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Benefits of Service-Learning through Community Volunteer Programmes to Pre-University Students

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Abstract: Service-learning in the Malaysia context is a course-based, credit-bearing education experience in which students participate in a structured service learning activity that meets academic and societal demands (Balakrishnan et al., 2022). Service-learning is a method of community engagement that is enriching students and empowering the community. This study discusses the findings of service-learning via volunteerism for the community by pre-university students. The objective of the study is to investigate the effect of service-learning via community volunteer programmes on the students who enrolled in the Critical Analysis of Current Issues course at the pre-university level. A mixed methods approach was used in the research design, whereby participants' responses to their level of comprehension, level of knowledge, level of social responsibility, level of personal development, and level of academic achievement related to their involvement in community volunteer programmes were assessed with a pre- and post-test questionnaire. Document analysis of participants' reflections of their experiences conducting the community volunteer programmes was also conducted. Responses were analysed to identify key themes and subthemes. The findings reveal that the mean for their level of comprehension, personal development, and academic achievement was high for both the pre- and post-test. The mean for their level of comprehension, knowledge, social responsibility, personal development, and academic achievement was higher in the post-test. The mean for their level of knowledge and social responsibility was at a medium level for the pre-test. However, this was at a high level in the post-test. This shows that the participants showed significant improvement in their knowledge and social responsibility from involvement in voluntary programmes. Finally, recommendations for youth empowerment in becoming involved in community volunteer programmes were highlighted.

Keywords: Pre-university students, Service-learning, Community volunteering programme

Introduction

Service-learning is a practical and experiential form of education where students learn from being involved in community volunteer work and where the tasks are connected to the topics in a course (Beehr et al., 2010). Service-learning via volunteerism is a method of instruction that combines learning through service for the

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community with an aim to foster civic and social responsibility among students. Through the collaborations and interactions during community engagement, participants' life skills and personal development, such as social skills are developed. Service-learning can be instrumental in instilling the qualities of being proactive and creating the willingness to act on current issues surrounding the pre-university students.

Service-learning is related to Service Learning Malaysia (SULAM) – University for Society, which was introduced by the Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs). Experiential learning is the focus of SULAM as SULAM “is part of a university class and a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (Department of Higher Education Malaysia, 2019, 84).

Service-learning as a community engagement program was included as part of the Critical Analysis of Current Issues (PNAP0283) course assessment of the ASASIpintar pre-university programme. The course outcomes, which are related to volunteerism, encourage pre-university students to be initiative-taking and act on the current issues surrounding them and be involved in community engagement. The group project on volunteerism was called the Youth-Led Project and forty marks were allocated for the course task and assessment. The marks were distributed into four aspects: overall class project, peer evaluation, individual reflection paper, and group exhibition. Marks were allocated for individual reflection as Osborne and Renick (2006) stressed that learning derives from the reflection that students have done during their volunteering experiences in relation to the course content.

The group project on volunteerism is introduced as part of the Critical Analysis of Current Issues (PNAP0283) course as youths in pre-university programme often have creative change-making ideas. This is due to their earnest passion for a variety of social causes, and they desire to make a difference through their commitment in turning their inspiration into action. As a class, students discussed and chose one of the significant issues of concern currently faced on the college campus, in the surrounding community, or at a state, national or global level. Then, they proposed a project and at least three subtopics for the proposed project. Students then chose to participate in one of the groups which were formed based on subtopics and each group comprised of four to six students. Some projects that were conducted by the students were voluntary work with the Malaysian Federation of the Deaf (MFD), beach cleaning, feeding those in need, and a project with an orphanage.

Literature Review

Students may gain benefits from community volunteer work. Eppler *et al.* (2011) investigated college students' attitudes and motives in a service-learning course where they tutored low-income English Language Learning kindergartners, first-, and second-graders in reading. The researchers explored the benefits for elementary school children. The focus was on the measurement of changes in the college students' motivations for voluntary work and social attitudes, and effects on the kindergartners' reading performance and achievement goals. The findings showed that in comparison with non-service-learning college students, the service-learning students volunteered more hours, had higher gains in esteem and protective motives. Besides that, there was a significant increase in participants' motivation to volunteer for their professional growth.

There was a positive correlation between hours tutored and increases in the kindergartners' reading scores, and the kindergartners showed increases in adaptive achievement goals. Eppler *et al.*'s (2011) findings suggest that benefits of the service-learning project were reciprocal. The researchers concluded that through volunteerism, students may gain confidence as they get the chance to try new activities and get involved in new projects. This may lead to a sense of achievement among the involved students where the students exhibited higher gains in esteem, felt better about themselves and had better coping skills in handling personal issues (Eppler *et al.*, 2011).

