Street Stories: Capturing Narratives Through Mural in Pusing Town

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Abstract

The paper "Street Stories: Capturing Narratives Through Mural in Pusing Town" explores the transformative power of mural art as a medium of inclusive expression and community engagement. This study emphasizes the accessibility of art and its role in transcending social and economic barriers. Through a qualitative approach, including observations, interviews, and documentation, the research examines the impact of the Pusing Town mural project in revitalizing local narratives, fostering social cohesion, and enhancing cultural pride. The study introduces a framework for assessing the mural's contributions to social, educational, and empowerment outcomes, addressing previous limitations in measuring direct impacts. The findings highlight the effectiveness of murals in not only beautifying urban landscapes but also serving as tools for education, community empowerment, and historical preservation.

Keywords: *Mural, Narratives, Pusing Town*

Kisah Jalanan: Merakam Naratif Melalui Lukisan Mural Di Pekan Pusing

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Abstrak

Penulisan "Kisah Jalanan: Merakam Naratif Melalui Lukisan Mural di Pekan Pusing" meneroka pengaruh transformasi seni mural sebagai medium ekspresi inklusif dan penglibatan komuniti. Kajian ini menekankan ketercapaian seni dan perannya dalam mengatasi halangan sosial dan ekonomi. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif, termasuk pemerhatian, temubual, dan dokumentasi, penyelidikan ini mengkaji impak projek mural Pekan Pusing dalam menghidupkan semula naratif tempatan, memupuk keharmonian sosial, dan meningkatkan kebanggaan budaya. Kajian ini memperkenalkan rangka kerja untuk menilai sumbangan mural terhadap hasil sosial, pendidikan, dan pemberdayaan, serta menangani keterbatasan sebelumnya dalam mengukur impak langsung. Dapatan kajian menekankan keberkesanan mural bukan sahaja dalam menghiasi landskap bandar, tetapi juga sebagai alat untuk pendidikan, pemberdayaan komuniti, dan pemeliharaan sejarah.

Kata Kunci: Mural, Naratif, Pekan Pusing

1.0 Introduction

Art defies boundaries and restrictions by its very nature, offering itself as an accessible avenue for all who seek to engage with it. In a world where barriers to access are prevalent, art stands as a beacon of inclusivity, inviting individuals from all walks of life to partake in its beauty and meaning. Unlike many other forms of expression, art requires no prerequisites or memberships; it exists openly, waiting to be discovered and appreciated by anyone who chooses to embrace it. Whether through public installations, digital platforms, or community workshops, the democratization of art ensures that its transformative power knows no bounds (Burger, 2023).

Furthermore, the digital age has revolutionized the accessibility of art, breaking down traditional barriers of geography and economics. Online galleries, virtual exhibitions, and digital archives provide unprecedented opportunities for individuals to explore various artistic creations from the comfort of their homes. This unrestricted access broadens artistic horizons and fosters a global dialogue that transcends cultural divides and fosters mutual understanding and appreciation (Momaa, 2023).

Ultimately, the freedom of art extends beyond mere consumption; it empowers individuals to become active participants in the creative process. From amateur enthusiasts to seasoned professionals, art offers a canvas for self-expression and exploration without judgment or constraint. Whether through painting, sculpture, music, or dance, individuals are encouraged to unleash their creativity and contribute their unique perspectives to the ever-evolving tapestry of human expression. In this way, art becomes not just a form of entertainment or enrichment but a fundamental right—a testament to the unyielding spirit of human imagination and ingenuity (USA Art News, 2024).

Based on Gifford (2024), mural art rooted in community embodies the essence of collective expression and shared identity. Unlike traditional forms of art created in isolation, community-based murals emerge from a collaborative process that engages residents, artists, and stakeholders. This collaborative effort ensures that the mural reflects the unique stories, values, and aspirations of the community it serves. From concept development to execution, community members play an integral role, contributing ideas, providing feedback, and even lending a hand in painting the mural. Through this inclusive approach, mural art reflects the community's collective spirit and cultural richness.

