

Transformative Reflections of Nursing Students and Alumni Volunteers on the Community Extension Services of the University

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Abstract: *Community extension programs and outreach activities of a certain institution is one of the key aspects that a community feels its existence. With the trilogy functions of instruction, research, and community extension of the university, it elevates its services to its stakeholders. The community extension program and outreach activities act as a bridge between the community and the university. It is the channel via which a higher education institution expands its competence following its program. Volunteers use their discipline knowledge to address issues in the real world. The main thrust of this study is to determine the volunteers' experience upon participating in the different community extension and outreach activities. This study is a descriptive, qualitative research design that was conducted on the students and alumni of the College of Nursing who participated and volunteered for the different activities offered by the department to the partner community. The survey was done through google forms to identify the relevance, effectiveness, and participation of the community extension programs offered by the College of Nursing at the University of Cebu- Lapu Lapu and Mandaue Campus. Thus, this is a convenience sampling in which the google form was cascaded by sending a google form link through Facebook messenger and E-mail. The top community extension services participated mainly by the key informants are the Coastal Clean-up, Blood pressure, Vital sign, Weight-taking activity, Gift-giving, and Breakfast Club.*

Keywords: Reflective evaluation, transformative reflection, community extension, community services

1. Introduction

Community extension programs and outreach activities of a certain institution are one of the key aspects that a community feels its existence. The Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997 in the Philippines mandates the organization and management of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), which is responsible for maintaining quality college education through its trilogy functions such as instruction, research, and community extension service (Montalbo 2016).

This work may interest higher education institutions (HEIs) that are designing community extension programs with optimized societal outcomes (Llenares and Deocaris 2018). For this reason, along with instruction and research, the focus of higher education places significant importance on extension services. Indeed, as the functioning of extension services as a component of university management is comparable to socioeconomic growth, its significance as a necessary component of education cannot be taken for granted.

The community extension program and outreach activities act as a bridge between the community and the university. It

is the channel a higher education institution expands its competence under its program. As volunteers use their discipline knowledge to address issues in the real world, there is a growing understanding of the benefits of higher education extension on the teaching and learning process.

The College of Nursing at the University of Cebu Lapu Lapu and Mandaue Campus provides democratized quality education to prepare students to become active participants in society's welfare and advancement in harmony with man's values, rights, and dignity. Thus, its community extension program offers the Health Education and Literacy Program (HELP) as the department's flagship.

The different activities offered to the partner community by the College of Nursing were based on the result of the needs assessment. In addition, the programs were crafted for the students to be trained and exposed in the community to the relevance of their chosen field through educating and executing awareness related to health issues. Thus, the spirit of volunteerism was inculcated in participation in the different activities offered.

The main thrust of this study is to determine the volunteers' experience upon participating in the different community

extension and outreach activities. Also, to propose a recommend base on the result of the study.

2. Methodology

This study is a descriptive, qualitative research design that was conducted on the students and alumni in the College of Nursing who participated and volunteered in the different activities offered by the department to the partner community for the year 2019 up to 2022.

There are a total of twenty-eight (28) informants in this study, composed of fifteen (15) student volunteers and thirteen (13) alumni volunteers. The survey was done through google forms to identify the relevance, effectiveness, and participation of the community extension programs offered by the College of Nursing at the University of Cebu- Lapu Lapu and Mandaue Campus. Thus, this is a convenience sampling in which the google form was cascaded by sending a google form link through Facebook messenger and E-mail.

The data was collected only based on the number of informants' responses. After this, the researcher collated and analyzed the data collected from the google form. Ethical considerations are an utmost priority in the duration of this study; thus, the identity of the informants was considered confidential. Ensuring data privacy and confidentiality is another consideration as part of the ethical standard, ensuring that all data collected are exclusively for the purposes of this study only.

3. Results and Discussion

This part presents the results of the data accumulated. The first part gives information on the profile of the key informants, and the second pertains to the transformative reflections of the involvement of the students and alumni volunteers as to relevance, effectiveness, and participation.