However, Beehr *et al.* (2010) highlighted that nonrequired volunteers had stronger commitment to and satisfaction with their university. Not only that, but they also shared stronger internal and weaker external motivations to volunteer compared to required volunteers. The researchers investigated required versus nonrequired volunteerism, internal and external motivations for volunteering, and attitudes of student volunteers towards their university among 273 college students made up of non-volunteers, required volunteers, and nonrequired volunteers.

Although Beehr *et al.*'s (2010) findings showed that nonrequired volunteers were more committed in carrying out voluntary work, Sax *et al.*, (1999) findings proved that although pre-college service participation is

controlled and made compulsory to students, the participation in volunteer service during the undergraduate years resulted in a variety of cognitive and affective outcomes measuring nine years after entering college. Moreover et al., (2013) stressed that individuals who participated in a combination of voluntary and mandatory community-based civic activities as an adolescent are most likely to continue participating in voluntary work. However, the researchers highlighted other factors that positively lead to continued community engagement which include religiosity, sense of belonging in school, achievement, and parents who are actively engaged in civic activities.

In addition, Cheung et al., (2015) findings showed that volunteers' social responsibility has a positive effect on volunteerism six months later, but not a positive effect on social responsibility. These results suggest that the emphasis on social responsibility is crucial to sustain volunteerism. The findings also indicated the need for universities to plan and organize volunteering projects which encourage students' volunteerism and social responsibility.

Method

This study utilized a mixed method research methodology. The instruments used to collect the quantitative data were pre and post-tests, which contained five main questions. The Likert scale range of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least acquired and score 10 as the most acquired, was used in the pre and post-tests. The pre and post-tests had related questions. The questionnaire was adapted from Selvaratnam's (2013) study. The objective was to investigate the effects of service-learning through community engagement on the participants. The pre and post-tests were tabulated through the SPSS software package and the data were analysed descriptively. Document analysis of the students' reflections provided the qualitative data to triangulate the quantitative data. Responses in the reflections were analysed to identify key themes and subthemes.

Participants

The participants of the study were sixty-two students of a pre-university programme at a public university in Malaysia. The participants were aged 18 years. As part of the assessment for the Critical Analysis of Current Issues Course (PNAP0283), the pre-university students conducted a class project named the Youth-Led Project which was related to current issues.

Results

The results of this study discuss the obtained research outcome by first presenting the research respondents' profile followed by the descriptive and inferential research outcome.

Respondents' Demographic Profile

Sixty-two participants participated in this research. Demographic data on gender are presented in Table 1 below.

Sample Profile based on Gender

The information in Table 1 shows the sample profile based on gender. Out of the overall sixty-two students involved in this research, 18 or 29.0 percent were male students whereas the other 44 or 71.0 percent were female students. This shows that the total of respondents among female students were more than the total of male students in this research.

Table 1. Sample profile based on gender

	Number	Percentage
Male	18	29.0
Female	44	71.0
Total	62	100.0

Instrument Reliability Test

The Cronbach's alpha reliability results for pre and post-test on the level of comprehension, knowledge, social responsibility, personal development, and academic achievement related to the Community Volunteer Programme among students are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Instrument reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Level of comprehension		
• Pre-test	0.754	4
• Post-test	0.810	4
Level of knowledge		
• Pre-test	0.767	4
• Post-test	0.862	4
Level of social responsibility		
• Pre-test	0.879	4
• Post-test	0.789	4
Level of personal development		
• Pre-test	0.873	4
• Post-test	0.849	4
Level of academic achievement		
• Pre-test	0.908	3
• Post-test	0.803	3

Table 2 above shows the range of reliability for pre and post-test level of comprehension, knowledge, social responsibility, personal development, and academic achievement related to the Community Volunteer Programme among students is between 0.754 to 0.908. Hence, the above Cronbach's alpha showed that the instrument used has good and acceptable reliability.

Normality Distribution

The Skewness and Kurtosis statistical test was employed to determine the key relative frequency distribution. Based on the statistical analysis, research variables had normal distribution which obtained a variable test result between ± 2 standard deviations. The test result demonstrating statistical values of Skewness and Kurtosis is shown in Table 3. Therefore, the data in this result were suitable for further analysis.

