Community Service and its Effects on Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement

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Abstract

Community service based service learning has been implemented in many different academic settings from elementary school to college.[3] Service learning is utilized as a tool to help students integrate real-world experiences and skills into the curriculum of the course. Students who engage in community based service learning are likely to see improvements in areas such as self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, and academic achievement.[3] Our objective was to measure academic achievement and self-esteem. We looked at student's participation in service learning and community service as well as those who have not participated. We sent out recruitment emails to the student body as well as using social media. Participants were asked questions about their overall self-esteem, academic achievement and involvement in community service or service learning. We used questions from the Harter Self-Perception for College Students and the Blais, Brière, Pelletier, and Valler Academic Motivation Scale, Why you go to College? We also used items that were created about community service and service learning involvement as well as how it influences academic achievement and self-esteem. The survey took take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. It was hypothesized that students who participate in service learning and community service will tend to have higher levels of self-esteem and academic achievement compared to those who do not. By examining student's participation in community service or service learning, it tested how effective service learning and community service were as learning tools. It examined the effects on student's attitudes about themselves.

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Community service based service learning has been implemented in many different academic settings from elementary school to college.[3] Service learning is utilized as a tool to help students integrate real-world experiences and skills into the curriculum of the course. Students who engage in community based service learning are likely to see improvements in areas such as self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, and academic achievement.[3] Academic achievements can be seen in the form of changes in knowledge both cognitively and in academics, the ability to apply knowledge, and how motivated one is to learn. Personal outcomes such as self-esteem encompass how participants perceive and feel about themselves, motives, or values.[1] Academic achievement and self-esteem were examined through students' participation in community service as well as service learning, to test how effective service learning and community service are as learning tools in the college setting, as well as examine the effects on student's attitudes about themselves.

In Weiler, Haddock, Zimmerman, Krafchick, Henry, and Rudisill (2013)[6] college students' participation in a service learning course was evaluated to see the effectiveness of mentoring at risk-youth on the development of civic-mindedness. Results showed that students who participated in the program gained greater benefits in self-esteem, interpersonal, and problem solving skills than those with no service learning experience. Further implications from Weiler et al. (2013)[6] suggest that having college students engage in mentoring programs is not only beneficial to mentees, but highly beneficial to the mentors in areas such as self-esteem, civic engagement, and civically-minded attitudes in regard to their college experience as a whole. The significance of looking at personal outcomes such as self-esteem when looking at

student's participation in service learning or community service may affect how they feel about it and influence further involvement in community service.

Similar to Weiler et al. (2013)[6], Stavrianopoulos (2008)[4] focused on the experience of students who participate in service learning by focusing on how service learning program academically met the needs of first year students. The John Jay College of Criminal Justice deployed a program that would have freshman take a service learning course; during their course they were surveyed to assess their experiences. Results found students felt that they had enhanced their understanding of class material and had fostered new bonds between other classmates. Implications of the study suggest that making community based service learning a part of the first year experience for college students is beneficial because it helps with retention and academic achievement.

It is also possible that service learning could have long lasting effects on academic outcomes. In Strange's (2004)[4] study of knowledge retention in a service learning experience, he found that introductory child development students who had completed a service learning component in their course earned grades 4.8% higher in upper level courses compared to those with no service learning. These findings suggest that those who engage in a service learning curriculum are more likely to achieve a modest gain in academic retention and achievement in the long term in comparison to those who do not engage in service learning.

In Uyulgan & Akkuzu's (2014)[2] study on student teacher's academic motivation showed that that those students with high grade point averages tend to have high academic intrinsic motivation as well. It was also shown that those students who are intrinsically motivated are more successful than those who tend to be extrinsically motivated.

It was hypothesized that students who participate in service learning and community service either for personal fulfillment or course requirement will tend to have higher levels of self-esteem and academic achievement compared to those who do not.

Method

Participants

The study consisted of 76 undergraduate students from Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. The participants speak fluent English and their ages range from 18 to 25 years (M=19.92 SD=1.31).The study was composed of 62 females and 11 males. They participated voluntarily in this study.

