

## THE LOWOKWAROE PRISON MUSEUM AS A HISTORICAL BUILDING IN MALANG CITY

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### Abstract

The Lowokwaroe Prison Museum is a museum that plays a significant role in preserving history and culture in Malang City. This study aims to understand how this museum contributes to the formation of the cultural identity of the Malang community and how the cultural elements in the museum can increase historical awareness among the younger generation. The background of this study is the importance of the role of museums in preserving cultural and historical heritage, as well as the challenges faced in maintaining the relevance of museums in the digital era. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method with data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The results show that the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum functions not only as a place to store historical artifacts, but also as an active educational center in disseminating knowledge about the struggle for independence. The cultural elements in the museum, such as colonial architecture and a collection of artifacts reflecting the lives of prisoners, successfully create a deep and meaningful learning experience. This study concludes that the museum has an important role in building historical awareness and cultural identity of the Malang community.

Keywords: Museum; Lowokwaroe prison; Cultural building.

### INTRODUCTION

Malang City Having a very long history and playing an important role in the Indonesian historical stage, it is not surprising that Malang City has many relics closely related to its historical development. The development of science and the mindset of the people of Malang has led to a change in views on objects from the past, people consider these objects as part of Malang City's civilization and have historical value. This was further realized through the establishment of the Pendjara Lowokwaroe Museum, which contains a Malang City identity. Museums have a very important role in preserving culture and history (Ardiansyah et al., 2024). As an institution that stores, maintains, and exhibits artifacts and information related to cultural heritage, museums function as a bridge between past and present generations. The following is an in-depth explanation of the importance of museums as a medium for preserving culture and history. Storage and Preservation of Historical Objects (Khoirunnisa, 2022). Museums serve as safe havens for various historical and cultural objects (Tjahjawulan & Adityayoga, 2019). Museum collections not only contain valuable artifacts but also items that represent a region's cultural identity. Museums help preserve and protect these objects from damage or loss, allowing future generations to learn about and appreciate their cultural heritage.

According to the Republic of Indonesia Government Regulation Number 66 of 2015, a museum is an institution that functions to protect, develop, utilize collections, and communicate them to the public (Hartono, 2023). In 2021, there were 439 museums in Indonesia, the majority of which were privately owned. This number demonstrates the growing awareness of museums, accompanied by an increasing number of museums (Purwantari Teguh, 2023). Museums play a vital role in education, particularly in history learning, which can be implemented at various levels of education. Museums also serve as tourist attractions that provide a sense of enjoyment while still linking them to lifelong knowledge (Mohamad et al., 2024). These tourism objects can provide

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Article History | Submitted: 26 June 2025 | Revised: 20 July 2025 | Accepted: 22 July 2025 | Publish: 31 July 2025

HOW TO CITE (APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition):

Ate, Roni Ririn Ole., Arsyad, Muhammad Naharuddin. (2025). The Lowokwaroe Prison Museum as a Historical Building in Malang City. *Juspi: Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam*. 9(1), page.250-259

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.30829/juspi.v9i1.25043>

healthy recreation that relaxes visitors, but still with the main goal of being able to refine the mind and conscience that comes from the results of implementing museum collections (Istina, 2022).

Originally, museums served as places to collect and store artifacts, art objects, and historical materials. These museums often housed the private collections of nobles or rulers who wished to preserve their cultural heritage (Tjahjaulan & Adityayoga, 2019). Over time, museums have begun to function as centers of education and research. They not only house collections but also provide information and resources for studying and understanding history, art, and culture. In recent decades, museums have focused on creating engaging experiences for visitors. They use innovative technology and design to present their collections more interactively and bring history to life. Museums were once viewed as institutions separate from society, considered places where artifacts were displayed for visitors to enjoy. However, in recent decades, this view has changed significantly. Museums are now seen as agents of social change that actively participate in the dynamics of society. The role of museums has undergone significant evolution over time, from their initial function as a place to collect and store artifacts to becoming centers for education, recreation, and cultural exchange (L Armiyati, 2020).