Table 3. Normality distribution

	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Std. Error	Statistics	Std. Error
Level of comprehension				
• Pre-test	-.687	.304	.733	.599
• Post-test	.210	.304	-.419	.599
Level of knowledge				
• Pre-test	-.750	.304	1.979	.599
• Post-test	-.211	.304	.248	.599
Level of social responsibility				
• Pre-test	-.328	.304	-.343	.599
• Post-test	-.523	.304	.896	.599
Level of personal development				
• Pre-test	-.989	.304	1.742	.599
• Post-test	-.401	.304	.876	.599
Level of academic achievement				
• Pre-test	-1.093	.304	1.749	.599
• Post-test	-.109	.304	-.855	.599

Students' Level of Comprehension related to the Community Volunteer Programme

In this section, the level of students' comprehension related to the Community Volunteer Programme was measured in the pre and post-test. The descriptive analysis is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Students' level of comprehension related to community volunteer programme pre and post test

No	-Statement	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Volunteer	7.85	1.458	8.44	1.002
2	Volunteerism	7.23	1.664	8.19	.989
3	Criteria of volunteerism	6.68	1.836	7.98	1.109
4	Ways to involve in volunteering programmes	7.21	1.549	7.95	1.372
	Overall	7.24	1.238	8.14	.900

(Level: Low = 1.00 – 4.00, Medium = 4.01 – 7.00, High = 7.01 – 10.00)

The results in Table 4 show that the mean range of the level of students' comprehension in the pre-test is between 6.68 to 7.85 which is medium to high level. Overall, the pre-test score for the comprehension level (mean = 7.24, SD = 1.238) among students related to the Community Volunteer Programme is at a high level. The mean range of the level of students' comprehension in the post-test is between 7.95 to 8.44 which is at high level. Overall, this shows that the post-test score for the comprehension level (mean = 8.14, SD = 0.900) among students related to the Community Volunteer Programme is at a high level.

Students' Level of Knowledge Related to the Community Volunteer Programme

In this section, the level of students' knowledge related to the Community Volunteer Programme was measured in the pre and post-test with four items, respectively. For clearer representation, the descriptive analysis is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Students' level of knowledge related to the community volunteer programme pre and post test

No	Statement	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Volunteer	7.63	1.571	8.13	1.109
2	Volunteerism	7.06	1.628	7.89	1.161
3	Criteria of volunteerism	6.53	2.030	7.82	1.138
4	Ways to involve in volunteer programmes	6.79	1.757	7.92	1.441
	Overall	7.00	1.346	7.94	1.025

(Level: Low = 1.00 – 4.00, Medium = 4.01 – 7.00, High = 7.01 – 10.00)

The results in Table 5 show the mean range of students' level of knowledge in the pre-test is between 6.53 to 7.63 which is medium to high level. Overall, the score of knowledge level (mean = 7.00, SD = 1.346) for the pre-test among students related to the Community Volunteer Programme is at a medium level. The mean range of the level of students' knowledge in the post-test is between 7.82 to 8.13 which is at a high level. Overall, this shows that the score for the level of knowledge (mean = 7.94, SD = 1.025) among students related to the Community Volunteer Programme in the post-test is at a high level.

Students' Level of Social Responsibility related to the Community Volunteer Programme

In this section, the level of students' social responsibility related to the Community Volunteer Programme was measured in a pre and post-test with four items, respectively. For clearer representation, the descriptive analysis is shown in Table 6 below.

The results in Table 6 above show the mean range of students' level of social responsibility in the pre-test is between 6.08 to 8.15 which is medium to high level. Overall, the score of social responsibility level (mean = 6.85, SD = 1.730) among students related to the Community Volunteer Programme is at a medium level in the pre-test.

Table 6. Students' level of social responsibility related to the community volunteer programme pre and post test

No	Statement	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	I like to share information related to volunteer programmes.	6.08	2.227	7.23	1.850
2	I will report if there is a need for volunteer programmes.	6.11	2.334	7.23	1.712
3	I can contribute ideas related to volunteer programmes.	7.08	1.721	7.84	1.369
4	I can contribute manpower for volunteer programmes.	8.15	1.716	8.74	1.200
	Overall	6.85	1.730	7.76	1.217

(Level: Low = 1.00 – 4.00, Medium = 4.01 – 7.00, High = 7.01 – 10.00)

The mean range of students' level of social responsibility is between 7.23 to 8.74 which is at a high level in the post-test. Overall, this shows that the score for social responsibility level (mean = 7.76, SD = 1.217) among students related to the Community Volunteer Programme in the post-test is at a high level. The findings which show that the involvement in voluntary work enhanced students' social responsibility are supported by responses from students' reflections as shown in the excerpt below:

"We can make a difference. I become more aware of the issues around me as I can have a real and valuable positive effect on people, communities, and society in general."

