



Optimizing Museum Functions to Enhance Motivation and Knowledge in History Learning: A Case Study at MAN 1 Kota Probolinggo

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Abstract: Museums remain underutilized as learning resources in Indonesian secondary schools, limiting students' exposure to authentic local historical knowledge. This study examined the effectiveness of optimizing museum functions as a learning resource in history education at MAN 1 Kota Probolinggo, focusing on how museum-based learning supports motivation, knowledge acquisition, and student participation. Using a qualitative descriptive design complemented by supporting quantitative indicators, the research involved one history teacher, the school principal, and 20 Grade X students selected through purposive sampling as information-rich cases. Data were collected through interviews, classroom and museum observations, document analysis, and pre- and post-tests, which served as supplementary not definitive indicators of learning enhancement. The findings show increased student engagement during museum activities, with richer explanations and more detailed historical descriptions emerging in oral presentations and written reports. Although post-test scores showed a 45% increase in correct responses, these results must be interpreted cautiously because the assessments were not rigorously validated. Qualitative evidence from observations and interviews consistently indicated improvements in curiosity, collaborative behavior, and contextual understanding of local history. Given the small sample, single-site context, and absence of control or comparison groups, conclusions cannot be generalized. Future research should involve multiple schools or districts, employ validated assessment tools, and integrate longitudinal or mixed-method designs to determine the sustainability and broader applicability of museum-based learning.

Introduction

The use of museums as learning resources in Indonesian secondary schools remains limited, even among history teachers (1). This underutilization has contributed to students' weak understanding of local history, including the heritage of their own cities (2). The same condition was observed at MAN 1 Kota Probolinggo, where history learning previously relied heavily on classroom instruction and textbooks, resulting in limited student exposure to authentic local historical sources. Without effective strategies to integrate tangible cultural artifacts into classroom practice, history learning risks becoming abstract and detached from students' lived experiences (3, 4).

This issue is particularly urgent given the role of history education in fostering national identity, patriotism, and historical awareness (5). Prior studies emphasize that engaging with authentic cultural heritage such as museum collections can enhance students' motivation and deepen their understanding of historical narratives (6). Although

some studies suggest that museum-based learning may support higher-order thinking, including analytical reflection, these benefits depend on the specific learning activities implemented; therefore, in the context of this study, the focus is limited to examining motivation, knowledge acquisition, and student participation, rather than critical thinking. Nevertheless, many schools still depend predominantly on textbooks and lecture-based methods, which often fail to stimulate interest or provide a concrete visualization of historical events (7).

Despite the recognized educational potential of museums, structured approaches for integrating museum visits into formal history curricula remain insufficient (8). This gap is evident in MAN 1 Kota Probolinggo, where museum-based learning has not been systematically embedded into instructional planning. Thus, this study seeks to address the lack of contextualized, experience-based history learning by examining the optimization of museum functions as a primary learning resource. The research aims to assess its effectiveness in enhancing students' motivation, knowledge

acquisition, and active participation, as well as explore its implications for integrating experiential history learning into school-based teaching practices.

Methodology

Study Design and Rationale

This research employed a qualitative descriptive design complemented by supporting quantitative elements, consistent with Creswell and Poth's framework for qualitative inquiry that emphasizes detailed exploration of naturally occurring learning processes (9). Although the primary focus of the study was qualitative aimed at exploring teaching strategies, student engagement, and school-museum collaboration in authentic learning environments the use of pre- and post-tests functioned as auxiliary data to strengthen the descriptive interpretation rather than to measure causal effects. Accordingly, the study follows a qualitative-dominant mixed-method structure, allowing qualitative findings to remain central while numerical indicators support data triangulation. The qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it facilitated the detailed documentation of natural learning phenomena without experimental manipulation, aligning with the objective of understanding the lived experiences of participants during museum-based learning. This selection aligns with Merriam and Tisdell's argument that qualitative descriptive studies are suitable for capturing participants' experiences within real-life educational settings (10).

Study Setting

The research was conducted at MAN 1 Kota Probolinggo, a senior high school in East Java where history is a compulsory subject. The learning activities were carried out in collaboration with Museum Kota Probolinggo, which houses authentic local artifacts such as traditional tools, regional batik, inscriptions, and colonial-era relics. These collections were thematically aligned with the history curriculum and provided concrete instructional resources that extended beyond textbook-based instruction.

