

Research article

# Learning Local History and Culture Through Museum Visits

John Erwin Prado Pedroso<sup>1\*</sup>, Charisse Gicole<sup>1</sup>, Anthony Sarches<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> West Visayas State University, Iloilo City, Philippines

\* Correspondence: [jobnervin.pedroso@wvsu.edu.ph](mailto:jobnervin.pedroso@wvsu.edu.ph)

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**Abstract:** This study described how social studies preservice teachers learn local history and culture through museum visits. It employed a qualitative descriptive research design involving ten social studies preservice teachers selected through purposeful sampling. Data were collected through a written interview and analyzed using thematic analysis. Through museum visits, social studies preservice teachers learned the following: visual driven through images, relics and artifacts, and multimedia presentation; audio/oral driven through curator explanation and peer discussion; text driven through text description; and actual experience-driven through applying learning from exhibits, giving a point of view from the past, and wearing traditional attire. Preservice social studies teachers can learn about local history and culture by visiting museums. This study emphasizes the value of museums in preserving and promoting local heritage and culture, as well as how they can be a valuable resource for learning about local history and culture.

**Keywords:** history; culture; museum visit; pre-service teachers, social studies

## 1. Introduction

Learning local history and culture stimulates learners as historical human beings (Umasih et al., 2019), allowing them to appreciate different cultural and historical collections (Mujtaba et al., 2018). It encourages students to explore the past while being inspired by heroes, events, and ideas (Febriani, Sunardi, & Pelu, 2022). Moreover, recent studies suggest that unique museum collections engage students (Giblin, Ramos, & Grout, 2019) and evoke potential heritage interpretation (Packer, Ballantyne, & Uzzel, 2019), thereby cultivating their capability to understand (Subakti, 2010; Rahayu, Sariyatun, & Agung, 2018), and boost their knowledge of history and culture, making them more culturally and historically sensitive to specific endeavours (Ysulana, 2021). Furthermore, learning local history and culture through museum visits provides students with knowledge and opportunities to learn by experience (Andre, Durksen, & Volman, 2017), breaking the boundaries between school and the outside world (Permana & Pratama, 2020).

While museum visits allow students to appreciate local and national collections (Mujtaba et al., 2018), this is unsatisfactory as previous studies of gaining knowledge through museum visits have not examined the effectiveness of it as one of the learning strategies for Social Studies preservice teachers. These studies focus only on learning local history and culture as beneficial for students' development, allowing them to appreciate the importance of different local cultures and history. With this, researchers identified knowledge gaps in previous studies which occur when: There may be a lack of knowledge in the theory and actual fields of literature from related research fields, and the research results may differ from expectations (Müller-Bloch & Kranz, 2015). In addition, the prior research did not address integrating the perspective of Social Studies preservice teachers in learning using museum visits. This encompasses new dimensions using reflections to imply the learnings acquired by the students. Museum visits provide knowledge and opportunities that are important for the learning process and allow learners to be a part of the history and culture of the rich past of the locality. The learning of local culture and history to Social Studies preservice teachers should be explored further to provide an understanding of why such is not the case with the prior studies (Miles, 2017). As for this case, these studies indicated that museum visits benefit students' development (Umasih et al., 2019), focus on the unique museum collections which engage students

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(Giblin, Ramos, & Grout, 2019), and evoke a potential heritage interpretation (Packer, Balantyne, & Uzzell, 2019) which is not specified to the preservice teachers' reflection to learning. However, one question that needs to be asked is: How do Social Studies preservice teachers learn local history and culture through museum visits?

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. It provides an authentic insight into preservice teachers' experiences (Silverman, 1997; Stenberg & Maaranen, 2020) to fully understand and gather specific experiences (Coughlan, 2020). Using the qualitative-descriptive design enabled researchers to capture in-depth and comprehensive accounts of the studied phenomena (Neergaard et al., 2009; Guy, Hughes, & Ferris-Day, 2022), and help maintain the accuracy and give a better understanding of what is being explored (Guy, Hughes, & Ferris-Day, 2022). This research is anchored in experiential learning theory by acquiring knowledge through connecting to personal experiences, using engagement, and encouraging critical thinking (Kolb, 2014; Silguero, 2020). Likewise, this study is anchored on constructivist epistemology and naturalistic inquiry methodology.