"I feel like I am part of the community. Volunteering makes me feel part of something besides my studies, friends, and family."

Students' Level of Personal Development Related to the Community Volunteer Programme

In this section, the level of students' personal development related to the Community Volunteer Programme was measured in a pre and post-test with four items, respectively. For clearer representation, the descriptive analysis is shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Students' level of personal development related to the community volunteer programme pre and post-test

No	Statement	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	I am interested in running volunteer programmes.	8.31	1.869	8.69	1.301
2	I always make effort to find information about volunteer programmes.	6.23	2.213	6.94	1.845
3	I can manage volunteer programmes.	6.71	1.876	7.73	1.621
4	I have the interpersonal interaction skills to run volunteer programmes.	7.10	1.897	8.06	1.401
	Overall	7.08	1.675	7.85	1.291

(Level: Low = 1.00 – 4.00, Medium = 4.01 – 7.00, High = 7.01 – 10.00)

The results in Table 7 show the mean range of the level of students' personal development is between 6.23 to 8.31 which is medium to high level. Overall, the score for personal development level (mean = 7.08, SD = 1.675) among students related to the Community Volunteer Programme is at a high level in the pre-test. The mean range of students' level of personal development is between 6.94 to 8.69 which is at medium to high level in the post-test. Overall, this shows that the score for personal development level (mean = 7.85, SD = 1.291) among students related to the Community Volunteer Programme in the post-test is at a high level.

The responses from the students' reflections also showed that the students' interpersonal interaction improved as shown in the extract below:

“I learn to engage with people that I have never known before and I make some effort to at least make the kid gain something that day. I become more determined to convince the underprivileged people about the importance of education. The involvement in this project encourages me to be an educator one day.”

The response was shared by a student who conducted a voluntary project, ‘Education for the Underprivileged Children’ which aimed to tutor the Indigenous children. The students planned and conducted activities such as educational games and sports activities. Another student highlighted improvement in her social interaction as shown in the excerpt below:

“I learn how to communicate effectively with my friends and others. I believe that the opportunity to deal with a lot of people helps me gain more knowledge. I observe my group members’ communication skills, how they choose their words to make people understand them and to avoid hurting people with harsh words, especially when they tried to break the ice with the Indigenous kids who were shy.”

Besides improving their interaction skills, participants also commented that they learned about leadership and teamwork. One participant highlighted that the leader of her project ‘Education for the Underprivileged Children,’ showed a good example of inspirational leadership where she managed conflicts and miscommunication among group members efficiently. The leader was reported to focus on behaviour and events, and not on individuals’ personalities despite the negative attitudes shown earlier by some of the group members such as consistently coming late for group meetings, and carelessly performing tasks. A reflection from another member for the ‘Education for Underprivileged Children’ project reported that eventually all her group members were committed for the project, as shown in the excerpt below:

“All of us did our part in the project and I can guarantee that each one of us was grateful for the opportunity given to plan and carry out this project. Although at first there were few members who missed meetings and did not complete their tasks, we managed to resolve the issue.”

Another student highlighted in her reflection of her voluntary work, ‘Food for the Homeless,’ the experiences that she had gained from the group project as shown in the excerpt below:

“Through volunteering I can challenge myself by doing something different. I am able to discover my hidden talents and achieve my personal goals.”

For this project, the group of students cooperated with Dapur Jalanan, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), to prepare and distribute food for the homeless in Kuala Lumpur. Some students shared their gratitude for being given the chance to contribute to people who are in need. The experience made them appreciate their privileged life more.

