

Impact Assessment of Student Volunteers on the Community Extension Services of the University amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: *Student volunteering as a form of community participation is essential for higher education's goal. Volunteering focuses on the service delivered, and the service user is the beneficiary. Youth that participates in community service have better outcomes. While the globe is grappling with a pandemic pushing people to keep their distance from one another, youth community service opportunities may seem different but are still a vital part of youth development. The university's community extension initiatives provide students with a learning experience through outreach activities. UCLM College of Hospitality and Tourism Management outreach program features the students' voluntary participation in the outreach program to conduct the community extension activities amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The outreach program supports the students' desire to participate in community outreach amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was conducted to assess the impact of community extension services on student-volunteers and how this volunteerism can contribute to their professional development. The respondents of this study were the student-volunteers of the university on the community extension services during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was found out that the involvement of the student volunteers in various community extension activities has a great impact on their knowledge and skills. Moreover, the involvement of the student volunteers in the limited community extension activities has given them a chance to strengthen values and positive attitudes towards life, studies, family, community, and environment.*

Keywords: Impact assessment, student-volunteers, community extension, COVID-19, pandemic, university of Cebu

1. Introduction

Student volunteering (SV) as a form of community participation is an essential aspect of higher education's goal (Geller et al., 2016; Conner & Erickson 2017) and a curricular activity that is an integral part of experiential learning in many parts of the world (Maheshwari et al., 2014). The focus and intended recipient of the engagement distinguish SV from other forms of student engagement such as service-learning or internships ((Geller et al., 2016). Volunteering focuses on the service delivered, and the service user is the beneficiary (Soong, 2013).

Youth that participates in community service have better outcomes (Schmidt et al., 2012). While the globe is grappling with a pandemic pushing people to keep their distance from one another, youth community service opportunities may seem different but are still a vital part of youth development (Williamson et al., 2020; Akat&Karataş 2020)." An increased sense of civic responsibility and volunteerism can be linked to the students' active and imaginative community outreach programs (Hamilton et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2020). Through outreach activities, the university's community extension initiatives provide students with a learning experience (Allahwala et al., 2013; Reid, 2013) that fosters a spirit of volunteerism (López, 2013).

UCLM College of Hospitality and Tourism Management outreach program features the students' voluntary participation in the outreach program to conduct the community extension activities amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The outreach program supports the students' desire to participate in community outreach amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Campus closures entail more than just switching to online classrooms (Ali, 2020; Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). They also isolate college students from non-academic activities and relationships on campus (Crawford et al., 2020). The collegiate experience has changed dramatically this year due to the coronavirus outbreak (Kecojevic et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2020) from social events and athletics to concerts and clubs (White et al., 2020).

College is when students become more conscious of community concerns and become more interested in action (Williamson et al., 2020; Massengale et al., 2020). One activity that might lose out on this fall is the chance to get engaged with issues and organizations that they care about in life (Williamson et al., 2020).

Extension programs assist students to understand the importance of citizenship in a way that traditional classroom education cannot (Dunn, 2013). Such engagements can also offer new ideas and insights to the intellectual process and provide academic work and life a more considerable

significance (Moore, 2012). Simultaneously, community stakeholders have a better awareness of pertinent issues and are better equipped to make decisions that will help them improve their current situation (Bracken et al., 2015).

Coproduction relies heavily on volunteerism (Tönurist & Surva 2017; Musso et al., 2019). Coproducing volunteers actively deliver critical public services to their local communities without receiving any monetary remuneration (Leyshon et al., 2019). Working with volunteers and groups to deliver community services can address critical gaps (Tönurist & Surva 2017) and keep governmental agencies from becoming overburdened during crisis events like COVID-19 (Gostin et al., 2020). However, the government's capacity to properly use volunteers and link volunteer coproducers with relevant duties is the most significant impediment to public volunteerism (Pestoff, 2018).