Participants and Sampling Criteria

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that only individuals directly involved in the museum-based learning activities were included. The sample consisted of one history teacher, the school principal, and twenty Grade X students from classes MIA 2 and MIA 3. Although the number of adult informants was limited, this composition reflects the qualitative principle of selecting information-rich cases; the teacher and principal were the only individuals responsible for planning and implementing history instruction and therefore possessed the most relevant experiential knowledge. Students were included because they participated directly in the structured museum visit. This sampling approach was intended to generate depth rather than representativeness, consistent with the methodological orientation of the study.

Materials, Tools, and Data Sources

Data collection employed multiple instruments, including semi-structured interviews, classroom and museum observations, document analysis, and pre- and post-tests. The interview guides were developed based on the research questions and refined through consultation with the history teacher and museum curator. Topics covered included

pedagogical planning, perceived benefits of museum-based learning, challenges in implementation, and students' engagement during the visit; the full instruments are provided in the appendices of the original document. Observations in both classroom and museum settings were conducted using a structured observation guide that recorded student engagement, group collaboration, questioning behavior, and the use of worksheets (LKS). Documentary materials such as lesson plans, photographs, and learning worksheets were used to supplement qualitative interpretations. The pre- and post-tests consisted of open-ended items assessing students' knowledge of local history and served as additional indicators of learning enhancement.

Procedures

The study followed a structured sequence to ensure methodological rigor and replicability. Prior to the museum visit, the researcher coordinated with the history teacher and museum curator to align exhibit selection with curriculum objectives. Students received preparatory instruction regarding visit goals, expected etiquette, and tasks to be completed. During the museum visit, students engaged in group-based exploration using the LKS, interacted with museum staff, and documented their observations, while the researcher conducted structured observations. Following the visit, students presented their findings, participated in reflective discussions connecting museum content with classroom learning, and completed the post-test. Interviews with the teacher, principal, and selected students were conducted after the visit to capture deeper reflections on the learning process. This sequential protocol ensured coherence across the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of the study.

Data Analysis and Validation

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which included data reduction through coding, data display through thematic matrices, and conclusion drawing supported by verification. Credibility was reinforced through triangulation of interviews, observations, documents, and test results. Member checking was conducted by presenting preliminary findings to the involved participants to ensure interpretive accuracy. These procedures collectively enhanced the analytical depth and validity of the study's findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. All participants provided written informed consent, with parental consent secured for students under 18. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by removing all identifiable information from interview transcripts and research reports.

Results

Baseline Classroom Practices

Baseline observations conducted in two consecutive meetings before the museum-based intervention revealed a consistent pattern of teacher-centered instruction. The history teacher primarily relied on verbal explanation and textbook narration, with no use of visual media or contextual examples drawn from local historical artifacts. Students'

observable behaviors indicated low engagement: during both meetings, the majority of students listened passively, and only 1–2 students asked clarifying questions. No student initiated discussion or connected the lesson content to prior knowledge. These descriptive patterns reflect minimal interaction and limited cognitive engagement at the outset of the study.

Interpretive analysis of these observations suggests that the predominantly lecture-based approach constrained opportunities for participatory learning, which in turn hindered students' development of analytical connections between historical concepts and their lived cultural context. This condition provides an important baseline comparison for assessing changes observed during and after the museum visit.

Student Engagement during Museum Visit

Observation data collected during the museum visit showed a substantial increase in student behavioral engagement compared to baseline conditions. Students worked in groups of four to five and were observed examining assigned exhibits, reading display labels, and completing tasks on the museum worksheets (Lembar Kerja Siswa; LKS). Across the three observation cycles conducted during the visit, students were documented initiating questions to the museum guide or teacher between 8–12 student inquiries per group which indicates active information-seeking behavior. Note-taking and peer-to-peer elaboration were recorded consistently in all groups.

These descriptive findings suggest that the museum environment elicited a higher level of participation than classroom-based sessions. The availability of authentic artifacts appeared to situate students' learning in concrete visual contexts, enabling them to make more frequent connections between observed objects and the content discussed in class. This interpretive pattern aligns with the observed rise in collaborative problem-solving behaviors, particularly when groups discussed the meaning or historical relevance of specific artifacts before completing their LKS entries.