Table 1 presents the profile of the key informants. There are 15 student volunteers comprising 53.60%, and 13 alumni volunteers comprising 46.40% of the total population participating in this study. Most key informants are female, comprising 66.70% of the total respondents. It implies that in terms of community service, women are more passionate and dedicated to their cause. It was also found that most

student volunteers are in their 4th year in college. It indicates that students in the higher year level have developed a greater sense of responsibility and motivation in helping alleviate the lives of the marginalized groups of society.

Table 1: Profile of the Research Key Informants

	Frequency	Percentage
Classification		
• Student	15	53.60
• Alumni	13	46.40
Gender (Student)		
• Male	5	33.30
• Female	10	66.70
Year Level (Student)		
• 1 st Year	4	26.70
• 2 nd Year	4	26.70
• 3 rd Year	2	13.3
• 4 th Year	5	33.30
Gender (Alumni)		
• Male	2	15.40
• Female	11	84.60
Year Graduated (Alumni)		
• 2022	2	15.40
• 2021	3	23.10
• 2020	5	38.50
• 2019	3	23.10

As presented in Figure 1, the top 3 CARES activities where students and alumni have participated are the Coastal Clean-up, Blood pressure, vital signs, and weight-taking activity. The gift-giving and Breakfast Club ranked third.

Coastal Clean-up is an activity that aims to remove the solid liters, dense chemicals, and organic debris deposited on the coastline by the tide. The vital sign-taking activity aims to reach out to people without access to medical services. Through this activity, beneficiaries will be aware of their health condition and prevent further health complications.

Gift giving, on the other hand, is more about sharing with community beneficiaries various basic needs, supplies, or any item in kind. Each beneficiary will receive a bag filled with different supplies. The Breakfast Club provides complimentary breakfast to students who cannot take their breakfast home. This activity is beneficial, especially to the students who could not take their breakfast due to financial difficulties.