### 2.2 Informants

This study involved ten Social Studies preservice teachers using the purposeful sampling method, also called “judgmental, selective, or selective sampling” (Domingo, 2018; Pedroso, 2021). Moreover, the following specific set of inclusion criteria was observed in selecting the informants: (a) bonafide students of West Visayas State University taking the Bachelor of Secondary Education with a Major in Social Studies; (b) completed the three museum visits conducted by the Social Science Students Society; (c) one of the organizers of the museum visits in the organization; and (d) with General Weighted Average (GWA) of at least 1.49 in the First Semester of school year 2022-2023. The table that follows shows the ten (10) Social Studies preservice teachers with their assigned pseudonyms for anonymity.

**Table 1. The Informants' Profiles**

Social Studies Preservice Teachers	Age	Sex	Year Level
Stephen	19	M	First
Aliza	19	F	First
Ybarra	20	M	Second
Jaime	22	M	Third
Pablo	21	M	Second
Rosa	20	F	First
Kim	19	F	First
George	19	M	First
Clyde	19	M	First
Jomer	19	M	First

### 2.3 Data Gathering Instrument

The instrument utilized was a researcher-made written interview guide that allows informants to express their beliefs, experiences, and gained knowledge through recalling, considering, and evaluating experiences (Rogers, 2002; Juuti et al., 2021) in relation to learning local history and culture through museum visit. It was duly-validated by experts in the qualitative research and pilot-tested among selected non-participants of the study.

### 2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data included in this research study was gathered using Google Forms. Ethical considerations were highly considered to ensure the confidentiality of the informants. A permission letter that includes the research information, waiver, and consent ensures the informants' safety and privacy at the highest level. Requests to conduct the study was sent to the informants for approval. Informants were also given ample time to answer the reflection question.

### *2.5 Data Analysis Procedure*

To analyze the data, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was employed. This technique assessed the qualitative data in which the researcher attentively studies to find recurring themes, subjects, concepts, and conceptual structures (Caulfield, 2019). The process involves analyzing data to identify how social studies preservice teachers learn local history and culture through museum visits. Consequently, the themes were organized that form the narratives (Pedroso, 2021).

## **3. Results**

Preservice teachers of social studies learn about local history and culture through visual, audio/oral, and hands-on experiences.

### *3.1. Visual-Driven*

Visuals are a powerful tool for learning and a great way to discover local culture and history through a museum visit. Visitors examining exhibits, artworks, relics, and artifacts help gain a deeper understanding of the past and cultural setting. The following are the categories identified in how preservice social studies teachers learn local history and culture through museum visits, namely: images of the past; relics and artifacts; and, multimedia displays.

#### *3.1.1 Images*

Images displayed in museums have a significant impact on learning local history and culture, as they offer vivid glimpses into the past and help visitors form deeper connections with historical events and cultural traditions (Mujataba et al., 2018). These visual representations serve as authentic records of a region's heritage, shedding light on the lives of its people, their customs, and societal changes over time (Liu et al., 2022). Such images can instill a sense of pride and identity within local communities by celebrating the distinct aspects of their collective history and cultural legacy, which help learners in learning their local history and culture. According to Rosa, she learns a lot about local history and culture through reflecting on the display images, especially on the photos taken by Felix Laureano. Stephen also added that pictures and physical appearances of cultural objects deepen his understanding of the ways of life of past "Ilonggos". Image displays in museums play a crucial role in learning about local history and culture. They provide a visual representation of the past, allowing us to see and understand the people, places, and events that shaped our communities. By studying these images, we can gain a deeper appreciation for our heritage and a better understanding of our place in the world.

#### *3.1.2 Relics and artifacts*

Relics and artifacts are important museum displays. They provide a tangible link to the past and help us understand how people lived in the past and what their culture was like (Triunfante, 2021). Interaction with these tangible objects helps discover details and information necessary for learning about local culture and the past (Not et al., 2019). Social studies students reflected on how they learned local history and culture through museum visits. According to Aliza, exploring collections of artwork, artifacts, and preserved objects has helped him gain a deeper understanding of the diverse histories and cultures present in the community. Additionally, these artifacts that were used in the past allowed Jaime to grasp what life meant at that period in time. Moreover, for Kim even just the actual copies of these artifacts showcase and reflect how our ancestors lived back then. Furthermore, George reflected on how artifacts and relics help him understand the past and culture, which shapes the present of the community he belongs to. Relics and artifacts play a crucial role in understanding the history and culture of a local community. They provide tangible evidence of past events and practices, allowing us to learn about the lives and beliefs of those who came before us. By

studying these objects, we can better appreciate the traditions and customs that have shaped our world today.

