

Leveraging Local Historical Heritage to Strengthen Students' National Insight and Nationalism

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how local cultural heritage sites in Metro City—specifically the Dokterswoning House and Santa Maria Hospital—contribute to fostering national insight and strengthening nationalism. As historical assets, these sites hold educational value and play a crucial role in shaping national identity and public appreciation for historical and cultural values. A qualitative research approach was employed, using in-depth interviews to gather insights from local residents, site managers, and historians. The study aimed to explore community perceptions and experiences regarding the educational and nationalistic potential of these heritage sites. Data were analyzed through qualitative descriptive methods to examine the link between heritage use and national awareness. Findings indicate that the Dokterswoning House and Santa Maria Hospital serve as effective mediums for historical education, promoting national values through organized educational programs, heritage tourism, and active community participation. These initiatives have enhanced public awareness of national identity and deepened emotional ties to the nation. The integration of local heritage into community life not only preserves cultural memory but also cultivates patriotism and civic responsibility. Familiarity with historical narratives associated with these sites was found to significantly influence individuals' sense of national belonging. This research highlights the strategic role of cultural heritage in advancing national insight at the local level. It advocates for sustained heritage management and educational programming as essential tools for nation-building and identity formation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage embodies the legacies of past civilizations and reflects the unique identity of a nation. In the face of globalization, particularly in Indonesia, the preservation of cultural heritage is essential to maintaining national identity. It serves as concrete evidence of local wisdom, carrying

historical and philosophical values that form the foundation of a nation's character (Agustinova, 2022). The preservation of national identity cannot be limited to national efforts alone; it must be rooted in the protection and promotion of local cultural elements. Local history—centred on ethnicity, geography, and specific communities—plays a critical role in sustaining national consciousness (Kian Amboro, 2021). Through the safeguarding of cultural heritage, historical values are passed down to future generations, supporting national identity and fostering cultural diversity.

In an increasingly globalised world, cultural preservation also serves as a societal compass, reminding communities of the vital role history plays in shaping social, cultural, and economic development. Therefore, integrating local history and cultural heritage into the educational curriculum is crucial. Students must not only be taught to understand but also to appreciate and protect their heritage, ensuring the continuity of national identity amid modernization (Karsiwan, 2023; Bustami, 2023). Metro City stands out as a region rich in historical value. Its development was significantly shaped by Javanese migration during the Dutch East Indies' colonization program, transforming what was once customary forest land of the Buay Nuban clan into a center of cultural convergence and growth.

The colonization program left behind both tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Metro City, contributing to its unique identity (Metro City Cultural Heritage Expert Team, 2020). As an education-focused city, Metro's historical experiences hold valuable lessons and values—such as perseverance, cooperation, and unity—that are essential for younger generations. Preserving cultural heritage extends beyond protection; it requires actively promoting these sites within local communities and educational institutions. Introducing students to historical heritage through direct engagement fosters both awareness and appreciation. To explore this, the researcher conducted a survey among 25 twelfth-grade students at Muhammadiyah Ahmad Dahlan High School in Metro City.

One survey question investigated how frequently teachers use technology-based media in history lessons. Students had four response options: always, ever, rarely, and never. Results showed that 56% chose "rarely," 32% said "ever," 8% chose "always," and none selected "never." These results suggest that students are not consistently exposed to diverse and engaging media in their history lessons. To make history more accessible and enjoyable, varied media tools should be integrated into classroom instruction.

The next question explored whether teachers employed diverse teaching styles and methods in history classes. With five possible answers—strongly agree, agree, ever, sometimes, and never—36% of students selected "sometimes," 28% chose "strongly agree," 20% answered "ever," and both "never" and "agree" received 8% each. These findings highlight a need for more dynamic and varied instructional approaches. When educators employ diverse teaching styles, students tend to be more engaged and responsive, ultimately enhancing their learning experience.

Another important aspect of the survey focused on students' boredom during history lessons. They could select from agree (bored), sometimes, sometimes bored, and disagree (not bored). The responses were as follows: 40% selected "sometimes," 24% "sometimes bored," 24% "disagree," and 12% "agree." These results indicate that a significant number of students experience some level of boredom in history classes. This suggests that teaching methods need to be more interactive and experiential, possibly through out-of-classroom activities or local explorations, to make history feel more relevant and engaging.

There is substantial potential in using local history and cultural heritage to enhance history education and strengthen students' historical awareness. History as a subject is intended to instill core values such as patriotism, integrity, and responsibility toward the nation. When students are exposed to tangible aspects of their cultural history, these values become more meaningful. Aligning with the vision of the Directorate of History, this approach supports national identity development and encourages the active involvement of local historical communities. One such example is the Metro Historical Walking Tour, a community-based initiative that fosters local engagement in historical preservation while nurturing national identity and character.