The aim of the museum is to realize the development of cultural values that can strengthen the character of the nation, strengthen self-confidence and nationalism, and strengthen the spirit of the nation of National Unity (RA Rakhim, 2021). Communities also influence museums by providing different perspectives and challenging existing narratives. The active involvement of diverse community groups helps museums design more inclusive and relevant programs. By listening to community needs and desires, museums can transform themselves into more empowering and responsive spaces (JDI, 2024). The key to this dynamic of interplay between museums and communities is collaboration. By working together, museums and communities can create experiences that strengthen social bonds, promote cross-cultural understanding, and stimulate positive change in society. Such collaboration also allows museums to be more open and reflective of the diversity of the communities they serve (Irwandi, 2023).

The Lowokwaroe Prison Museum, located in Malang City, is the first prison museum in Indonesia, which was founded on June 16, 2020. This museum serves as a means of education and historical reflection, especially regarding life in prison and the historical journey of the Lowokwaroe Penitentiary (Lapas) which has undergone various changes since the colonial era until today. A Brief History of the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum, Museum of the Origin of the Lowokwaroe Prison, Lowokwaroe Prison Founded in 1918, during the Dutch colonial period. Initially, this prison was designed to accommodate political and criminal prisoners from various backgrounds. Over the years, Lowokwaroe Prison has witnessed various historical events, including the struggle for Indonesian independence. This building has a typical colonial architecture that reflects the construction style of that time, and during its use, many inmates have experienced life in it. This museum is located in one corner of the prison and utilizes a water reservoir building built during the Dutch colonial period. Through self-help, involving a number of inmates, several historical items from the Dutch colonial period have begun to be displayed. For example, a cauldron weighing approximately 1.2 tons is located in front of the museum and was used to cook food for inmates in the prison in 1970. To the left of the museum are also displayed two trucks that were used to transport prisoners at the time. Several relics that had been largely neglected have been cleaned and displayed by the inmates, such as a wooden table made in 1950.

Other historical objects neatly arranged in this museum include a manual typewriter, a bicycle used by prison guards, a generator, a weaving tool, and photographs of prison officers' activities (Heradiani, 2021). This museum not only offers visitors a glimpse into historical objects but also provides insights into prison life, which can also provide valuable lessons for the public to avoid committing crimes, as they could face legal consequences and end up behind bars. The prison authorities are currently searching for and collecting other historical objects and organizing them to make the museum more attractive and attractive. In the future, the museum will be integrated with other prison relics in the Ngajum District, Malang Regency, through an educational assimilation program (Heradiani, 2021).

According to Koentjaraningrat, the seven elements of culture include: First, a language system that functions as a means of social interaction that enables communication and understanding between individuals in society. Second, a knowledge system that encompasses traditions, practices, values, and norms passed down from generation to generation, shaping people's perspectives and behavior. Third, a social system that encompasses kinship and social organization that determine hierarchies within society. Fourth, a system of tools and technology. In (Sumarto, 2019) Living equipment and technology reflect human interaction with the surrounding environment through the tools and technology used daily. Fifth, the livelihood system which encompasses the economic activities undertaken by people to support their livelihoods (Chatulistiwa et al., 2024). Sixth, a religious system that explains the relationship between humans and supernatural powers shapes beliefs and religious practices. And finally, art encompasses various artistic activities as a form of creative expression and cultural identity that reflects aesthetics and religious rituals.

Several studies that discuss the same issues as the research conducted by researchers include (Istina, 2022) in her study entitled "The Existence and Function of Museums for Generation Z: Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Era" found the importance of adaptation and collaboration of museums with Generation Z to ensure their sustainability and relevance as educational institutions and cultural preservation. (D Asmara - 2019, 2019) in her study entitled "The Role of Museums in History Learning" (Zamrodah, 2016) highlights the importance of museums in the context of history education and provides insight into the shifting paradigm of museums from collection centers to places of interaction with visitors. (POSHA & Yusnita, 2023) in their study entitled "The Role of Museums as Education Centers and Tourist Attractions for the Sambas Community" that museums have an important role in promoting, appreciating, and preserving local cultural and historical heritage. Museums are not only places to store historical artifacts, but also centers for education, research, and tourist attractions (Sutrisno & Meirinaldi, 2020). In his research entitled "The Role of the Mpu Tantular Museum in Preserving Heritage Collections," through the support of the "Let's Visit the Museum" movement from the government, the Mpu Tantular Museum won the award for Best Museum in East Java in 2014. This demonstrates the museum's success in fulfilling its role as a cultural heritage preservation institution. (Prasetyo et al., 2021) in his research entitled "Utilization of Museums as Educational Tourism Objects" stated that the use of museums as educational tourism can have a positive impact both in terms of improving the quality of learning and regional income (Fitriansyah & Kasmin, 2022) also mentioned that museums used as educational tourist attractions are one of the practical benefits of museums that can be felt by all levels of society.