Students’ Level of Academic Achievement Related to the Community Volunteer Programme

In this section, the level of students’ academic achievement related to the Community Volunteer Programme was measured from a pre and post-test with three items, respectively. For clearer representation, the descriptive analysis is shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Students’ level of academic achievement related to community volunteer programme pre and post-test

No	Statement	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Involvement in volunteer programmes helps my academic achievement.	6.98	2.123	8.13	1.287
2	Involvement in volunteer programmes helps my critical thinking.	7.98	1.860	8.74	1.070
3	Involvement in volunteer programmes helps build persistence and retention related to my academic achievement.	7.85	1.791	8.53	1.170
Overall		7.61	1.774	8.47	.998

(Level: Low = 1.00 – 4.00, Medium = 4.01 – 7.00, High = 7.01 – 10.00)

The results in Table 8 show the mean range of the level of students' academic achievement in the pre-test is between 6.98 to 7.98 which is medium to high level. Overall, the score of students' academic achievement level in the pre-test (mean = 7.61, SD = 1.774) related to the Community Volunteer Programme is at a high level. The mean range of the level of students' academic achievement in the post-test is between 8.13 to 8.74 which is at a high level. Overall, this shows that the score for the academic achievement level (mean = 8.47, SD = 0.998) in the post-test among students related to the Community Volunteer Programme is at a high level.

Interestingly, the reflection from one of the participants showed that the hours spent for the planning and execution of the project did not really affect her commitment for her studies. She elaborated that with effective time management and good teamwork, she could juggle both responsibilities. This is shown in the excerpt below:

“When we first started, I am worried that I may not be able to focus on my studies as there is so much to be done for the voluntary project. However, my teammates cooperated well, and we managed to divide our time for studies and also the project.”

Comparison of Pre and Post-test Score for the Level of Comprehension of the Community Volunteer Programme

Ho1 There is no significant difference between the pre and post-test scores of students' comprehension level of the Community Volunteer Programme

The comparison of the pre and post-test scores for the level of comprehension of the Community Volunteer Programme among students is exhibited in Table 9.

Table 9. Pre and post t-test scores of students' comprehension of the community volunteer programme

	Pre-test		Post-test		T value	Sig. P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Comprehension level	7.24	1.238	8.14	.900	-6.128	.000

**p<0.01

Based on the results of statistical test data as shown in Table 9, there is a significant difference in score of students' comprehension level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [t = -6.128, p = 0.000], p < 0.01 between pre and post-test. Hence, **Ho1 is rejected**. This result shows that the score of students' comprehension level towards the Community Volunteer Programme in post-test (mean = 8.14, SD = 0.900) is higher than the pre-test (mean = 7.24, SD = 1.238).

Comparison of Pre and Post-Test Score for the Level of Knowledge towards the Community Volunteer Programme

Ho2 There is no significant difference between the pre and post-test score of students' knowledge level towards the Community Volunteer Programme

The outcome of pre and post-test score comparison for the level of knowledge towards the Community Volunteer Programme among students is exhibited in Table 10.

Table 10. Pre and post t-test score of students' knowledge level towards the community volunteer programme

	Pre-test		Post-test		t value	Sig. P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Knowledge level	7.00	1.346	7.94	1.025	-5.739	.000

**p<0.01

Based on the result of statistical test data as shown in Table 10, there is a significant difference in the score of students' knowledge level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [t = -5.739, p = 0.000], p < 0.01 between pre and post-test. Hence, **Ho2 is rejected**. This result shows that the score of students' knowledge level towards the Community Volunteer Programme in post-test (mean = 7.94, SD = 1.025) is higher than pre-test (mean = 7.00, SD = 1.346).

Comparison of Pre and Post-test Scores for the Level of Social Responsibility towards the Community Volunteer Programme

Ho3 There is no significant difference between the pre and post-test scores of students' social responsibility level towards the Community Volunteer Programme

The outcome of pre and post-test scores comparison for the level of social responsibility towards the Community Volunteer Programme among students is exhibited in Table 11.

Table 11. Pre and post t-test scores of students' social responsibility level towards the community volunteer programme

	Pre-test		Post-test		t value	Sig. P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Level of social responsibility	6.85	1.730	7.76	1.217	-5.126	.000

**p<0.01

Based on the results of statistical test data as shown in Table 11, there is a significant difference in score of students' social responsibility level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [$t = -5.126$, $p = 0.000$], $p < 0.01$ between pre and post-test. Hence, **Ho3 is rejected**. This result shows that the score of students' social responsibility level towards Community Volunteer Programme in post-test (mean = 7.76, SD = 1.217) is higher than pre-test (mean = 6.85, SD = 1.730). This is supported by the analysis of the participants' reflections, as one of them reported that she had managed to **make a difference** from the real and valuable positive effect on people, communities, and society in general. This is shown in the excerpt from her reflection below:

"I realise that I am responsible not just for my life. I must contribute to the community and society."