### *3.1.3 Multimedia displays*

Multimedia displays in museums significantly enrich the learning of local history and culture by providing interactive and immersive experiences. Multimedia displays in museums are dynamic exhibits that help visitors form deeper connections with historical events and cultural practices (Mohammed, Jamhawi, & Rashid, 2022). It presents complex narratives and diverse perspectives, and multimedia displays offer a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of local history and culture (Nikonova & Biryukova, 2017). Multimedia displays in museums are also important to further deepen the insight and experiences of students and other museum visitors. According to Pablo, multimedia presentations enhanced his learning experience during museum visits. Multimedia displays cater to various learning styles, making the museum experience accessible and enjoyable for a broader audience. Furthermore, it helps to gather interest and attract visitors' attention (Yumei, 2020).

### *3.2. Audio/Oral-Driven*

One of the most important things in having museum visits is the presence of audio or oral factors in learning the collections, may these be in presenting collections and displays to the visitors. There are two categories identified with how social studies preservice teachers learn history and culture through museum visits through audio/oral factor, namely: (1), (2) Gives Point of View from the past, and (3) Wearing Traditional Costumes.

#### *3.2.1 Curator Explanations*

Jomer stated that learned so much during museum visits by listening to the curator. George stated that through the help of the curators, who give depth to the definition. Ybarra stated that listening to the curator/s played a significant role in my learning journey. Their narrations not only provided insights into the local history and culture but also facilitated a deeper understanding of the exhibits. In addition, Kim stated that with the help and assistance of the different curators of each museum, they were able to learn and dig up more about our very own culture and history. Aliza stated that owing to the knowledgeable and skilled curators who have comprehensively explained and educated them on the rich history, especially in Panay museums, it is now much simpler to liven up their identity as Filipinos as they honor, respect, and give importance to their history and culture. Jaime added that learnings were further supplemented by an explanation of the museum curator/facilitator. He would not have experienced the mentioned feelings if not for the concise yet elaborate explanation they were given. Also, Stephen, Pablo, and Rosa stated that interactive elements such as audio guides enhanced the learning experience and the curators discussed the significance and definition of their collections well. This audio/oral factor such as curator explanations became one of the informants' reasons regarding how they learn local history and culture.

#### *3.2.3 Peer Discussion*

Peer discussion is present not only in the actual classroom but also in museums. In line with this, George and Jomer stated that some of their seniors also have given additional information regarding their knowledge about the museum collections which is a great way to further add their knowledge in learning local history and culture.

### *3.3 Text-Driven*

Text describing the artifacts and relics or any display in the museum is helpful to visitors to recognize and identify specific museum displays easily. This text can be beneficial in giving context and background information about the objects, as well as the people and events they represent. There is a single category identified how social studies preservice teachers learn local history and culture through museum visits, namely: Display descriptions.

#### *3.3.1 Display descriptions*

Text descriptions of exhibits in museums are essential. They help visitors understand the local history and culture and give background information that helps them appreciate the significance of the artifacts on display (Jarosz, 2021). These descriptions also help in

connecting the dots between different exhibits and understanding how they relate to each other (Chu & Mazalek, 2019). By providing a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical significance of the artifacts, the text descriptions help students engage with the exhibits on a more personal level. Some of the informants reflect on how text descriptions help them in learning the past and culture of their community.

According to Ybarra, the museum offers a brief yet precise information for its audience to learn. Reading the details presented gives an intriguing sense that pushes to learn deeper about the local culture that a certain museum offers. Also, Rosa and Kim stated that displays with detailed explanations accompanying each artifact help them understand the contribution and significance of such museum displays. George added that, moreover, the texts next to the specific relic or artifact is a great help to know and understand what the displays are. Furthermore, according to Jomer, texts provide information about the specific artifacts in the absence of a curator to discuss.

Reading text descriptions of a museum display helps to stimulate knowledge and understanding about culture and history of a local community (Simon, 2023). It encourages learners to reflect on their experiences and perspectives, making the museum visit more meaningful and memorable.