Furthermore, community-based mural projects have the power to transform physical spaces into vibrant hubs of cultural exchange and social engagement. These murals serve as visual testimonials to the community's heritage and collective memory by depicting local narratives, historical landmarks, and cultural symbols. They become focal points for community pride and cohesion, fostering a sense of belonging among residents. Additionally, creating murals often involves workshops, events, and gatherings that bring people together, bridging divides and strengthening social bonds. As a result, murals not only beautify urban landscapes but also serve as catalysts for community empowerment and revitalization (Brandon & Deserea, 2024).

As indicated by Young (2022), community-based mural art has the potential to address pressing social issues and amplify marginalized voices within society. Through thematic murals that tackle topics such as social justice, environmental sustainability, or cultural diversity, communities can spark meaningful conversations and advocate for positive change. By giving voice to underrepresented groups and shedding light on their experiences, murals become powerful tools for advocacy and social activism. They challenge prevailing narratives, inspire empathy, and mobilize collective action, ultimately contributing to the creation of more equitable and inclusive communities.

2.0   Literature Review

The article explores the role of mural painting in inclusive art education. It discusses the historical and theoretical background of inclusive education, emphasizing its importance in providing educational opportunities for all, regardless of age, gender, race, or ability. It highlights the significance of inclusive art learning, arguing that it fosters students' creativity, critical thinking, and social interaction. Furthermore, the nature of mural painting pedagogy promotes collaborative and constructivist learning. It describes how mural projects involve students in every stage of the process, from design to completion, fostering teamwork and individual accountability. Through case studies at both the college and middle school levels, the transformative impact of collaborative mural projects on students, including those with disabilities. Integrating mural painting into educational curricula promotes inclusivity, creativity, and social cohesion among students of diverse backgrounds and abilities (Ho, 2010).

In traditional art education, the emphasis often lies on individual performance and competitiveness, which can inadvertently exclude certain learners. However, the mural painting curriculum stands out for its emphasis on collaborative execution, ideas development, and constructivist learning. By involving learners of different skills, abilities, and ages in various stages of the mural painting process, from design to completion, inclusive community murals provide a platform for meaningful engagement and shared learning experiences. This approach aligns with contemporary educational theories, such as collaborative learning and constructivism, which emphasize active engagement and knowledge generation through hands-on experiences (Migeon, 2024).

Through mural painting projects, learners acquire practical skills in art and design and develop a deeper understanding of artistic concepts and techniques. Working alongside teachers, peers, and community members, participants contribute to the creation of meaningful artwork that reflects their collective ideas and aspirations. Despite potential challenges, such as accommodating learners with disabilities, modern digital technology offers avenues for their meaningful participation, such as digital mural design and documentation. Ultimately, the success of a community mural hinges on the collective contributions of all participants, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging within the community where the mural is located (Ho, 2012).

Based on Li & Liu (2023), mural art and visual communication share a close bond, as murals represent one of the most impactful forms of visual expression. Utilizing elements like images, colors, layouts, and illustrations, mural art effectively communicates messages, ideas, or emotions, encapsulating the essence of visual communication. Each mural carries a distinct message or narrative, spanning from social and political commentary to purely aesthetic themes. Visual communication in murals serves to convey these messages to viewers, enhancing their understanding and engagement.

The murals have a transformative effect on the spaces they inhabit, altering the character and appearance of their surroundings. This transformative quality renders murals a form of visual communication that interacts with the physical environment, whether by adorning building walls, defining neighborhood identities, or catalyzing social discourse. Indeed, murals frequently serve as platforms for expressing social and political concerns, advocating for change, and challenging injustices, thereby exerting a significant societal impact. Consequently, mural art transcends mere aesthetic beauty to emerge as a potent medium of visual communication that actively influences and inspires communities and their environments (Sahabuddin & Hildayanti, 2024).

Interactive murals as visual media in education, focusing on the effectiveness in enhancing language learning. As supported by previous studies, interactive murals have been shown to impact viewers and enhance student learning significantly. Murals serve not only as functional barriers but

also as visual enhancements in spaces. It is a valuable educational tool in classrooms, offering both instructional and entertainment value. Murals, distinct from traditional paintings, must meet specific criteria related to design, maintenance, and observation to be classified as such. Interactive murals' potential in English instruction, offers new insights into application for school-age students during a critical developmental stage (Sri Yulani & Linarta, 2023).