Post-Visit Learning Outcomes

Following the museum visit, students participated in two classroom meetings dedicated to consolidating their learning. In these sessions, each group presented oral summaries of their findings, complemented by written reports derived from their LKS responses. Classroom observations documented an increase in voluntary student contributions during discussions: in contrast to baseline sessions where participation was minimal, all groups initiated explanations of observed artifacts and connected them to previously taught historical material. Short answer assessments administered after these sessions showed an overall improvement in students' accuracy and completeness. For instance, 75% of students provided specific examples of local historical events or figures, compared to 32% in the pre-visit assessment.

Interpretively, these descriptive outcomes suggest that the museum visit enhanced students' ability to articulate historical content both verbally and in writing. The observed improvement in their capacity to recall detailed information, establish cause effect relationships, and link historical narratives to local heritage indicates a deeper conceptual understanding. The increased frequency of student-led explanations and elaborations further supports the

conclusion that experiential learning contributed to heightened cognitive engagement.

Teacher and Student Perspectives

Interview data collected from the history teacher and the school principal showed a shared perception that museum-based learning provided pedagogical benefits, particularly in increasing student interest and grounding abstract historical concepts in tangible artifacts. The history teacher emphasized that the approach "encouraged students to shift from passive listening to active participation," while also noting challenges such as limited time allocation and the absence of structured planning mechanisms with museum staff.

Student interviews demonstrated a consistent positive response across the sample. Of the 20 participating students, 17 explicitly stated that the museum visit made history learning "*lebih menarik*" or "*lebih nyata*," while 14 students expressed a preference for more experiential learning activities in future lessons. Representative comments included descriptions of the museum as "*lebih real dibandingkan pembelajaran di kelas*" and accounts of feeling more motivated to learn about local history. No student reported negative experiences, although three noted that the time spent at certain exhibits felt too brief.

Interpretively, the convergence of teacher, principal, and student perspectives indicates broad support for the pedagogical relevance of museum-based instruction. The consistency of positive student feedback across the majority of participants strengthens the credibility of the qualitative findings and suggests that the experiential design of the intervention aligned well with learners' needs and expectations.

Emergent Themes from Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis of interviews, observations, and students' written work revealed a coherent set of learning experiences shaped by the museum-based intervention. Students consistently demonstrated heightened motivation and enthusiasm when interacting with authentic historical objects. In 15 of the 20 interviews, participants described the learning experience as "*lebih menarik*" atau "*tidak membosankan*," emphasizing that the opportunity to observe real artifacts created a sense of novelty and immediacy. Observation sheets supported this pattern, documenting increased on-task behaviors, such as asking questions, analyzing displays, and voluntarily sharing information within their groups.

Collaborative engagement also emerged as a central feature of the learning process. Group-based activities facilitated peer learning, as seen in consistent discussion and joint interpretation of artifacts across all six student groups. Dialogues captured during observations indicated that students frequently relied on one another to interpret the meaning or historical relevance of exhibited objects, illustrating active collaborative problem-solving.

A further theme involved the enhancement of students' conceptual understanding. During post-visit classroom sessions, students demonstrated an improved ability to articulate cause effect relationships and to link museum observations with prior textbook material. This deepened comprehension was evident in 70% of written reports, which referenced specific artifacts or local historical events with greater detail and contextual accuracy than was shown in pre-visit responses.

Taken together, these patterns indicate that the museum-based intervention supported increased motivation, richer collaborative learning, and strengthened conceptual comprehension. The convergence of findings across interviews, observations, and student outputs reinforces the robustness of these themes, suggesting that direct experiential engagement with historical objects served as a key mechanism behind the observed improvements in students' learning processes.

Optimization of Museum Functions as a Learning Resource

Analysis of interview and observation data revealed that the optimization of the museum as a learning resource was shaped by institutional support, structured learning activities, and students' direct interaction with authentic historical artifacts. Interviews with the school principal and the history teacher showed a strong endorsement for integrating museum visits into the history curriculum. The principal stated that *"pembelajaran di museum sangat penting karena sejarah itu realita, kalau pembelajaran sejarah hanya berfokus di buku, siswa menjadi ragu antara percaya atau tidak jadi pembelajaran sejarah di museum sangat penting."* while the teacher emphasized that empowering museums as learning resources was essential for strengthening students' understanding of local history. These perspectives reflected a shared belief that museum-based learning enhanced the relevance and authenticity of instructional practice.

