MUSEUM AS AN EDUCATIONAL MEDIUM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS AND CHALLENGES IN HISTORY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by students' low interest in history learning, which is often caused by monotonous instructional methods in formal classrooms. Museums are expected to offer alternative, experience-based learning environments that can enhance historical understanding and engagement. This study addresses three research questions: (1) How is the history learning experience at the Soeharto Museum? (2) What learning materials and media are presented? and (3) What are the effectiveness and challenges of history learning in this museum. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to describe the learning experience at the Soeharto Museum, identify the materials and media used, and analyze their effectiveness and challenges. This qualitative research employed interviews with museum managers and visitors, non-participant observation, and documentation. The findings reveal that the Soeharto Museum is effective as a medium for historical education that integrates empirical and affective learning through collections, visual narratives, documentary films, and guided tours. The materials and media—such as interactive storytelling, value discussions, national songs, and reflective activities—are adapted to visitors' age levels and engage cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The museum's effectiveness is reflected in positive visitor responses, collaboration with educational institutions, and the adoption of similar approaches by other museums. While this experience-based learning aligns with constructivist theory, maintaining relevance in the digital era remains a challenge, which the museum addresses through technological innovation and communicative educators. Overall, the study highlights the importance of school–museum collaboration to foster contextual, reflective, and adaptive history learning.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Museums play an important role in the educational landscape, particularly in the context of history learning. Museums serve as dynamic spaces that not only preserve artifacts but also facilitate the construction of historical knowledge. Integrating museums into history education can result in structured learning and high learning achievement because museums offer concrete historical information that enhances students' understanding of historical events (Chatulistiwa et al., 2024). Additionally, museums function as laboratories for history education that enable experiential learning. Through interactive exhibitions, reconstructions of historical events, and the use of multimedia technology, students can gain a deeper and more contextual understanding of history (Muhammad Iqbal Birsyada, Dhinianty Gularso, M. Fairuzabadi, Muhammad Khidir Baihaqi, Muhammad Abdu, 2022). This approach helps students develop critical thinking skills, source analysis, and the ability to connect past events with present realities. Thus, museums become strategic partners in supporting more effective and meaningful history education. In the field of education, history plays an essential role in shaping the identity and character of younger generations. However, history education at the high school level is often perceived as boring due to its emphasis on memorizing past facts (Birsyada, Muhammad Iqbal, Arif Saefudin, Bayu Ananto Wibowo, 2024). This approach places less emphasis on the relevance of history to students' current lives, resulting in low interest in history subjects. This issue is further exacerbated by the limited variety of learning resources, where textbooks and conventional teaching media still dominate the teaching and learning process (Birsyada, 2015). The lack of varied and engaging learning resources prevents students from gaining deep and interactive learning experiences, even though history education has the potential to foster critical awareness and shape students' character (Wahyudi et al., 2024). By properly utilizing social media, visitors can provide feedback to museums about their visiting experiences. Visitors can also invite friends or family to visit together. These efforts contribute to increasing the interest in revisiting the Soeharto Museum and enrich visitors' experiences (Arifah et al., 2024). The use of social media significantly influences visitors' interest in returning to the Soeharto Museum in Yogyakarta. Social media can boost public interest, especially among younger generations, to visit museums and explore the history presented.

This emphasizes the importance of effective communication management in the digital era to increase visitor interest and educate the public (Wijayanti, 2023). The effectiveness of museums as educational media in history learning can be observed from how museums present interactive and engaging information, encouraging visitors to actively participate in the learning process. Furthermore, museums provide real contexts for historical events, helping visitors relate information to real experiences, making it easier to understand (Hansson & Öhman, 2022).

Thus, museums function as places where history education is not only theoretical but also practical and applicable. However, challenges in learning history through museums should not be overlooked, especially those related to personal interest. Personal interest always concerns the individual. Strong personal interest can lead to egocentric tendencies, but as responsibilities grow, egocentric interests gradually decrease, and social interests begin to develop. Personal interest is defined as a relatively stable personality characteristic that tends to persist within an individual and usually directs someone toward specific activities or topics (Wicaksosno, 2019). Museums require collaboration between museum managers and formal educational institutions to enhance their educational function. In this context, the quality and professionalism of educators, as well as innovation in museum content management, become key to attracting visitors and improving accessibility (Wulandari et al., 2021).

Such collaboration can address challenges in history learning, such as limitations in delivering in-depth information and comprehensive understanding of historical contexts. Utilizing learning resources is a crucial skill that educators must possess so they can effectively use available resources. Learning resources can include anything objects, places, or stories presented in written, visual, or audio forms that can help convey educational content or messages (Prasetyo et al., 2021). Given its educational function, both museums and schools should collaborate to use museums as learning resources, particularly for history education (Birsyada et al., 2022). However, in reality, museums today seem to lack appeal for the public, especially among students. Museums are often perceived as outdated or even eerie places, even though they can serve as educational media and as sites for educational tourism.

On the other hand, museums are places to obtain information about past events from a historical perspective. The low public interest in educational tourism to museums presents a challenge for all stakeholders, particularly museum managers who need to create attractive programs or collaborate with various institutions such as schools, private companies, and other organizations. Schools also need to initiate new strategies or programs to foster care and love for museums, as visiting museums helps preserve historical objects and cultural heritage (Fitriansyah & Kasmin, 2022). More broadly, education is a key pillar in building a nation. Education is an effort to design the future of humanity as a generation that advances a nation. Over time, educational concepts have been influenced by government policies, and although quality has improved, certain shortcomings remain that need to be addressed. The New Order era (1968–1998) led by President General H.M. Soeharto was characterized by centralized education policies, also known as centralization. During this time, education was used as an instrument for national economic development and was managed through an administrative and bureaucratic system. Curriculum standardization was accompanied by standardized teaching methods and evaluation systems. This study focuses on the education system during the New Order era, its advantages, and its shortcomings (Safei & Hudaidah, 2020). In line with government efforts to develop educational policies aimed at shaping the nation's future generations, Yogyakarta has made significant contributions in preserving the history of Indonesia's independence struggle. As the education sector continues to focus on improving teaching quality, historical museums in Yogyakarta play an important role in sharing knowledge about key events and figures, technological advancements in weaponry, and the active participation of society in the fight for independence. Thus, education and historical preservation are closely linked in shaping a strong, cultured national identity capable of competing globally (Muhammad Iqbal Birsyada, Dhinianty Gularso, M. Fairuzabadi, Muhammad Khidir Baihaqi, Muhammad Abdu, 2022).