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines has mandated that universities and colleges provide educational and civic services to the communities (Balanay & Halog 2016). The Republic Act 9163, also known as the "National Service Training Program (NSTP) Act of 2001," is an example of such policies (Ruiz & Sabio 2012; Llenares & Deocarís 2018). It emphasizes HEIs' commitment to deliver, promote, and sustain community service. It is worth noting that this is similar to the community service-learning programs established in the United States under the National and Community Service Act of 1990. The Commission just launched the Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction: Vol. CHED Memorandum Order 52, series of 2016: 35-55 37 efforts to re-direct extension programs under 15 (No. 1) June 2018: 35-55 37 efforts to re-direct extension programs under CHED Memorandum Order 52, series of 2016 (Ruiz & Sabio 2012).

The policy lays out some guidelines for HEI community extension programs, including "providing space to discover practical, evidence- and science-based answers that can address real-world social, economic, and environmental challenges of partner citizens and communities." As producers of knowledge or innovation hubs, HEIs are uniquely positioned to collaborate with communities, businesses, and industries to address real-world social, economic, and environmental challenges (Balanay & Halog 2016). University extensions, sometimes known as "university extensions," are "any educational innovations carried out outside the university." Most of these innovations are focused on literary, agricultural, and social issues (Llenares & Deocarís 2018).

Partnerships between higher education institutions and the general public should be mutually beneficial (Franco et al., 2019). The academe's research and technology transfer initiatives should improve curriculum and pedagogy (Toquero, 2020). Community stakeholders have a better awareness of pertinent issues and are better equipped to make decisions that will help them improve their current situation (Franco et al., 2019).

HEIs deliver extension programs in various ways (Rubens et al., 2017). There are delivery methods that focus on students

assisting local organizations and delivery methods that involve faculty and staff programs to address community development (Hénard & Roseveare 2012) in the form of educational cohorts, social service, public health, and livelihood and technical training, consultations, and direct application of R&D output (Porter et al., 2014). Livelihood, health promotion, and computer literacy initiatives are the most common forms of extension efforts (Llenares & Deocarís 2018).

The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management of the University of Cebu LM Campus is very responsive and supportive to the call of the Commission on Higher Education to provide educational and civic services to the communities. Student-volunteers are motivated to participate in the community extension services of the College because they want to help the underserved of the society and develop a sense of volunteerism among them. Hence, this study was conducted to assess the impact of community extension services on student-volunteers and how this volunteerism can contribute to their professional development.

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized descriptive research methods to determine the impact of community extension services on the student-volunteers of the university amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Site

The study was conducted at the University of Cebu Lapulapu and Mandaue Campus 2nd semester, AY 2020-2021.

Respondents

The respondents of this study were the BSHM student-volunteers of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management of the University of Cebu Lapulapu and Mandaue Campus.

Instrumentation

This study utilized a self-assembled study survey. It is divided into two parts. The first part is the respondent's profile, and the second part is the activities students participated in and or volunteered. The third part of the instrument is the impact of the different community extension programs of the university on the student volunteers.

Treatment of Data

A simple percentage was used to determine the profile of the respondents. At the same time, a weighted mean was utilized to assess the impact of the different community extension programs of the university on the student volunteers.

3. Results and Discussions

Presented in figure 1 below is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age majority, with 71.7 percent belonging to the ages between 18-21 years old followed by 26.4 percent between 22-24 years old. The student

volunteers or respondents of this study at these levels started to mature, be independent, and establish experience.

The maturity of the student volunteers is an essential part of exercising their potentialities. It is the best time for them to prove their capabilities and determine areas in building self-sufficiency and focus on individual goals in life.