### *3.4 Actual Experience-Driven*

Actual experience enables students to learn local history and culture through first hand. Local museums serve as an excellent resource for learning about the local history while also fostering a sense of community (Richardson, 2023). There are two categories identified with how social studies preservice teachers learn history and culture through museum visits as it shapes actual experience, namely: (1) Applying Learnings through Exhibits, (2) Gives Point of View from the past, and (3) Wearing Traditional Costumes.

#### *3.4.1 Applying Learnings through Exhibit*

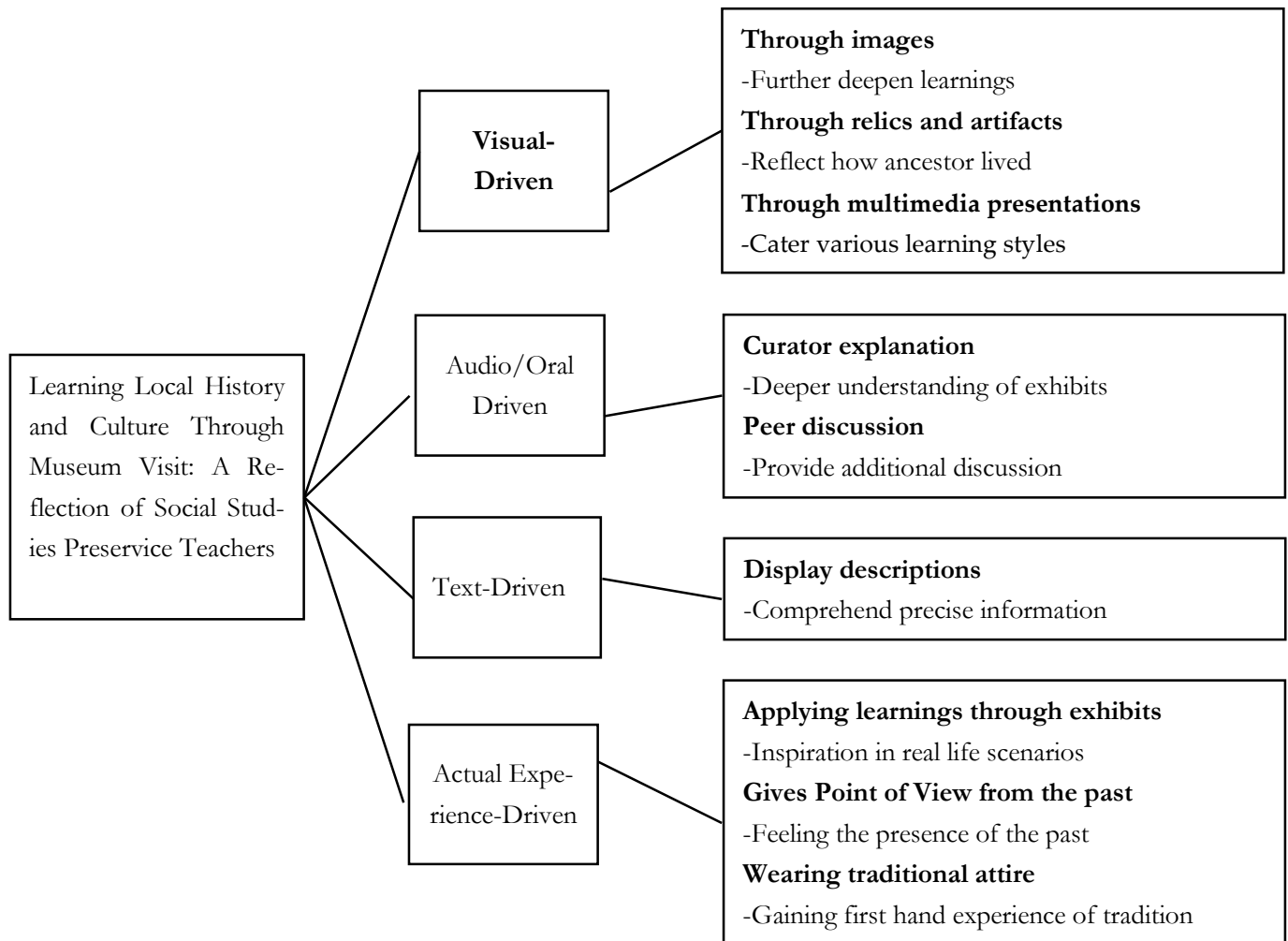
Museum exhibits enable viewers to relate the story being portrayed to their own lives. It provides a place where people may see themselves and be seen (Roto, n.d.). Aliza stated that drawing from his personal experience, he acquired knowledge by immersing himself in exhibits. Also, closely examining the objects themselves allowed him to develop an appreciation for the artistry and craftsmanship involved. Rosa also stated that museum visits enabled her to dig deep into the context of local history and culture through learning in exhibits. For instance, learning the history of the photography of Felix Laureano and the culture of Panay's Indigenous Peoples. This actual experience factor such as applying learnings through exhibits became one of the informants' reasons regarding how they learn local history and culture.