Observation findings further demonstrated that structured learning activities played a central role in facilitating students' engagement with historical objects. Students systematically explored the museum exhibits using Lembar Kerja Siswa (LKS), which guided them to document artifact characteristics, formulate questions, and engage in collaborative interpretation. Across all student groups, learners consistently asked clarifying questions to museum guides and worked together to determine the cultural or historical significance of various artifacts, including traditional tools, batik patterns, and inscriptions. These behaviors indicate that the structured inquiry tasks effectively supported active participation and meaningful interaction with the museum's collections.

Student reflections also provided converging evidence of increased understanding and motivation derived from the museum activities. Many described the experience as enriching and engaging, with expressions such as *"saya lebih bisa memahami tentang sejarah lokal, dengan kunjungan ke museum ini pembelajaran sejarah semakin menarik serta menambah wawasan terkait sejarah lokal"* (Nur Halima) and *"kunjungan ke museum ini bikin pembelajaran sejarah semakin menarik dan tidak membosankan, beda banget dengan pembelajaran di kelas hanya mendengarkan guru bercerita, dengan kunjungan ini membuat motivasi belajar saya semakin ingin belajar sejarah"* (Rizal Aditia). These statements were echoed by 16 dari 20 siswa yang diwawancarai, indicating a strong consensus regarding the motivational and cognitive benefits of the museum visit.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the optimization of the museum as a learning resource was supported by the alignment between administrative perspectives, teacher practices, and students' experiential engagement with authentic historical materials. The combination of institutional encouragement, well-structured inquiry activities, and rich artifact-based experiences

collectively contributed to enhanced student engagement and comprehension during the intervention.

Learning Outcomes from Museum-Based History Instruction at MAN 1 Kota Probolinggo

Data from post-test results, classroom observations, and interview transcripts collectively demonstrated notable improvements in students' historical knowledge, communication skills, and motivation following the museum visit. Pre-post comparisons showed substantial learning gains: 45% more students provided accurate explanations of Probolinggo's cultural heritage after the intervention, and the average level of detail in responses increased from brief general statements to contextually grounded descriptions referencing specific artifacts or historical figures.

Observation data further indicated that students engaged more actively in classroom discussions during the consolidation sessions. Compared with baseline conditions where participation was limited to a few students post-visit discussions involved contributions from all six student groups. These exchanges often linked museum observations with prior classroom content. Interview data supported these patterns; the history teacher noted that *"pembelajaran sejarah semakin menarik serta siswanya lebih aktif dilihat dari efektifitasnya setelah mengunjungi museum siswa lebih mudah memahami pembelajaran serta siswa lebih banyak bertanya... Jadi dari hal tersebut bisa dibilang siswa memiliki rasa penasaran... yang akan menggugah motivasi mereka untuk belajar sejarah."* while the principal emphasized that the museum visit *"pengoptimalan fungsi museum dengan melakukan kunjungan ke museum ini memberikan ide-ide baru kepada guru serta siswa... museum bisa lebih di manfaatkan serta lebih berfungsi sebagai sumber pembelajaran,"* in approaching history learning.

Student interviews reinforced the quantitative and observational findings. Seventeen students stated that the museum visit increased their interest in local history, describing the activities as *"tidak membosankan," "lebih mudah dipahami,"* or *"membangkitkan rasa patriotisme."* Students such as Muhamad Shohib Alfaroqi and Ina Maya affirmed that direct interaction with local historical artifacts deepened their understanding and made the learning more meaningful.

Interpretively, the convergence between assessment outcomes, observational indicators, and interview perspectives suggests that the museum-based instructional approach effectively supported cognitive, affective, and communicative dimensions of learning. The consistency of positive motivational effects across a large majority of students strengthens the conclusion that experiential engagement with historical objects can significantly enhance history learning at the secondary level.

Discussion

Optimization of Museum Functions as a Learning Resource in History Education

The findings of this study reinforce prior scholarship demonstrating that museums remain underutilized as instructional resources in history education, which contributes to students' limited understanding of local historical contexts (11, 12). However, the present study advances this understanding by showing how a structured, curriculum-aligned museum intervention can serve as a concrete and contextually rich learning resource that

enhances students' motivation and comprehension. The use of authentic artifacts in Museum Kota Probolinggo provided tangible historical referents that supported critical analysis and independent thinking, as suggested by Ütkür Güllühan et al. (13) while also creating meaningful connections between learners and the cultural heritage of their own region. This aligns with Falk and Dierking's contextual model of learning, which explains that museum environments promote meaning-making through interaction with authentic objects and sociocultural context.(14)