Comparison of Pre and Post-test Scores for the Level of Personal Development towards the Community Volunteer Programme

Ho4 There is no significant difference between the pre and post-test score of students' personal development level towards the Community Volunteer Programme

The outcome of pre and post-test score comparison for the level of personal development towards the Community Volunteer Programme among students is exhibited in Table 12.

Table 12. Pre and post t-test score of students' personal development level towards the community volunteer programme

	Pre-test		Post-test		T value	Sig. P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Level of personal development	7.08	1.675	7.85	1.291	-5.117	.000

**p<0.01

Based on the result of statistical test data as shown in Table 12, there is a significant difference in score of students' personal development level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [$t = -5.117$, $p = 0.000$], $p < 0.01$ between pre and post-test. Hence, **Ho4 is rejected**. This result shows that the score of students' personal development level towards the Community Volunteer Programme in post-test (mean = 7.85, SD = 1.291) is higher than pre-test (mean = 7.08, SD = 1.675). Data from the participants' reflections supported this as shown in the excerpt below:

"I realized that the small things that we do, can bring greater effect in someone's life. Throughout this project I have changed to be a better person and my soft skills have improved. This project makes us believe in the quote, 'Living is giving.'"

Another excerpt from the students' reflections supported this:

"I feel I have more worth. Doing something for other people make me always remind myself that I can optimize my energy and I have to do something that bring good things for this universe."

Comparison of Pre and Post-test Scores for the Level of Academic Achievement towards the Community Volunteer Programme

Ho5 There is no significant difference between the pre and post-test scores of students' academic achievement level towards the Community Volunteer Programme

The outcome of pre and post-test scores comparison for the level of academic achievement towards the Community Volunteer Programme among students is exhibited in Table 13.

Table 13. Pre and post t-test scores of students' academic achievement level towards the community volunteer programme

	Pre-test		Post-test		T value	Sig. P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Level of academic achievement	7.61	1.774	8.47	.998	-4.302	.000

**p<0.01

Based on the results of statistical test data as shown in Table 13, there is a significant difference in score of students' academic achievement level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [t = -4.302, p = 0.000], p < 0.01 between pre and post-test. Hence, **Ho5 is rejected**. This result shows that the score of students' academic achievement level towards the Community Volunteer Programme in post-test (mean = 8.47, SD = 0.998) is higher than pre-test (mean = 7.61, SD = 1.774). An analysis of the students' responses in their reflections support the finding that involvement in voluntary work does not necessarily affect academic performance as shown in the following excerpt:

"I become better at time management as I know that I have to complete assignments, course work and at the same time executing the activities for the voluntary work. I do not see my studies is affected."

Pre and Post Test Score Difference of Comprehension Level between Male and Female Students

Ho6 There is no significant difference between pre-test score of comprehension level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

Ho7 There is no significant difference between post-test score of comprehension level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

The t-test outcome to assess pre and post-test score difference of comprehension level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students is displayed in Table 14.

Table 14. Pre and post t-test score difference of comprehension level towards the community volunteer programme between male and female students

Comprehension Level	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t Value	Sig. P
Pre-test	Male	18	6.64	1.412	-2.563	.013
	Female	44	7.49	1.082		
Post-test	Male	18	7.85	.888	-1.668	.101
	Female	44	8.26	.888		

**p<0.01

The result from t-test analysis as shown in Table 14 found that there is a significant difference in pre-test comprehension level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [t = -2.563, p = 0.013], p < 0.05 between male and female students. Therefore, **Ho6 is rejected**. This outcome shows pre- test comprehension level among female students (mean = 7.49, SD = 1.082) is higher than male students (mean = 6.64, SD = 1.412).

However, in Table 14, it was found that there is no significant difference in post-test comprehension level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [t = -1.668, p = 0.101], p > 0.05 among male and female students. Hence, **Ho7 is accepted**. This means that there is no difference in post-test comprehension level among male and female students.

Pre and Post Test Score Difference of Knowledge Level between Male and Female Students

Ho8 There is no significant difference between pre-test score of knowledge level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

Ho9 There is no significant difference between post-test score of knowledge level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

The t-test outcome to assess pre and post-test score difference of knowledge level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students is displayed in Table 15.