3.0   Methodology

This art research study focuses on the relationship between creative or appreciative experiences and artworks. It generally possesses characteristics of qualitative research, aiming to explore and understand the meanings derived from the activities or outcomes of individuals or groups within specific human, social, or cultural contexts (Ismail, I., 2022). Descriptive research is a type of study that describes or illustrates a problem. It aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon. This type of research can answer questions of what, where, when, and how, but not why. Unlike experimental research, the researcher does not control or manipulate any variables but observes and measures them (Fiantika, F. R., et al 2022). While descriptive research is effective in capturing and analyzing the role of murals in revitalizing local narratives and fostering cultural pride, it has limitations in measuring their direct impact on specific community outcomes, such as social cohesion or educational benefits. To address this, the study incorporates additional assessment frameworks to evaluate the mural's effectiveness in addressing social issues and empowering the community.
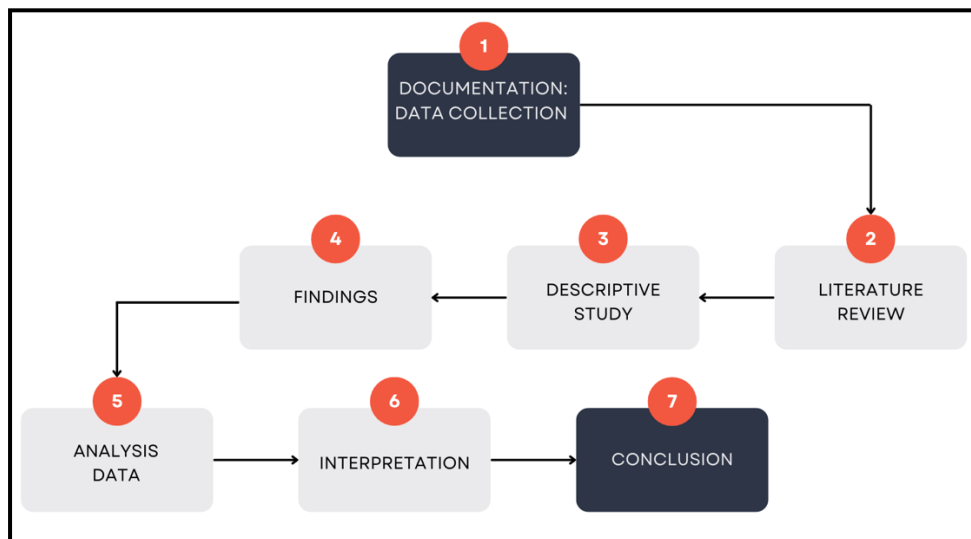

Figure 1: Process of Qualitative Research Method

(Source: Wan Nurhasyimah W. Mohd Apandi, 2022)

Based on the conceptual framework shown in *Figure 1*, the qualitative research in this study aims to comprehensively comprehend the contextual elements of events and the data gathered from the Pusing Town mural. This art study distinguishes itself from previous qualitative research by strongly emphasizing profound sensitivity and a deep understanding of the mural's environment. The

researcher acquires evidence through observations and interviews to fully grasp the artwork's influence, instead of exclusively depending on documentation. The methods employed encompass observation, interviews, and documentation, facilitating a thorough comprehension of the icons shown in the mural. Supplementary information is collected from several resources, including catalogs, books, and digital sources, as well as through direct encounters with the mural artist at the location. Methods of data collection encompass videography, photography, and contemporaneous field notes.