(Khoirunnisa, 2022) examined the development of museums as historical educational tourism, which showed that museums can serve as effective learning media for the younger generation. This study found that visitors who participated in educational programs at museums had a better understanding of local history and culture. Another study by (AF Batubara, n.d.) highlighted the role of museums in cultural and historical conservation, focusing on how museums can contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage in the modern era. This study showed that museums function not only as places to store artifacts but also as centers of activities that involve the community in cultural preservation. In addition, research by (Ntobuo & Yusuf, 2016) in examining the impact of museums on local tourism found that well-managed museums can increase tourist visits and provide economic benefits to the surrounding community. However, despite numerous studies discussing the role of museums in the context of education and cultural preservation, there remains a gap in studies that specifically highlight the cultural identity embodied in the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum. This research will fill this gap by focusing on how the museum reflects the historical journey of the Malang community and its contribution to the formation of local cultural identity.

This research can provide a novel value that lies in its in-depth focus on the cultural identity represented by the collection and history of the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum. This research will reveal how this museum reflects the historical journey of the people of Malang, including the role

of Lowokwaroe Prison in the struggle for Indonesian independence. Thus, this research is expected to provide a new perspective in the study of museums and cultural identity, as well as highlight the importance of preserving cultural heritage in the city of Malang. So it is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of science in the field of history and culture by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the role of museums in the preservation of cultural heritage and public education. This research is also expected to be a reference for museum managers and related parties in an effort to increase public awareness of the importance of cultural preservation and The expected results of this research are the identification of cultural elements found in the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum and a better understanding of the influence of museums on public awareness of local history and culture. Thus, this research not only provides academic contributions, but also has a positive impact on the community in appreciating and preserving cultural heritage.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to understand the cultural identity of the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum in depth by focusing on the collection of descriptive and narrative data. Qualitative research is a research method that aims to understand social and cultural phenomena from an individual or group perspective. This method focuses on collecting descriptive and narrative data, which can provide in-depth insights into the experiences, views, and meanings given by the research subjects. Qualitative research is research used to examine the conditions of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument (Utami, Wulandari, Mahendra, & Safitri, 2023). Research using qualitative methods aims to understand social and cultural phenomena in depth. (M Husnailail, nd). This method allows researchers to explore the meaning and individual experiences related to cultural identity that exist in the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum .

The approach used is descriptive in qualitative research, aiming to provide a clear and detailed picture of the phenomenon being studied (Tjahjawulan & Adityayoga, 2019). This approach not only focuses on data collection, but also on data analysis and interpretation to provide a deeper understanding (Rachman Arif, Yochanan E, Samanlangi Ilham Andi, 2024). This research was conducted through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation studies. Data analysis was carried out by researchers by interpreting the meaning of each theme in the context of the museum's cultural identity, thus producing a clear picture of how the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum contributes to the preservation of history and culture. Data collection in this study was carried out through several techniques, namely interviews, observations, and documentation studies with informant sources of museum managers, museum visitors, and the surrounding community . The data analysis techniques and data validity techniques used by researchers were by interpreting the meaning of each theme in the context of the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum's cultural identity. The results of the analysis were then compiled in the form of a narrative that describes the museum's cultural identity.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Lowokwaroe Prison Museum

Lowokwaroe Prison Museum, officially established in 2005, has deep and rich historical roots, dating back to the Dutch colonial era. The building that now houses the museum once served as a prison for freedom fighters captured by the colonial authorities. This prison has been a silent witness to various important events in the nation's history, with many national figures experiencing detention and torture within its walls. An interview with the museum's manager, Ms. Rahajeng Nastuti, explained that the museum serves not only as a repository for historical objects but also as a silent witness to the struggles of the independence heroes. This statement emphasizes that the museum is more than just a collection of artifacts; it also immortalizes and honors the heroic stories and sacrifices of the freedom fighters.