Materials

Materials used in this study included an electronic survey administered through Survey Monkey. Survey questions addressed participant's engagement in community service, their self-esteem as a person, self-esteem after doing community service, overall academic achievement, and academic achievements met after community service. The survey was broken into 4 main parts. The first part of the survey looked at descriptive responses such as class year, GPA, ethnicity, age, and gender. The second part of the survey was a 28 item questionnaire that examined why students go to school (Blais, Brière, Pelletier, & Vallerand, 1989). The scale measured student's academic motivation that included intrinsic motivation (doing something

because you want to) extrinsic motivation (doing something for ulterior reasons) and amotivation (not being motivated) A 7 point likert scale with responses 1"disagree completely", 2 "mostly disagree", 3 "somewhat disagree", 4 "neutral", 5 "somewhat agree", 6 "mostly agree", 7 "agree completely". For example one of the items was, "Because with only a high-school degree I would not find a high-paying job later on." The third part of the survey was a 10 item questionnaire that used the Self-Perception Profile for College Students to examine their self-esteem. For the purposes of the study we used the scholastic competence and overall global self-esteem (Harter & Neemann, 2012). A 4 point likert scale with responses "Not true of me at all" "A little true of me" "True of me" "Very true of me". For example one of the items was, "Some students feel confident they are mastering their coursework". The last part of the survey were items that examined what reason students participated in community service, what type of community service students had participated, and how long students had participated in community service for. For example one of the items was, "Have you participated in community service before? If so, why? following responses were presented, "Class requirement, personal development, I have not participated in community service".

Procedure

The student body of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts was sent an email explaining the basics of the survey as well as the link to the survey. They were able to click on that link which brought them to the first page on SurveyMonkey, which is an online survey tool. The first page asked for the consent of each participant as well as further explaining what the survey will be about. The survey took no longer than 15 minutes. After the participants completed the survey, they were brought to the debriefing page in which it was explained what the actual purpose of the study was.

Results

Tables 1-5 demonstrate the frequencies of the reasons why participants were involved in community service, what types of community services participants were involved in, how often participants engaged in community service, correlations among the dependent variables, and the means and standard deviations of the dependent variables. Examining the different reasons behind participant's participation in community service found there were more students who engaged in community service for personal development.

A One way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to assess the impact of types of participation on GPA. There was no significance main effect of GPA on types of participation.

A mixed between-within model analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to assess the impact of types of participation (class requirement, personal development and no participation) on self-esteem (scholastic competence and global self-esteem). There was a significant main effect of type of participation on self-esteem, $F_{(2, 63)}=6.28$, $p=.003$, partial eta squared=.166. The pairwise comparisons indicate that people who participate in community service for personal development tend to have a higher self-esteem than those who do not participate in community service. There were no other significant results.

A mixed between-within model analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to assess the impact of types of participation on academic motivation. There was no significant main effect for participation type or interaction but there was a significant overall difference in motivation,

Wilks' Lambda=.383, F(2, 63)=49.071, p<.001, partial eta squared= .617. The pairwise comparisons indicate that extrinsic motivation is significantly higher than intrinsic motivation when it comes to participation in community service. Amotivation is significantly lower than both extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation.

 The relation between types of motivation, types of self-esteem, grade point average (GPA), hours spent per month participating in community service, and how often participants participate in community service were investigated using a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (see Table 5). Intrinsic motivation has a strong positive correlation with extrinsic motivation in that as intrinsic motivation increases, so does extrinsic motivation. Amotivation was found to have a strong negative correlation with both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in that as amotivation increases, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation decrease. Global self-esteem was found to have a weak positive correlation with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in that as global self-esteem gets higher, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation get higher. Global self-esteem was found to have a strong negative correlation with amotivation in that as global self-esteem gets higher, amotivation gets lower. Scholastic competence was found to have a strong positive correlation with GPA and global self-esteem in that as scholastic competence gets higher, GPA and global self-esteem get higher. Scholastic competence was found to have a medium positive correlation with extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in that as scholastic competence gets higher, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation get higher. Scholastic competence was also found to have a strong negative correlation with amotivation in that as scholastic competence gets higher, amotivation gets lower. How often participants participated in community service was found to have a positive moderate correlation with hours per month spent participating in community service.