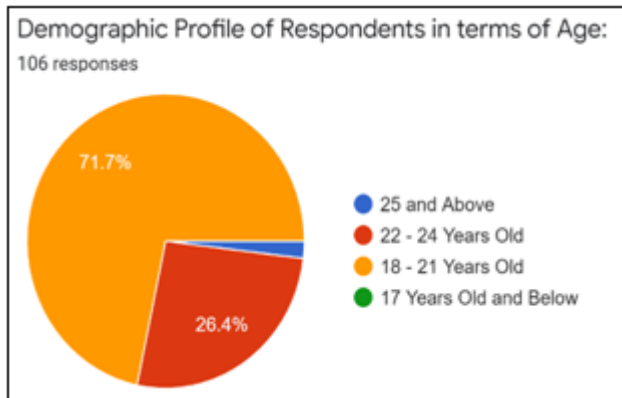


Figure 1: Demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age

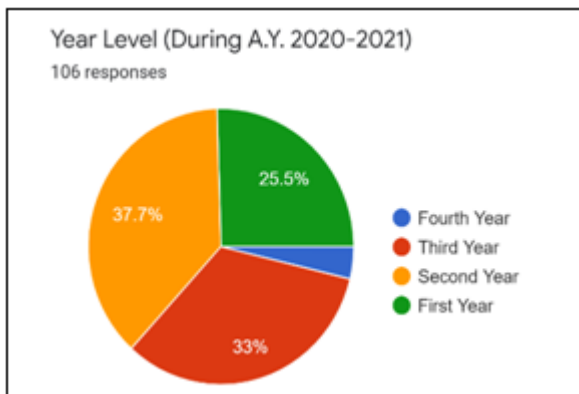


Figure 2: Demographic Profile of the Student Volunteers in terms of Year Level

Shown in figure 2 above is the profile of the respondents or student volunteers. In terms of year level, most of the 106 total participants in this study were 37.7 percent from the 2nd year. Next is 33.0 percent from the 3rd year, 25.5 percent from the 1st year, and a few percent from the 4th-year level.

The result indicates strong involvement and participation of student volunteers from the first year to third-year levels. It implies encouragement, support, and motivation through orientation programs online.

Table 1: CHTM-CARES Activities for A.Y. 2020-2021

Activities	F	%
• Gift Giving Programs to Partner Communities' selected beneficiaries thru CARES Office	42	39.6
• Donation Campaign and distributions of goods for Fire Victims thru CARES Office	45	42.5
• Virtual Seminar for Butuanon River Rehabilitation Program (Virtual River Summit 2020)	28	26.4
• Donation and distributions of relief goods to calamity (typhoons) victims thru CARES Office	51	48.1
• Others (Virtual seminars, orientation, and the likes)	24	22.6

Table 1 above showed the limited activities of the CHTM-CARES for A.Y. 2020-2021 due to pandemic. Despite the trying times, the student volunteers have given their full support on the donation and distribution of relief goods to calamity victims, with 51 or 48.1 percent of the total 106 respondents participating in this study.

In addition, there were 45 student volunteers, or 42.5 of the total 106 respondents involved in the donation campaign and distribution of goods to fire victims in Mandaue City through the Community Awareness, Relations, and Extension Service (CARES) office.

Further, there were 42 student volunteers involved in the gift-giving program to partner communities' selected beneficiaries undertaken through the CARES office. Students also participated in the virtual seminar for the Butuanon River Rehabilitation program in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The involvement of student volunteers during this academic year signifies dedication commitment and showcases individual social responsibility. It is a good indication that student volunteers are willing to exert efforts despite the limitations brought by COVID-19.

Table 2: Impact of the Involvements on the Knowledge and Skills of the Student Volunteers

Variables	Mode	Interpretation
• Enhances Interpersonal Skills	4	MA
• Exercises leadership Potentials	4	MA
• Increases human relation skills	4	MA
• Enhances managerial knowledge and skills	4	MA
• Enhances knowledge in the industry	4	MA
• Improves customer service delivery	4	MA
• Aligns industry-standard practices	4	MA
• Increases awareness on community development programs	4	MA
• Increases awareness on the importance of community relations	4	MA
• Enhances awareness on community characteristics	4	MA
Average Mode	4	MA

Legend: Strongly Agree- 5, Agree- 3, Strongly Disagree- 1, Moderately Agree- 4, Disagree- 2

Presented in table 2 above is the impact of the involvements on the knowledge and skills of the student volunteers. Based on the study results, student volunteers asserted that their involvement enhances interpersonal skills with a modal rating of 4 interpreted as moderately agree. Interpersonal skill is one of the characteristics that a person must possess to become a good leader in the future.

Exercising the leadership potentials of students is also one of the skills gained in participating in various community extension activities with a modal rating of 4 interpreted as moderately agree. At this point, student volunteers try to empower themselves and establish an experience of becoming dignified leaders soon.