Over time, the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum has undergone significant changes and improvements. These efforts were made to improve the quality of information presented to visitors, allowing them to better understand the historical context. One important step taken was the development of interactive exhibits that allow visitors to directly engage with history. For example, visitors can see replicas of prison cells, listen to recordings of prisoners' voices, and interact with various media explaining the conditions of life inside the prison at that time. Furthermore, the museum is also active in holding various educational programs, such as seminars, discussions, and school visits, aimed at instilling a sense of patriotism and historical awareness among the younger generation.

Based on an interview, a history teacher, Mr. Roni Wargino, stated, "A visit to this museum is very beneficial for students, because they can see firsthand historical evidence and experience the atmosphere of the struggle that once existed." This demonstrates that the museum serves not only as a repository of history, but also as an effective educational tool. In recent years, the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum has also collaborated with various institutions, both government and private, to improve its facilities and collections. These efforts include fundraising for building restoration, developing new programs, and increasing promotions to attract more visitors. Thus, the museum continues to adapt and develop, making it one of the important educational tourist destinations in Malang City. Through all these efforts, the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum not only serves as a place to commemorate history, but also plays an active role in educating the public and preserving existing cultural heritage. With all the changes and developments that have been made, the museum is expected to continue to be a source of inspiration and knowledge for future generations, as well as preserving the collective memory of the nation's struggle for independence.

### **Cultural Elements of the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum**

Lowokwaroe Prison Museum not only serves as a repository of history but also reflects a rich and diverse range of cultural elements. One of the most striking aspects is the museum's architecture. The building has a distinctive design, with thick walls and small windows reflecting colonial architectural style. This sturdy brick structure not only served as a place of detention but also as a symbol of resilience and struggle. Based on an interview with a local architect, Mr. Prayitno, he stated that the museum's architecture reflects strength and resilience, as if telling the stories of the prisoners who experienced life there. This design not only provides a historical feel but also creates a deep atmosphere for visitors who want to understand the history stored within. In addition to the architecture, other cultural elements are also evident in the collections on display at the museum.

The museum's collection includes various artifacts, documents, and photographs depicting the lives of prisoners and their struggles. For example, there are important documents documenting historical events, such as letters written by prisoners to their families, which provide insight into their psychological and emotional states during their incarceration. These artifacts serve not only as inanimate objects but also as windows into human stories of hope and struggle. The museum also features interactive exhibits, where visitors can participate in educational and inspiring activities. For example, an exhibition space features videotaped interviews with former prisoners or historians recounting their experiences. This adds an added dimension to the visitor experience, allowing them to experience firsthand the impact of the history on display.

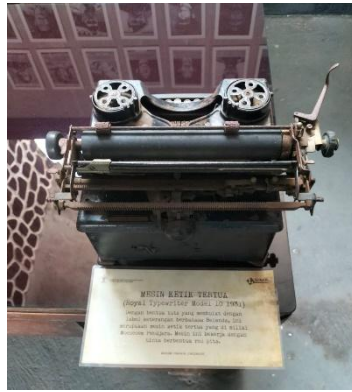


Figure 1: The oldest typewriter as one of the objects in the Prison Museum collection. Lowokwaroe  
Source: Personal documentation

Based on an interview with a visitor, Mr. Edy Muhammad stated, "I felt as if I could feel what the prisoners experienced. This exhibition was very touching and made me appreciate their struggle even more." Another cultural element that is no less important is the educational activities held by the museum. The Lowokwaroe Prison Museum regularly holds seminars, discussions, and workshops involving the community, students, and academics. These activities aim to raise awareness of the importance of history and cultural preservation. Based on an interview with a history teacher, Ms. Sunarti S.Pd., she emphasized that educational activities at this museum are very important to instill a love of the homeland in the younger generation. They need to understand history so as not to repeat the same mistakes in the future. Thus, the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum is not only a place to store and exhibit history, but also functions as a cultural center that educates and inspires the community. Through its distinctive architecture, diverse collections, and active educational activities, the museum has succeeded in creating a space that not only honors the past but also builds awareness and a better understanding of the nation's identity and culture. With all its cultural elements, the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum is a valuable place for preserving and protecting Indonesia's historical heritage.