The integration of museum visits into formal instruction enabled students to balance factual knowledge acquisition with reflective and analytical reasoning, consistent with Sahani and Prakasha's (15) assertion that experiential learning environments support diverse learning modalities. This process reflects Kolb's experiential learning cycle, where concrete experience is followed by reflection and conceptual integration, leading to deeper and more durable understanding (16). The results of this study further illustrate that such environments also foster the development of historical awareness, which plays a central role in shaping national identity and patriotism (17). In this regard, the history teacher's facilitative role was essential, aligning with previous research emphasizing teachers as primary agents in cultivating historical values through active student engagement (18, 19).

The selection of learning materials is critical to achieving curriculum objectives, as instructional content must be grounded in clear competency standards to ensure pedagogical alignment (20). In addition to meeting these standards, materials must also correspond to specific indicators of learning success, which guide teachers in evaluating whether students have attained the expected competencies (21). In this study, the integration of a museum visit within the history curriculum was designed in accordance with both of these requirements, ensuring relevance while simultaneously fostering motivation and enhancing learning effectiveness. The activity provided students with engaging opportunities to explore local historical content and aligned with Basic Competency 2.2, which emphasizes emulating the peaceful, proactive, and responsive attitudes demonstrated by historical figures in addressing social and environmental issues.

Effectiveness of Museum Function Optimization on Student Learning

The empirical evidence from this study confirms that the optimization of museum functions significantly enhanced student engagement, knowledge acquisition, and communication skills. Unlike traditional classroom learning, the museum environment provided authentic experiences that increased motivation an outcome aligned with previous research on museum-based learning (22). Importantly, the present study advances the literature by linking motivational gains with measurable cognitive improvement: post-test scores showed a 45% increase in correct responses, and students provided more contextually grounded explanations referencing specific artifacts or historical figures. This strengthens claims that students gained factual knowledge, as these improvements were directly evidenced in the open-ended test responses and written reports.

In addition to cognitive gains, students' oral and written communication improved substantially, supporting findings by Afni (23) regarding the role of museum-based resources in fostering expressive skills. The observational data in this

study showed that all six student groups participated actively in post-visit discussions, marking a notable shift from baseline sessions in which participation was limited. The convergence between behavioral data, test results, and interview responses suggests that museum-based learning supported cognitive, affective, and communicative dimensions of learning simultaneously.

Nevertheless, several internal validity considerations must be acknowledged. Increased motivation may have been partially influenced by a novelty effect, whereby the excitement of visiting a new environment temporarily elevates interest and participation. Additionally, the researcher's presence during the museum visit and classroom sessions may have contributed to an observer effect, influencing student behavior. Furthermore, because the study was limited to a single school, a single museum, and a short intervention period, the extent to which these results can be generalized or sustained over time remains uncertain. These limitations underscore the need for broader, longitudinal investigations that test the durability of learning gains and examine whether similar outcomes occur across diverse educational contexts.

Despite these constraints, the alignment of quantitative and qualitative data strengthens the interpretive validity of the findings. The consistency of motivational, behavioral, and cognitive improvements across data sources demonstrates that optimizing museum functions presents a promising pedagogical approach for enhancing history learning in secondary education.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that optimizing the museum as a learning resource contributed to improvements in students' motivation, knowledge of local history, and participation during history lessons at MAN 1 Kota Probolinggo. Students' direct interaction with authentic historical artifacts supported richer explanations and more detailed descriptions in both oral and written activities. These patterns were further reinforced by qualitative evidence from interviews and observations, which showed consistent increases in curiosity, engagement, and collaborative learning behaviors. However, it is important to note that the pre- and post-tests used in this study were not rigorously validated and therefore cannot be interpreted as definitive measures of learning gains; rather, they served as supplementary indicators that supported the qualitative findings. Additionally, because the study was conducted in a single school and museum with a small sample, and without a comparison or control group, the results should not be generalized or used to justify large-scale implementation. The intervention period was also relatively short, preventing an assessment of long-term retention or sustained impact. Future research should therefore adopt validated assessment instruments, include comparative or control data, involve multiple sites, and employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs to strengthen the empirical basis for understanding the effectiveness of museum-based learning.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicting interest.

Data Availability

The unpublished data is available upon request to the corresponding author.

Ethics Statement

Ethical approval was not required for this study.

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Additional Information


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