Increasing human relation skills is one of the benefits gained through active involvement in various community extension

activities, as shown in Table 2 above, with a modal rating of 4 interpreted as moderately agree. Human relations is one of the skills needed in the workplace. With this, student volunteers try to generate in preparation for their future endeavors.

Participating in various community extension activities can also enhance the managerial knowledge and skills of the student volunteers, as shown in table 2 with a modal rating of 4 interpreted as moderately agree. The students' exposure is of great help in developing managerial skills and an avenue to practice what has been taught in the classrooms.

In addition, student volunteers gained enough skills on delivering customer service with a modal rating of 4 interpreted as moderately agree. It indicates that students can ensure proper handling of customers, dealing with different personalities, and handling customers' concerns.

Moreover, the strong involvement of student volunteers in various community extension services enhances knowledge in the industry, aligns industry-standard practices, increases awareness on community development programs, increases awareness of the importance of community relations, and enhances awareness of community characteristics. These elements can lead to personal and professional development and widen their horizons in life.

Overall, it greatly impacts student volunteers involved in various community extension activities against their knowledge and skills. Skills development can be acquired not only inside the classroom but also through exposure to various programs, activities, seminars, and training within the school premises and community-wide engagement.

Table 3: Impact of the Involvements on the Attitude and Values of the Student Volunteers

Variables	Mode	Interpretation
• Establishes rapport and camaraderie to stakeholders	3	MA
• Increases confidence level and trust	4	MA
• Strengthens self-respect and discipline	4	MA
• Creates positive image within the community	4	MA
• Strengthens the value of quality improvements	4	MA
• Enhances personal and professional characteristics	4	MA
• Develops positive emotions against people	4	MA
• Develops individual or personal social responsibility	4	MA
• Establishes strong support to environmental conservation	4	MA
• Integrates safety, security and risk management at home	4	MA
Average Mode	4	MA

Legend: Strongly Agree- 5, Agree- 3, Strongly Disagree- 1 Moderately Agree- 4 Disagree- 2

Shown in table 3 above is the impact of the involvement on the attitude and values of the student volunteers. The result showed that students' involvement greatly impacts the

increase of confidence level and trust, strengthens self-respect and discipline, strengthens values on quality improvements, enhances personal and professional characteristics, and develops positive emotions towards people. These elements emphasize the individual perspectives in life. These are intangible tools used to drive students soaring high as they go on their journey in the industry.

Likewise, the results in table 3 create a positive image within the community. It also develops individual or personal social responsibility, establishes strong support for environmental conservation, and integrates safety, security, and risk management at home. These components may give student volunteers a chance to govern socio-economic activities, implement environmental conservation and ensure safety and security at their household level.

Also, table 3 indicates the impact of the student volunteers on establishing rapport and camaraderie with stakeholders within academic institutions and the hospitality industry, with a modal rating of 3 interpreted as agreeing. It implies constant teamwork and professionalism, and it can also give a chance for the students to enhance and update industry knowledge.

In totality, the involvement of student volunteers in various community extension activities has a great impact on their attitudes and values. It is a good indication that students were not just wasting their time on participating in community extension activities but also giving them a chance to create their image. Their involvement empowers them to become good leaders in the industry soon.

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The majority of the student volunteers for the A.Y. 2020-2021 was at least 18 years old and above, mostly from 1st year to 3rd-year level, respectively.
- The community extension activities implemented and participated by student volunteers were limited to online seminars and relief goods contributions and distributions due to pandemics.
- The involvement of the student volunteers in various community extension activities has a great impact on their knowledge and skills.
- Involvement of the student volunteers in the limited community extension activities has given them a chance to strengthen values and positive attitudes towards life, studies, family, community, and environment.

5. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations were drawn:

- Strengthen orientation program to encourage strong involvement of students in the community extension activities.
- Design new programs that will be implemented and encourage student engagement in the wider community.

- Ensure student volunteers have fully understood the importance of participating in community extension activities to enhance knowledge and skills.
- Encourage students to establish individual social responsibility to harness positive attitudes and values towards work, life, studies, community, and industry.

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