Additionally, to address the limitations of qualitative research, this study integrates qualitative impact assessment techniques to capture the mural's influence on social and educational outcomes. This includes gathering feedback from community members, using structured interview techniques to assess perceptions of social cohesion, and exploring educational programs linked to the mural. While qualitative research does not emphasize generalization, it seeks to understand and uncover the meaning behind data, aiming for empirical, logical, and theoretical insights (Fiantika, et al., 2022).
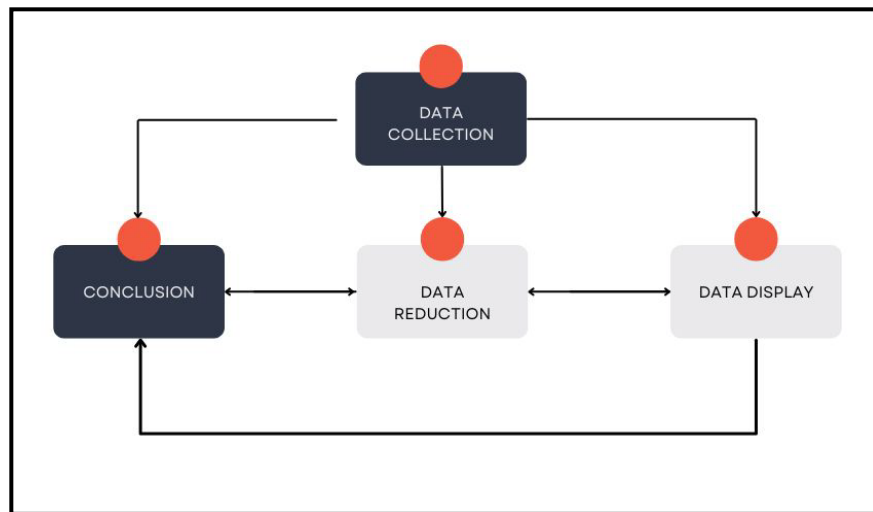

Figure 2: Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model

(Source: Fiantika, et al., 2022)

Based on the components of Data Analysis: the Interactive Model states that activities in qualitative data analysis are conducted interactively and continuously at every research stage until data saturation is achieved. The flow of data analysis activities coincides, as illustrated in Figure 2 (Fiantika, et al., 2022). This study enhances its analytical rigor by incorporating qualitative coding techniques to identify recurring themes in community responses. By applying structured thematic analysis, the research ensures that the mural's role in addressing social issues and fostering empowerment is critically examined. These additional measures strengthen the study's ability to assess the mural's broader social implications beyond mere descriptive observations.

4.0   Analysis And Discussion

Figure 3: Together with Rector of UiTM Perak, Head of Faculty and the members involved in this project

(Source: Ruzamira Abdul Razak, 2024)

Figure 4: The members involved in making a mural

(Source: Ruzamira Abdul Razak, 2024)

The Pusing Town mural project embodies community-driven artistic expression, uniting local artists and residents to reflect shared heritage. While the research effectively captures the mural's role in promoting cultural pride, further exploration of its social and educational contributions enhances

the study. The mural project fosters a sense of belonging by depicting historical and cultural narratives familiar to residents. Workshops and guided tours surrounding the mural have introduced educational elements, promoting historical awareness among younger generations. Furthermore, the artwork incorporates themes of unity and sustainability, reflecting ongoing community issues such as environmental conservation and heritage preservation.

To provide richer insights into the dynamics between community members and artists, the study examines the extent of local involvement in concept development, painting, and maintenance. It explores how muralists interpret community narratives and translate them into visual storytelling. Additionally, the research considers public reception by gathering feedback from different age groups on the mural's relevance to their daily lives and identity.

Figure 5: The mural design 2 that has been painted on the wall in Pusing Town

(Source: Ruzamira Abdul Razak, 2024)

Pusing Town is a surviving ancient town located in Central Perak. Pusing played a crucial role in Malaya's tin mining sector, looking back at its history. Since the 1900s, Central Perak has been recognized for its plentiful and superior tin ore reserves. In the colonial era and during the height of the global tin industry, railway stations were constructed to facilitate the transportation of tin ore for export to foreign markets. The five stations implicated in this were Tronoh, Pusing, Papan, Lahat, and Menglembu. These stations operated effectively until the 1940s, when they were severely damaged or destroyed by Japanese military aircraft and bombings during the occupation of Malaya. The historical grandeur of these railway stations and Pusing town served as the inspiration for the historical theme of this painting project. The main subjects, including locomotives, tracks, station officers, mining activities, stations, and station name signs, were organized to create an ambiance that reflects bygone times (Visit Perak, 2020).