Efforts to promote understanding and preservation of Metro City's cultural heritage must be collaborative, involving schools, local government, communities, and the general public. A key strategy is introducing educational programs that integrate local history into school curricula. This could include

the development of modules focused on local historical sites and their cultural significance. Field visits to heritage sites, organized in cooperation with education departments and local communities, can enrich students' experiences. During these educational tours, students would not only learn historical facts but also engage with cultural preservationists and gain firsthand insight into the importance of heritage conservation.

These educational excursions could include visits to historic houses, museums, and monuments that represent Metro City's colonization era. They should also incorporate interactive elements such as storytelling by local guides, reflective discussions, and creative assignments like essays or art inspired by the visit. Such experiential learning strengthens students' emotional connection to their heritage and fosters a deeper appreciation for their cultural identity.

The importance of preserving cultural heritage is reinforced by previous research (Agustinova, 2022b), which emphasizes that safeguarding heritage is a dynamic process involving protection, development, and utilization. Cultural heritage is susceptible to deterioration and loss if not properly managed. Introducing local history to students cultivates a sense of ownership and responsibility toward their heritage. More importantly, it instils a sense of nationalism and pride in one's homeland. Concrete applications of this principle can include student visits to local heritage sites, where they engage not only with the physical structures but also with the stories, values, and lessons embedded within them.

In addition to visits, schools can organize heritage-focused projects and competitions. Students might be encouraged to produce digital content—such as videos, comics, or articles—that documents and celebrates local cultural sites. This allows them to blend historical learning with creativity and media literacy, while also contributing to cultural preservation in formats that resonate with their generation. Integrating local historical narratives into lesson plans ensures that students perceive local events and heritage as integral to the broader national history, strengthening their identification with the nation.

Through programs like these, students gain more than historical knowledge; they develop a genuine sense of connection to their community and its past. This awareness fosters a deeper understanding of their national identity and encourages long-term commitment to preserving cultural heritage. Ultimately, education that is grounded in local history and cultural appreciation serves as a powerful tool to cultivate nationalism and build character among the next generation of citizens.

2. METHODS

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods to explore in-depth understanding using resource interview approaches and interpretation to reveal and analyze the use of Metro City's local historical cultural heritage, especially the Dokterswoning House and Santa Maria Hospital, in fostering national insight and nationalism. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to explore the meaning, experiences and perceptions of the community regarding the importance of preserving cultural heritage in the context of building national identity (Gina Lestari et al., 2016). In this research, data was collected through in-depth interviews with various related parties, such as local historians, cultural heritage managers, local communities, and cultural experts. In addition, participatory observation is carried out at cultural heritage locations to observe visitor interactions and the use of these spaces in activities related to historical and cultural education. Documentation was also carried out by collecting various archives, photos and relevant historical notes to explore the historical context and role of the two buildings in the formation of national consciousness. With this approach, it is hoped that a deeper understanding can be obtained regarding the contribution of cultural heritage to increasing national insight and nationalism among the people of Metro City.

Before describing the results of the interviews conducted with the informants, this study also departs from the collection of survey data on questions about history learning in class and the level of student absorption of results that are adjusted to the students' passion for learning in class. before students implement the values resulting from learning history, students must also be comfortable in learning

history. This data collection was carried out through a Google Form survey given to 25 students in class XII. The presentation of the results of filling out the form is presented in the form of a percentage and written answers which will then be described.

The interview and Q&A method through Google form for students in this study was carried out to dig up in-depth information regarding the views, experiences, and perceptions of various related parties regarding the utilization of the Rumah Dokter Swoning and Rumah Santa Maria cultural heritage in fostering national insight and nationalism. In-depth interviews were chosen as the main technique for obtaining rich qualitative data, because they allow researchers to obtain a more personal and contextual perspective from respondents. Interviews were conducted with several groups of key informants, such as local historians who deeply understand the history of cultural heritage in Metro City, cultural heritage managers who are directly involved in its preservation and utilization, and local communities who often interact with the two historical sites.

Apart from that, interviews were also conducted with historians and academics who understand the relationship between cultural heritage and the development of national identity (Ramelan, 2015). The questions asked in the interviews were designed to explore the extent to which the use of these sites can increase understanding and appreciation of local history, as well as how this contributes to strengthening a sense of nationhood and nationalism among the community, especially school students. This interview technique not only focuses on historical and preservation aspects, but also involves discussions regarding the values contained in these sites, as well as their potential in building collective awareness about the importance of preserving cultural heritage as part of national identity.