Table 15. Pre and post t-test score difference of knowledge level towards community volunteer programme between male and female students

Knowledge Level	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t Value	Sig. P
Pre-test	Male	18	6.54	1.466	-1.759	.084
	Female	44	7.19	1.263		
Post-test	Male	18	7.60	.982	-1.708	.093
	Female	44	8.08	1.020		

**p<0.01

The result from t-test analysis as shown in Table 15 shows that there is no significant difference in pre-test knowledge level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [t = -1.759, p = 0.084], p > 0.05 between male and female students. Therefore, **Ho8 is accepted**. This means that there is no difference in the pre-test knowledge level among male and female students.

Similarly in Table 15, it was found that there is no significant difference in post-test knowledge level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [t = -1.708, p = 0.093], p > 0.05 among male and female students. Hence, **Ho9 is accepted**. This means that there is no difference in post-test knowledge level among male and female students.

Pre and Post Test Score Difference of Social Responsibility Level between Male and Female Students

Ho10 There is no significant difference between pre-test score of social responsibility level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

Ho11 There is no significant difference between post-test score of social responsibility level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

The t-test outcome to assess pre and post-test score difference of social responsibility level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students is displayed in Table 16.

Table 16. Pre and post t-test score difference of social responsibility level towards the community volunteer programme between male and female students

Social Responsibility Level	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t Value	Sig. P
Pre-test	Male	18	6.28	1.843	-1.706	.093
	Female	44	7.09	1.645		
Post-test	Male	18	7.29	1.448	-1.975	.053
	Female	44	7.95	1.070		

**p<0.01

The result from t-test analysis as shown in Table 16 shows that there is no significant difference in pre-test social responsibility level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [t = -1.706, p = 0.093], p > 0.05 between male and female students. Therefore, **Ho10 is accepted**. This means that there is no difference in the pre-test social responsibility level among male and female students. Similarly in Table 16, it was found that there is no significant difference in post-test social responsibility level towards Community Volunteer Programme [t = -1.975, p = 0.053], p > 0.05 among male and female students. Hence, **Ho11 is accepted**. This means that there is no difference in post-test social responsibility level among male and female students.

Pre and Post-test Score Difference of Personal Development Level between Male and Female Students

Ho12 There is no significant difference between pre-test score of personal development level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

Ho13 There is no significant difference between post-test score of personal development level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

The t-test outcome to assess pre and post-test score difference of personal development level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students is displayed in Table 17.

Table 17. Pre and post t-test score difference of personal development level towards the community volunteer programme between male and female students

Personal Development Level	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t Value	Sig. P
Pre-test	Male	18	6.13	1.766	-3.079	.003
	Female	44	7.48	1.485		
Post-test	Male	18	7.08	1.419	-3.234	.002
	Female	44	8.17	1.103		

**p<0.01

The result from t-test analysis as shown in Table 18 found that there is a significant difference in pre-test personal development level towards Community Volunteer Programme [$t = -1.706$, $p = 0.093$], $p > 0.05$ between male and female students. Therefore, **Ho12 is rejected**. This outcome shows pre-test personal development level among female students (mean = 7.48, SD = 1.485) is higher than male students (mean = 6.13, SD = 1.766).

Similarly in Table 17, it is shown that there is a significant difference in post-test personal development level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [$t = -3.234$, $p = 0.002$], $p < 0.01$ among male and female students. Hence, **Ho13 is rejected**. This outcome shows post-test personal development level among female students (mean = 8.17, SD = 1.103) is higher than male students (mean = 7.08, SD = 1.419).

Pre and Post-test Score Difference of Academic Achievement Level between Male and Female Students

Ho14 There is no significant difference between pre-test score of academic achievement level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

Ho15 There is no significant difference between post-test score of academic achievement level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students

The t-test outcome to assess pre and post-test score difference of academic achievement level towards the Community Volunteer Programme between male and female students is displayed in Table 18.

Table 18. Pre and post t-test score difference of academic achievement level towards the community volunteer programme between male and female students

Academic Achievement Level	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t Value	Sig. P
Pre-test	Male	18	6.93	1.762	-1.981	.052
	Female	44	7.89	1.721		
Post-test	Male	18	8.19	.972	-1.438	.156
	Female	44	8.58	.996		

**p<0.01

The result from t-test analysis as shown in Table 18 shows that there is no significant difference in pre-test academic achievement level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [$t = -1.981$, $p = 0.052$], $p > 0.05$ between male and female students. Therefore, **Ho14 is accepted**. This means that there is no difference in pre-test academic achievement level among male and female students.