In addition, the depiction of rubber planting activities, which were also of great importance at that period, as well as the portrayal of traditional Chinese lantern-playing activities that evoke a sense of nostalgia for the past. Several suggestions were created based on the research of Pusing town's

historical subject. One of the prominent notions emphasized the significance of Pusing in its history. The primary emphasis was on trains and tin mining. Moreover, the station signboards played a vital role in presenting the local stories. The arrangement of the building windows was impromptu, designed to create the illusion of an antiquated station connected by a circular network of railway tracks surrounding these areas.

Figure 5: The mural design 1 that has been painted on the wall in Pusing Town

(Source: Ruzamira Abdul Razak, 2024)

The Pusing mural is a vibrant and compelling piece of public art that captures the essence of the town's cultural and historical heritage. Employing a bold color palette, it contrasts beautifully with the rustic facade of the building. Bright greens, reds, and yellows dominate the scene, immediately drawing the viewer's attention. The mural's dynamic and somewhat fragmented composition features various elements like a teapot, coffee cup, and local desserts. The central placement of the pouring teapot and coffee cup creates a focal point, guiding the viewer's eyes across the artwork. Bold, thick lines give the mural a graphic, almost cartoon-like quality, while the old wall's texture adds depth and a sense of history, integrating the artwork seamlessly into its environment (Dawson, 2023).

The mural prominently features elements reflecting Pusing Town's local culture and history. It highlights everyday life and local traditions through the inclusion of a traditional coffee cup and the image of a local farmer. Signboards and items reminiscent of local markets and produce emphasize the town's agricultural roots and heritage. The mural tells a story of Pusing's past and present, merging historical references with contemporary artistic styles. By incorporating text and imagery, it serves as a visual narrative of the town's identity and heritage. The artist skillfully integrates the mural with the building's features, using windows and wall texture to enhance the artwork's narrative and aesthetic appeal. This artwork exemplifies the power of murals in preserving and celebrating local identity and heritage, engaging the community, attracting visitors, and serving as an educational tool that highlights Pusing's rich history and traditions.

5.0   Conclusion

According to Andersen (2024), murals epitomize the democratization of art, transcending traditional boundaries and offering an accessible form of expression for all. Unlike artworks confined within galleries or museums, murals adorn the public spaces we navigate daily, from bustling city streets to quiet suburban lanes. This unrestricted accessibility ensures that anyone, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, can encounter and engage with the art. Murals become a part of the fabric of our communities, enriching our urban landscapes and fostering a sense of connection and belonging among residents.

Moreover, the digital age has further expanded the reach of murals, breaking down geographical barriers and amplifying their impact. Through social media platforms and online galleries, murals can be shared and appreciated by audiences worldwide in real-time. This virtual accessibility ensures that the transformative power of murals is not limited by physical location, allowing individuals from diverse cultures and regions to experience and connect with the art. As a result, murals become catalysts for global dialogue, sparking conversations and inspiring change across borders (Sameh, 2024).

Furthermore, the inherent freedom of murals encourages artists to push the boundaries of creativity and explore bold new ideas. Murals provide a blank canvas for artists to express themselves authentically, without the constraints of commercialism or censorship. Whether conveying powerful social messages, celebrating cultural heritage, or simply brightening up public spaces with vibrant colors and imagery, murals empower artists to leave their mark on the world. In essence, murals embody the ethos that art should be inclusive, accessible, and unrestricted, serving as a testament to the universal human need for creative expression (Petronienė, & Juzelėnienė, 2022).

The study successfully demonstrates that murals serve as powerful tools for cultural preservation and community engagement. However, a more structured analysis of social and educational outcomes strengthens its contributions. The Pusing Town mural provides an accessible public art space that educates, empowers, and inspires. Future research should include longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of mural projects on urban identity, tourism, and community development.

To build upon the findings of this study, future research should explore the economic impact of murals on local businesses and tourism in Pusing Town. Investigating how murals contribute to commercial growth, attract visitors, and shape urban identity would provide a more comprehensive understanding of their benefits. Additionally, a comparative study examining the effectiveness of murals in different towns or cultural settings could offer insights into best practices for mural-driven community development. Another important avenue for future research is the role of digital and interactive murals in fostering greater engagement and participation among younger audiences, leveraging technology to enhance mural appreciation and education.

5.0   Acknowledgement

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