Yogyakarta's support for the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence is undeniable. The Special Region of Yogyakarta holds various historical artifacts from the independence struggle, the New Order era, and the Reform era. These artifacts show the participation of many community elements in the fight for and defense of independence, serving as evidence of Yogyakarta's historical significance. Military history museums in Yogyakarta showcase technological advancements in weaponry alongside social aspects, such as the participation of society (Wiyono, 2014). The uniqueness of Yogyakarta as a witness to Indonesia's struggle for independence is evident in its historical sites, including museums that preserve important historical records (Suwardi Endraswara, Soni Nopemberi, Rvianto Budi Santosa, 2022).

Nevertheless, history education in schools still faces challenges, particularly the low interest of students in the material. Thus, the Soeharto Museum, which documents significant historical events from the New Order era, can serve as an engaging and effective alternative to enhance students' understanding of history, providing a more interactive and contextual learning method (Wiyono, 2014). Based on the explanations above, this research focuses on utilizing the Soeharto Museum as an educational medium for history by examining its effectiveness and the challenges faced in implementing museum-based learning. This study aims to identify obstacles in applying this method and to explore the potential for developing more effective and relevant innovations in history education. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled *"The Soeharto Museum as an Educational Medium: A Qualitative Study on the Effectiveness and Challenges in History Learning,"* which seeks to provide in-depth insights into the museum's contribution to improving the quality of history education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the case study method. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to investigate a phenomenon in depth within its real-life context, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions among various factors that influence the phenomenon. As one type of qualitative research, the case study method is particularly suitable for exploring in detail the experiences, processes, and dynamics that occur within individuals, groups, or specific events. Through in-depth analysis, this research not only describes the phenomenon but also attempts to interpret the meanings behind the collected data and explain the relationships that emerge among various complex social variables. This approach is highly relevant, especially in the

fields of social sciences and education, where the issues studied are typically contextual, dynamic, and interconnected, making them insufficient to be explained solely through quantitative data. Thus, this study is expected to provide more meaningful theoretical and practical contributions. (Siregar et al., 2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Soeharto Museum as a Medium for History Education

The HM Soeharto Museum in Kemusuk, Bantul, plays an important role as a medium for experiential history learning. Direct visits enable students not only to learn about the history of President Soeharto but also to experience and internalize values of nationalism through media such as documentary films, animations, and guided tours (Purvis & Beckingham, 2024). The museum does not merely display artifacts; it also offers reflective and emotional narratives that make history more contextual and memorable (Rusilowati et al., 2019). Managed by Soeharto's family through the Wangsa Manggala Foundation, the museum presents a more personal narrative than state-run museums, reinforcing its role as a space for reflection and the cultivation of national values. This approach aligns with constructivism, which emphasizes active learning through direct interaction (Herdin et al., 2022).

2. Educational Materials and Media at the Soeharto Museum

The educational content covers Soeharto's life journey from childhood, his struggles, to the New Order and Reform eras. The museum employs a variety of learning media: dioramas, documentary photographs, documentary films, and the use of digital technology. Observations show that visual media are the most effective in stimulating students' curiosity, supported by the communicative narratives provided by guides (Purvis & Beckingham, 2024). The museum also creates emotional learning experiences, such as singing national songs, reflecting on values, and storytelling. This multimodal approach combining text, visuals, audio, and motor activities engages cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of learning (Dellia et al., 2022). The digitalization of museum content adds further value in addressing the challenges of history learning in the digital era.

3. Effectiveness and Challenges of History Learning at the Soeharto Museum

History learning in the museum has proven effective in enhancing students' understanding, learning interest, and sense of nationalism (Riyanto & Yunani, 2020). Indicators of effectiveness include repeated visits by schools and positive responses from students. However, several challenges remain: limited visit duration, the capacity of museum guides, and the need for continuous innovation to keep content relevant for the digital native generation (Muhammad Iqbal Birsyada, Dhinianty Gularso, M. Fairuzabadi, Muhammad Khidir Baihaqi, Muhammad Abdu, 2022). As solutions, the museum utilizes animated films, digital tours, and interactive educational materials to enrich the learning experience. The practical implication is the importance of synergy between schools and museums to optimize history learning as a direct, experiential process rather than mere rote memorization (Londongpudi, 2024)

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the HM Soeharto Museum plays an important role as an interactive and contextual medium for history education for Grade XII students, in line with the national history curriculum. The museum integrates comprehensive historical content about President Soeharto's life journey with various learning media, such as dioramas, statues, documentary photographs, documentary films, and guided tours, making learning more concrete and memorable. The effectiveness of the museum is reflected in students' enthusiasm, strengthened historical knowledge, as well as the development of critical thinking and a sense of nationalism. Nevertheless, challenges remain, such as limited visit time, a shortage of guides, less practical administrative procedures for visits, and the need for ongoing digital innovation. Overall, the Soeharto Museum has succeeded in making history learning more meaningful and profound, going beyond conventional textbook-based methods.

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