### **The Impact and Role of the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum in Providing Historical Information in Malang City**

The Lowokwaroe Prison Museum plays a crucial role in providing historical information to the public, especially the younger generation. As one of Malang's historic sites, the museum serves not only as a repository for artifacts but also as an educational center actively disseminating knowledge about the nation's struggle for independence. Through various educational programs and school visits, the museum strives to instill a sense of patriotism and historical awareness in visitors.



Figure 2: Lowokwaroe Prison Museum  
Source: Personal documentation

One of the museum's flagship programs is school visits, where students from various educational levels are invited to learn directly about the history contained within the museum. Based on an interview with a history teacher, Ms. Sunarti, she stated that a visit to the museum is very beneficial for students, because they can see historical evidence firsthand and feel the atmosphere of the struggle that once existed. This direct experience has a deeper impact than just learning from textbooks. Students can interact with the existing collection, listen to stories from the guides, and feel the emotions contained in each artifact on display. In addition, the museum also holds various seminars and discussions involving academics, historians, and the general public. These activities aim to broaden the horizons and understanding of history, as well as encourage dialogue between the older and younger generations.

In an interview with one of the visitors who actively participated in the seminar, he stated, "The discussions in this museum really opened my eyes to history that is often forgotten. This is a good opportunity to learn and share knowledge." Thus, the museum is not only a place to preserve history, but also a space to share knowledge and experiences. Another positive impact of the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum is increasing public awareness of the importance of historical preservation. Through informative and engaging exhibitions, the museum has succeeded in attracting the attention of a wider public, including those who may not have previously cared much about history. Promotional activities and collaborations with various educational institutions and local communities have also helped increase the museum's visibility, so that more people are interested in visiting and learning about history. The museum also plays a role in building local identity. By showcasing the history of the struggle that occurred in Malang City, the museum helps people understand their own cultural and historical roots. Based on an interview with a local visitor, Mr. Edy Muhammad, he said, "This museum makes me proud of my city's history. I have a greater appreciation for the struggle of the heroes who sacrificed for independence. This sense of pride is important for building a sense of togetherness and solidarity among the city's residents."

With all its roles and impacts, the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum is not only a place to remember the past, but also serves as an effective and inspiring educational tool. Through diverse educational programs, the museum has succeeded in instilling a love of the homeland and historical awareness among the younger generation, as well as encouraging the community to better appreciate and preserve existing cultural heritage. Thus, the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum contributes significantly to shaping the identity and historical awareness of the people of Malang City.

### **Management and Preservation of the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum**

The management and preservation of the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum is a key focus in efforts to maintain the sustainability of existing historical information. As an institution that preserves and presents cultural heritage, the museum has a significant responsibility to ensure that its collections remain protected and accessible to future generations. Museum management routinely maintains the collections and conducts building maintenance activities to ensure they remain in good condition. Based on an interview, Ms. Rahajeng Nastuti, one of the museum's managers, stated, "We are committed to maintaining and preserving all existing collections so that future generations can learn from the history we have preserved." This statement reflects the management's dedication to safeguarding this valuable historical heritage. One important step in collection management is conducting regular inventories and documentation. Every artifact entering the museum is recorded in detail, including its origin, condition, and other relevant information. This process not only aids collection management but also facilitates research and the presentation of information to visitors. Furthermore, management implements appropriate conservation techniques to maintain the physical condition of artifacts, such as the use of environmentally friendly materials and appropriate storage methods. Building maintenance is also a top priority.