#### *3.4.2 Gives Point of View from the past*

Another consideration for students in learning local history and culture through museum visits is that they can imagine themselves as part of the past. Jaime stated that the sophistication brought about by these materials tempted him to be in the shoes of someone who has lived in the past. It was as if he were experiencing a mere speck of what life was. It is essential to feel the presence of the past in order to learn from it.

#### *3.4.3 Wearing Traditional Attire*

Actual experience allows students to execute the wearing of traditional costumes which enable them to appreciate the richness of their culture and history according to Clyde. People who are dressed in their locality's traditional attire together have a sense of shared culture, of being connected to one another, and of being a part of the community (Shaikat, 2023). Figure 1 shows themes and key categories.



**Figure 1. Demonstration of Meaningful Categories**

Note: The diagram was created to present the Themes and Key Categories of how Social Studies Preservice Teachers learn local history and culture through Museum Visits. Fig. by Pedroso, Gicole, & Sarches (2023)

#### 4. Discussion

The considerations of how social studies preservice teachers learn history and culture through museum visits were elaborated as the results implied four themes such as visual-driven, audio/oral-driven, text-driven, and actual experience-driven. Nine key categories emerged from the answers after carefully examining the written transcripts based on the themes. The findings of the study revealed museum visits made the social studies preservice teachers find another effective way of learning local history and culture aside from the classroom through the characteristics of different museums which helped them gain further learnings of how their locality was shaped. They also integrated methods regarding how they learned in museums effectively adhering to their own ways of absorbing information. These findings have not been addressed by the previous researchers making the findings of this study a significant contribution in the field of social studies research. Unexpected results included the multimedia displays because the researchers expected that in visuals, only relics, artifacts, and pictures could help, but with the integration of technology, it further helped the understanding of museum visit. Additional unexpected results included that visitors could not manipulate the things found in the museum, but in the study, it was found out that they could also wear traditional costumes.

Visual driver shows that images, relics and artifacts, and multimedia displays further enhanced imagination allowing these preservice teachers to see and understand the people, places, and events that shaped their communities which also provided interactive and

immersive experiences. Such visuals serve as a tangible connection to the past, allowing students to immerse themselves in historical events and cultural practices and gain a deeper understanding of their significance. Using these historical and cultural relics and artifacts from their locality leads students to understand their locality's past culture and history (Syaputra, Sariyatun, & Ardianto, (2020). Also, images such as portraits and photos displayed in museums serve as visual gateways for students to explore their local history and culture, providing tangible connections to the past. These visual artifacts offer insights into the lives, customs, and experiences of previous generations, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the students' cultural heritage. This is noted by Mujataba et. al (2018) stating images and such visuals offers a clear path through time providing students new knowledge and perspectives. On the other hand, multimedia displays offer an interactive and engaging learning experience that enables students to better understand their locality's history and culture. It caters to various learning styles of students through visual, auditory, and tangible elements making complex concepts become more. Wilson-Barnao (2018) suggests that museums have transformed from being mere repositories of artifacts to dynamic spaces that utilize new technologies and strategies to foster engagement, facilitate interpretation of cultural and historical significance, and accelerate learning.

Audio/Oral drivers such as curator explanation and peer discussion became crucial as these provided further discussions, deeper understanding of the exhibits, and concise yet elaborative explanation to the museums' visual displays and descriptions. Previous research conducted showed that the role of curators in museum studies is commonplace: they are in charge of preserving and interpreting works of art as well as giving tours and educational programs to the public and instructing students about historical objects from a certain era (Schertz, 2015). Another study showed that the impact of the value and definition of learning in museums by students and teachers leads to some discussion between students with their peers supplying further information (Griffin, 2004). Thus, these studies are aligned to the present study as curation and peer discussions are needed more than just other ways of learning in museums.