All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, allowing flexibility in extracting information according to the informants' responses and facilitating the development of further questions based on the answers obtained (Kusumawardani, 2015). This process helps researchers to explore the meaning behind individual experiences and perceptions of the role of cultural heritage in strengthening national insight, as well as to identify various obstacles and opportunities that exist in its use.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *Historical and Educational Significance of Metro City's Cultural Heritage*

Metro City is home to several historic landmarks that bear witness to the city's colonial and post-colonial past. Among the most prominent of these are Dokterswoning and Santa Maria Hospital, both of which serve not only as physical reminders of the Dutch East Indies period but also as key learning resources for future generations. Dokterswoning, originally constructed as an official residence for government-appointed doctors, continued to be used as such even after Indonesia's independence (Amboro et al., 2021). Although the building remains physically well-preserved, the scarcity of historical records about its former occupants and use presents a significant challenge for historians and educators alike.

Meanwhile, Santa Maria Hospital holds equal if not greater historical value. Built in 1938, this hospital was originally known as St. Elisabeth and was established in collaboration with the Franciscan sisters under the supervision of Father M. Neilen, SCJ. Father Neilen was also the first Catholic priest to reside in Metro City after the opening of the second mission station outside Tanjungkarang in 1937. Located in the city center, the hospital stands adjacent to the Sacred Heart Church and directly faces Taman Merdeka. Its establishment played a central role in the development of public health infrastructure during the colonial era, and it remains a significant cultural touchstone to this day.

These historical sites go beyond being mere architectural relics; they encapsulate the spirit of an era and form part of the broader narrative of Metro City's development. As stated in Law No. 11 of 2010 concerning Cultural Heritage, preserving such sites must include both physical maintenance and active efforts to educate the public about their historical and cultural value. Cultural heritage, in this regard, becomes a tool for intergenerational transmission of identity and values.

3.2 *Legal Protection and Community Engagement*

The formal recognition of Dokterswoning and Santa Maria Hospital as official cultural heritage sites was cemented by Metro Mayor's Decree No. 408/KPTSD/D-01/2021. This designation aligns with the city's broader agenda to protect, preserve, and utilize its rich historical resources. Metro City is also unique in the province of Lampung for having a Cultural Heritage Expert Team (TACB), a body that supports both scholarly research and public awareness related to heritage preservation.

Notably, Santa Maria Hospital was the only medical facility in Metro until 1952. During that time, it operated under a dual-function model, housing both the Catholic mission and a government-run health center. The colonial architectural style of the hospital, particularly its maternity wing, remains largely intact and is maintained by the St. Georgeus Foundation based in Pringsewu, Lampung. Alongside its medical function, the building now serves as an enduring symbol of colonial-era healthcare development.

Preserving these architectural features contributes significantly to the authenticity of Metro's cultural landscape. They provide not just a physical space for reflection, but also a medium through which the public—especially the younger generation—can engage with history in an immersive way. These efforts are made more meaningful by the community's proactive role in historical preservation, most prominently through the Metro Historical Walking Tour initiative.

3.3 *Metro Historical Walking Tour: A Collaborative Model for Preservation*

The Metro Historical Walking Tour, launched on November 12, 2021 (National Health Day), is a standout example of community-based heritage education. Initiated through a partnership between TACB and the Indonesian Doctors Association in Metro, this program was designed to promote historical awareness while actively engaging the public in the preservation of cultural sites.

The tour features a curated route through Metro City's most significant historical locations, including Dokterswoning, Santa Maria Hospital, the Assistant Wedana House, the Taqwa Mosque, and Metro City Square. More than a sightseeing excursion, the tour serves as a platform for interactive learning. It features guides from various backgrounds, including history students from Muhammadiyah Metro University, lecturers, and members of the TACB. Additionally, it collaborates with local heritage organizations like Trimurjo Heritage, Beranda Desa, and Pensil Berhistori to enrich the narratives and ensure authenticity.

This collaborative model fosters an ecosystem where local knowledge, academic insight, and public engagement intersect. The walking tour presents a compelling example of how historical education can be both dynamic and rooted in local contexts, making it particularly effective in promoting cultural literacy and civic pride.

3.4 *Cultural Heritage as an Educational Tool*

According to an interview conducted with a history teacher from Muhammadiyah Ahmad Dahlan High School, the Metro Historical Walking Tour represents a significant pedagogical advancement. The teacher highlighted how the program provides students with real-life, contextual learning opportunities. Instead of learning history solely from textbooks, students are taken to the very sites where historical events unfolded. This direct interaction with physical remnants of the past enriches their understanding and emotional connection to local history.