Lowokwaroe Prison Museum, a historic building, requires special attention to prevent damage. Management regularly conducts inspections to detect any structural damage, such as

cracks in the walls or leaking roofs. Based on an interview, Mr. Agung Gde Krisna Head of Class 1 Malang Prison, who is involved in building maintenance, stated, "We strive to maintain the building's authenticity while making necessary repairs. This is a challenge, but it is crucial to maintaining its historical value." This effort also includes using building materials that match the building's original characteristics, so as not to alter its original form and function. In addition to collection management and building maintenance, the museum is also active in conducting preservation programs that involve the community. One initiative is holding workshops and seminars on the importance of historical and cultural preservation. In these activities, management invites historians, conservators, and cultural practitioners to share knowledge and experiences. These activities not only raise public awareness of the importance of historical preservation but also encourage the active participation of local communities in preserving their cultural heritage. Collaboration with various parties, such as educational institutions and local communities, is also an integral part of the museum's preservation efforts. Through these collaborations, museums can offer broader and more in-depth educational programs. For example, museums often collaborate with schools to organize educational tours, where students can learn firsthand about history and the importance of preservation.

Based on the results of an interview with a teacher, Mrs. Sunarti S.Pd, she stated, "Collaboration with the museum really helps us in providing a real learning experience for students. They don't just learn from books, but also from direct experience. With all these efforts, the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum not only functions as a repository of history, but also as an active and dynamic preservation center. Through careful processing, continuous maintenance, and collaboration with the community, the museum is committed to preserving the existing cultural and historical heritage, so that it can continue to provide benefits and inspiration for future generations. Thus, the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum plays an important role in preserving the nation's collective memory and ensuring that history is not forgotten."

Based on the results and discussion above, the research conducted by this researcher found that the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum functions not only as a place to store historical artifacts, but also as an active educational center in disseminating knowledge about the struggle for independence. This museum has developed interactive exhibitions that allow visitors to experience history firsthand, such as seeing replicas of prison cells and listening to recordings of prisoners' voices. The emphasis on the importance of museums in building historical awareness among the younger generation is a novel value of this research, which was previously less noticed in previous studies. By involving the community in educational programs and interactive activities, this museum creates a deeper and more meaningful learning experience. In comparison with previous research, such as that conducted by Istina (2022) which emphasized the importance of museum adaptation for Generation Z, this study goes further by showing how the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum has successfully implemented this strategy through interactive exhibitions and educational programs. In addition, research by (D Asmara - 2019, 2019) states that museums function as places of interaction with visitors. This research adds a new dimension by showing that the interaction is not only physical, but also emotional, through the experiences felt by visitors when interacting with the artifacts.

The cultural elements found in the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum encompass various aspects that reflect the social and cultural life of the Malang people in the past. First, the architecture of the museum building itself, which reflects a colonial style, with thick walls and small windows, serves as a symbol of resilience and struggle. Second, the collection of artifacts on display, such as important documents, letters from prisoners, and tools used during detention, provides an in-depth picture of the psychological and emotional conditions of the independence fighters. Third, educational activities held by the museum, such as seminars and discussions, serve to raise public awareness of the importance of history and cultural preservation. By identifying these cultural elements, this research contributes to the development of science in the fields of history and culture, and provides a reference for museum managers in their efforts to raise public awareness of the importance of cultural preservation.



The knowledge generated from this research contributes to providing new insights into how museums can function as a bridge between history and the younger generation, and emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural heritage in an educational context. By identifying the cultural elements present in the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum, this research contributes to the development of science in the field of history and culture, as well as providing references for museum managers in their efforts to increase public awareness of the importance of cultural preservation. Through these findings, it is hoped that this research can serve as a reference for further research and provide inspiration for the development of museums as centers of education and cultural preservation in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study reveal that the Lowokwaroe Prison Museum serves not only as a repository for historical artifacts, but also as an active educational center in disseminating knowledge about the struggle for independence. Through interactive exhibitions and educational programs, the museum has succeeded in building historical awareness among the younger generation and engaging the community in the preservation of cultural heritage. The museum's cultural elements, such as colonial architecture, a collection of artifacts reflecting the lives of prisoners, and the educational activities held, emphasize the museum's important role in creating in-depth and meaningful learning experiences, as well as its contribution to the cultural identity of the Malang community. Future research can focus on further exploring the long-term impact of the museum's educational programs on the understanding of history among the younger generation, particularly in the context of the cultural elements on display. Furthermore, further research can explore how museums can adapt to technological developments and social changes to remain relevant in the digital age, and how these cultural elements can be integrated into new programs.

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