Text drivers such as descriptions of artifacts, relics, and other museum displays are helpful to learn about local history and culture. It provides context and background information allowing them to understand the artifacts and their significance. According to the previous research of Ariffin and Zainal Abidin (2019), the purpose of the text in a museum display is to communicate important information about the locations and artifacts on exhibit through specific nouns, which helps visitors establish connections and gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical significance of each artifact. Also, well-written text descriptions can spark curiosity and encourage students to ask questions and engage in discussions. This active learning process can create a more meaningful and memorable educational experience (Yalovitsyna, Volokhova, & Korzun, 2019). Furthermore, text descriptions serve as starting points for students to explore and further research the significance of the artifact to the history and culture. Students may be inspired to delve deeper into the subject by reading the text about an artifact or historical event, broadening their knowledge and appreciation of their local history and culture (Windhager et al., 2019).

Actual experiences such as applying learnings through museum exhibits, giving point of view from the past, and wearing traditional attire in the local context enhances preservice teachers' experiential learning in a way that they put themselves in a situation wherein they act as the first-hand learners. Previous study has demonstrated that openness is connected with people's ability to immerse themselves in their environments, for example, in doing activities during museum visits (Weibel et al., 2010; Meyer et al., 2023)). In addition, museums are becoming more audience-centered and are required to consider the needs of the potential visitors when planning activities and exhibitions (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006). Museum visits provide important learning opportunities for people across the lifespan. People can use the exhibitions and activities in different museums as reflections of themselves, the present moment, and the past to gain first-hand experience (Falk & Dierking, 2018). Additional studies also indicated that museum visits focus on the unique museum collections which engage students (Giblin, Ramos, & Grout, 2019), evoke a potential heritage interpretation (Packer,

Ballantyne, & Uzzell, 2019), and creative imagination which describes ease in visualizing things (Soto & John, 2017). Thus, learning in museums provides cognitive and affective skills by reinforcing prior knowledge through direct concrete experience.

This study had several strengths, these are opportunity of preservice teachers to share perspectives, thoughts, and experiences themselves by providing valuable insights, investigated the effectiveness of experiential and place-based learning approaches in the field of local culture and history and described how these methods shaped preservice teachers' understanding of their local culture and history, contributed to the broader field of multicultural education and inclusivity which described exposure to diverse perspectives and narratives, contributed to understanding how learning about local culture and history influences students' sense of identity and belonging, and explored the ways in which students connect their personal experiences, heritage, and community with their social studies education. The study has potential limitations. First, limited sample representativeness which involved a specific sample of social studies students distinguished by their qualifications. The results obtained in this study may not be applicable to students outside of this field. Second, self-reporting and social desirability bias which have possibly relied on self-reported data obtained through interviews. Students may possibly have provided socially desirable responses or may not accurately recall their experiences, leading to bias in the data. Third, the study covers only how social studies preservice teachers learn local culture and history, in which other disciplines are not included. Finally, outside influences including prior knowledge, socio-cultural background, and the classroom environment may have had an impact on the students' reflections and experiences. It is crucial to recognize these limitations in order to ensure a fair assessment of the study's findings and to promote future research that specifically addresses these constraints.

This study recommends that social studies preservice teachers should focus on the factor of how they learn most effectively in museums. Also, further research can be improved by integrating other fields of social studies in learning through museums, not just limited to local culture and history. Furthermore, the study should be expanded to include a more diverse and representative sample of social studies students from different schools, grade levels, and cultural backgrounds which can provide a broader understanding of how learning local culture and history impacts students across various contexts. Lastly, additional research to measure the impact of learning local culture and history on students' academic achievement, critical thinking skills, cultural competency, and empathy could also be utilized to include quantitative data rather than qualitative. By considering these research recommendations, the study can further contribute to the field of social studies education.

## 5. Conclusions

Museum visits can be a rich and immersive way to learn about the history and culture of a place. Learning from museum visits is an ongoing process. Different museums may interpret history and culture differently, so visiting multiple institutions can provide a well-rounded view. Museums can be a great place to learn about local history and culture, but they may not provide a complete or unbiased picture. To develop a well-rounded understanding, it is critical to approach the information with an open mind, seek multiple perspectives, and continue to explore other sources.

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