Similarly in Table 18, it was found that there is no significant difference in post-test academic achievement level towards the Community Volunteer Programme [$t = -1.438$, $p = 0.156$], $p > 0.05$ among male and female

students. Hence, **Ho15 is accepted**. This means that there is no difference in post-test academic achievement level among male and female students.

Discussion

The present study was designed to investigate the effects of service-learning through community volunteer programme on the participants. The findings showed pre-university students benefit from service-learning through community engagement. This is consistent with Bromnick et al., findings (2012) where students clearly gained benefit from both voluntary work and the reflection on their experiences.

The present study's findings demonstrating students' higher scores for post-test comprehension and knowledge level prove that the students are more aware of voluntarism, criteria of voluntarism and ways to involve in voluntary work. The students found ways they could contribute to the betterment of society, and they learned that their actions have a broader impact on society. This finding supports Gray's (2010) previous research which highlighted that being involved in voluntary work helps students realise they could make a difference in society. However, further research may need to be conducted to understand if such level of knowledge is applied in their real-lives.

This result shows that the score of students' personal development level towards the Community Volunteer Programme in post-test is higher than pre-test. This supports previous research (Gray, 2010) which showed that voluntary work had a positive effect on character and personal development and helped developed individuals' skills. Through engagement in voluntary work, students acquire important abilities and dispositions through the identification, planning and implementation of the action. As shown in this study's findings, the pre-university students developed important skills, including problem solving, conflict resolution and empathy. This corroborated the findings of Mária Jármai and Palányi's (2015) which showed that voluntary work has several advantages which positively influences the development of an individuals' personality. Since soft-skills are greatly needed in study and working life, this sort of experiential pedagogy should be encouraged and implemented at all levels of learning.

The findings in this study demonstrated that with good cooperation, voluntary group work enhances the sense of personal and collective efficacy. Through resolution of conflicts, students learned that there are responsible ways to address issues, and that everyone can play a role in social change. This is consistent with the observations of O'Dell et al., (2016) that voluntary work promotes individual growth which is likely to inspire long-term participation in social change activities. Conflict resolution and problem solving are life-long skills needed for students to ensure that in any situation, they can systematically organise their thoughts and solve an issue.

It is also shown in this study that the post-test personal development level among female students is higher than male students. This is consistent with the findings of Darawsheh et al., (2020) which highlighted that female students manifest a more positive attitude and more dedication in carrying out voluntary work. Further research can be conducted to validate the qualitative reasoning of female students developing better than their male counterparts.

The result in this study evidenced the score of students' academic achievement level towards Community Volunteer Programme is higher in the post-test. This finding is in agreement with Selvaratnam's (2013) findings which found that there was an increment in the level of academic performance in post-test when students involved in volunteerism. The participants' level of academic achievement showed the highest mean and that could imply involvement in voluntary work did not negatively affect academic performance.

Conclusion

Pre-university students aged 17 to 18 years old normally possess creative change-making ideas as they have heartfelt passion for a variety of social causes, and they want to make a difference. The inclusion of the volunteering project in the Critical Analysis of Current Issues course of the ASASIPintar UKM Program is to help the students gain a sense of empowerment as they engage in projects designed to result in change of attitude, information sharing and involvement in an important social cause. Voluntary work may be linked with individual benefits. Involvement in Community Projects (Magoon, 1980, as cited in Educational Services Division, 2007) could help develop leadership in students. Volunteering can help students gain confidence by

giving them the chance to try something new and build a real sense of achievement. Moreover, student engagement in voluntary work may help students enhance their employability (Bromnick et al., 2012; Paine, 2014).

Recommendations

Youths are often an untapped source for creative change-making ideas. They normally are passionate about social issues, and they want to contribute to the society. Thus, educational administrators must support them at every step of the process by promoting volunteer work among the youth. Administrators and lecturers can help the students gain a sense of empowerment as they engage in projects planned. Below are the actions that could be taken by administrators and lecturers to assist students in accomplishing their voluntary programs:

- 1) assist students with the formal correspondence with relevant authorities
- 2) include voluntary work as part of course assessment as this motivates students to do their best to secure satisfactory results.

Although this may seem like “forcing” them to commit to voluntary work, findings from previous research (Domaradzki & Walkowiak, 2021; Selvaratnam, 2013) have shown that involvement in voluntary work instills social responsibility among students. This may eventually make them volunteer on their own. Students instilled with voluntary work through service learning would have been equipped with knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to adapt, adjust and initiate service learning within their own capability. The deep learning and ripple effect involved would transform every student into a better human being.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

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