The teacher emphasized that this form of experiential learning enhances not only historical insight but also instills a range of values—such as patriotism, perseverance, and social responsibility—that are foundational to national identity. Through stories of struggle, community cooperation, and the challenges of colonial rule, students are invited to reflect on the moral and philosophical dimensions of history. This approach aligns well with character-building objectives of the national education system and the broader vision of preserving cultural identity amid globalization.

The tour also serves as a powerful tool for instilling a sense of nationalism. By realizing that they are the inheritors of a significant historical legacy, students develop a deeper appreciation for their cultural roots. The walking tour thereby becomes more than an educational activity; it transforms into a civic ritual, reinforcing the sense of belonging and duty toward one's nation.

3.5 Integration with 21st-Century Learning and the SDGs

The Metro Historical Walking Tour stands out for its alignment with 21st-century educational principles. It fosters critical thinking, collaborative learning, and real-world application of knowledge. By including storytelling, group discussions, and creative projects (e.g., multimedia content creation), the program addresses multiple intelligences and learning styles. It also reflects a broader commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Cultural heritage, as part of a sustainable community framework, is essential not only for identity formation but also for social cohesion. According to scholars such as Arifin (2018), Purba & Kurnia Putra (2020), and Nugraha & Tadu (2021), the protection and promotion of cultural heritage contribute to national unity, economic development, and international recognition. Involving youth and the local community in heritage programs also aligns with Indonesia's 2045 Golden Vision, which aspires to build a culturally rich and socially resilient nation.

As noted by Gea and Sazali (2023), preserving Indonesia's diverse cultural wealth strengthens the implementation of Pancasila, promotes national unity, and enriches the nation's character. The Metro Historical Walking Tour is therefore not merely a local initiative—it embodies a broader national agenda, one that sees culture as a strategic asset for future development.

3.6 Reflections and Broader Impacts

One of the key strengths of the Metro Historical Walking Tour is its intergenerational and cross-sectoral appeal. It brings together students, educators, cultural experts, local government, and civil society organizations in a shared mission. By weaving together diverse narratives and encouraging inclusive participation, the program creates a more comprehensive understanding of local history and its relevance to national identity.

Moreover, this model of collaborative education can be replicated in other regions of Indonesia. Its success in Metro City underscores the potential of cultural heritage to act as a unifying force. Not only does it support curriculum-based education, but it also promotes social cohesion, economic development through tourism, and global cultural diplomacy.

The integration of creative outputs—such as video documentaries, student-made comics, and blog posts about historical sites—also highlights how cultural heritage can be leveraged through digital media to reach broader audiences. This allows the message of preservation to transcend geographical and generational boundaries.

The research findings clearly demonstrate that cultural heritage, when effectively preserved and integrated into education and public life, becomes a powerful tool for building identity, fostering civic pride, and promoting national unity. Dokterswoning and Santa Maria Hospital are not just remnants of the colonial era—they are living testaments to Metro City's historical trajectory and cultural resilience.

Through programs like the Metro Historical Walking Tour, Metro City has not only succeeded in preserving these heritage sites but also transformed them into dynamic educational platforms. These efforts, supported by local government, academic institutions, and grassroots organizations, provide a sustainable model for heritage-based education and community engagement.

Looking forward, the continued success of such programs will depend on institutional support, innovative educational strategies, and active community involvement. By empowering students and

the wider public to engage with their cultural heritage, Metro City is laying the groundwork for a generation that values its roots and is committed to preserving the nation's legacy. In doing so, the city contributes meaningfully to Indonesia's cultural richness, social harmony, and long-term development goals.

4 CONCLUSION

This research highlights that the colonization program implemented during the Dutch East Indies era in Lampung—particularly in Metro City—has left enduring historical legacies, especially in the form of infrastructure such as Dokterswoning and Santa Maria Hospital. These colonial-era buildings not only reflect early urban planning and the prioritization of public health and administration but have also become central to local historical identity. Today, they stand as cultural heritage sites that contribute significantly to historical education and community engagement through initiatives like the *Metro Historical Walking Tour*. This program demonstrates the effective integration of heritage preservation, education, and community participation, successfully instilling historical awareness and nationalism among the younger generation. However, a key limitation of this study lies in the limited availability of archival data and personal records concerning the detailed historical use of these buildings and their occupants, which restricts a deeper understanding of their evolving roles over time. Future research should aim to address this gap by incorporating oral history methods, archival exploration, and interdisciplinary approaches that include architecture, education, and tourism studies. Additionally, comparative studies with other former colonization cities in Indonesia could offer broader insights into how historical infrastructure contributes to local identity and sustainable heritage-based development.

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