Table 1

Participation in Hours per Month

Time (Hours/month)	Frequency	Valid Percent	Percent
0	20	31.3	26.3
1-4	23	36.0	30.2
5-9	10	11.1	13.1
10-14	6	9.4	7.9
15-19	2	3.2	2.6
20-24	1	1.6	1.3
25-29	1	1.6	1.3
30+	1	1.6	1.3
Missing	12	-	-
Total	76	100.0	100.00

Table 2

Reason Why Participants were Involved with Community Service

Participation	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Percent
Class Requirement	19	25.0	25.0	25.0
Personal Development	44	57.9	82.9	57.9
No Participation	13	17.1	100.0	17.1
	76	100.0		100.0

Table 3

Different Community Service Participation

Type	Frequency	Percent
Community Day of Service	29	38.2
Alternative Spring Break	1	1.3
S.T.I.C.S.	3	3.9
Write Stuff	3	3.9
Pathways	5	6.6
H.A.L.F. Times	5	6.6
STEM	1	1.3
College Cadets	1	1.3
A Hand up, Not a Hand Out	8	10.5
Adams Youth Center	11	14.5
BART Homework Buddies	3	3.9
YMCA	7	9.2
Teaching to Learn	2	2.6
Other	38	50

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviations of all Dependent Variables

	Class Requirement		Personal Development		No Service	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Global Self-Esteem	2.89	0.52	3.09	0.78	2.37	0.75
Scholastic Self-Esteem	2.88	0.52	3.21	0.67	2.45	0.74
Intrinsic Motivation	5.15	1.03	5.22	1.51	4.79	0.82
Extrinsic Motivation	5.85	0.86	5.89	1.31	5.38	1.13
Amotivation	1.82	1.01	2.44	1.97	3.05	1.76
GPA	3.15	0.53	3.25	0.54	3.19	0.46

Table 5 *Correlations Between Hours spent per month, How often, GPA, Motivation, and Self-Esteem*

Measure	Hour/month	How often they go to Community Service	GPA	Extrinsic Mean	Intrinsic Mean	Amotivation Mean	Global Self-Esteem	Scholastic Competence
Hours per Month	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
How often they go to Community Service	.433*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GPA	-.132	-.042	-	-	-	-	-	-
Extrinsic Mean	-.015	-.101	.014	-	-	-	-	-
Intrinsic Mean	.082	-.040	.052	.717*	-	-	-	-
Amotivation Mean	.013	-.093	-.039	-.507*	-.507*	-	-	-
Global Self-Esteem Mean	-.109	.071	.235	.281*	.319*	-.509*	-	-
Scholastic Competence Mean	-.109	.050	.502*	.370	.366*	-.410*	.670*	-

Discussion

Results showed that there was a significant difference in how groups were reporting their self-esteem. A main effect of self-esteem collapsed over both global and scholastic self-esteem for participants who engaged in community service for personal development. A pairwise comparison showed that participants who engaged in community service for personal development had higher overall self-esteem compared to participants who had not engaged in community service.

Results also showed that the reasoning behind participant's participation in community service had no significant effect on GPA. Possible limitations that could explain this result suggest that due to the sample there was a selection bias. This selection bias may have occurred due to the survey being voluntary. Another possible explanation may be due to the stringent range of the average GPA among participants. Participants in each group had B averages. Perhaps results may have been different if there was more variability in GPA. Other limitations that occurred could have been due to the sample size. The eta squared for GPA suggests that there is a practical significance in the difference between participants, but due to a lack of power.

   Correlations among the hours spent per month doing community service, how often participants participated in community service, GPA, intrinsic motivation, amotivation, global self-esteem, and scholastic competence had no correlation. There were no differences among the groups in these variables. However there was a difference among these groups was in extrinsic motivation.

If this study was to be replicated again a few changes that would be beneficial to make is to track participant's academic achievement before and after they have engaged in community service. Although there was no main effect for GPA for the reasons why participants engage in community service, the small trend in the mean for GPA's throughout all of the groups as well as the eta squared that showed a lack of power in the sample size. By repeating the study and getting a larger sample size it could possibly show an effect in community service participation. Further implications of the this finding could suggest that promoting community service for personal fulfillment can benefits students in how they feel about themselves. Having a higher self-esteem in both global and scholastic may affect academic achievement for those who have participated in community service for personal fulfillment.

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