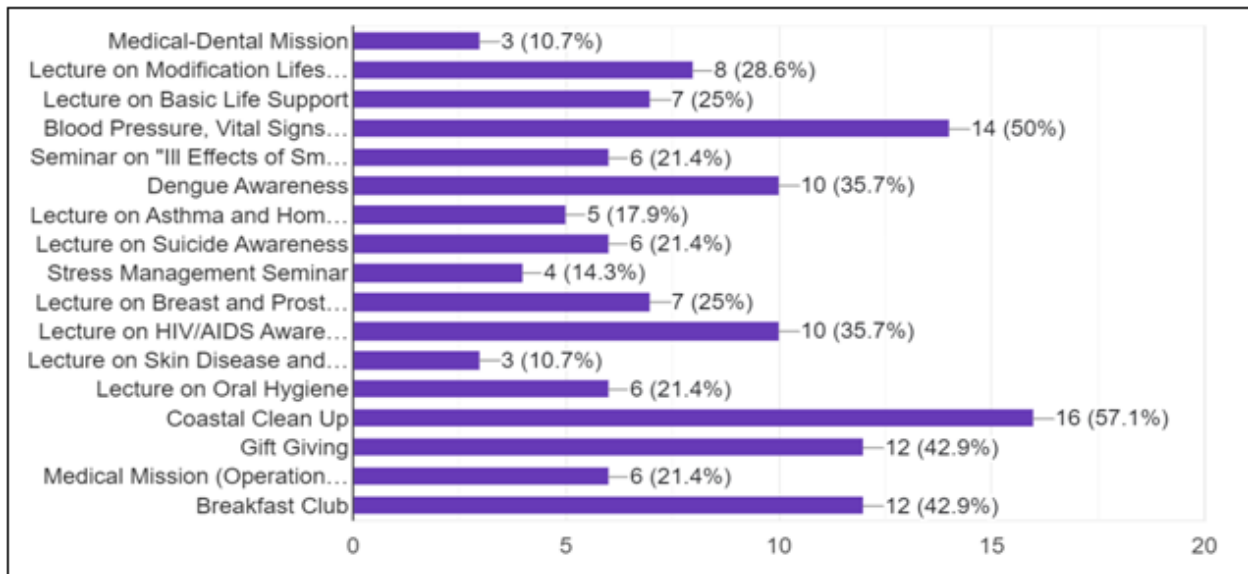


Figure 3: CARES activities participated by students and alumni volunteers

Thematic categories of the Key Informants' Responses

Common Themes Emanating from the Reflections of Key Informant

This section shows the common themes articulated by the selected informants in the CARES activities.

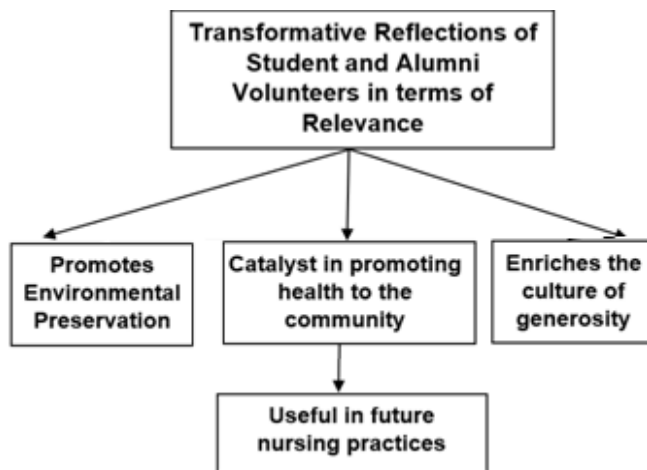


Figure 2: Reflections of students and alumni volunteers in terms of Relatives

Figure 2 presents the thematic categories of key informants' transformative reflection in terms of relevance. These common themes were disclosed in the google survey form and were analyzed using thematic analysis.

The CARES activities are very relevant to the students and alumni volunteers in propagating their role in the community and the environment. The following themes were identified:

Promotes Environmental Preservation

The coastal clean-up activity and other related CARES activities have paved the way for preserving the environment. Volunteers are becoming more aware of their role in protecting the environment, and this will significantly impact the community as a whole, and everybody must protect and preserve the environment.

Problems with coastal pollution will affect the extinction of local living things. For instance, waste or other impurities can contaminate phytoplankton, ultimately reducing a body of water's fertility. Some coastal and ocean contaminants include oil pollution, heavy metal pollution, pesticides, and waste. This kind of pollution is the main issue in specific coastal tourist destinations. It will be crucial to make an effort to keep the coastal areas clean. The effort made by people worldwide to maintain the coastal environment's cleanliness includes coastal clean-up activities. This idea for a campaign to educate people about coastal pollution through firsthand experience is compelling (Lintangkawuryan, Y. 2018).

Catalyst in promoting health to the community

The active participation of the volunteers serves as a key driver in promoting the health and well-being of the community. Participation of students and alumni volunteers in health-related community services enables them to be more productive toward the health of the people with almost no access to medical assistance due to several factors hindering their access to medical health services. An active agent of good health and well-being of the community is a critical factor in preserving people's lives.

In underprivileged areas, community health professionals serve as catalysts, encouraging self-help to help communities deal with their health issues (Graham, A. I. 2017). Promoting a broad-based improvement in community health in underprivileged neighborhoods is essential for a healthy country (Hancock & Nuttman, 2014).

Useful in future nursing practices

CARES volunteers acting as catalysts in promoting the community's health will positively impact their future career endeavors. Volunteers' involvement is a crucial factor in developing their service skills. Their experience in providing health care services to the marginalized groups of the community will help build their skills and attributes towards providing better health care service to the patients. Community service can help a person get the expertise and abilities necessary for the professional turn to consider when

thinking about altering or expanding their career. One advantage of community service is the opportunity to advance workplace competencies, including teamwork, planning, problem-solving, communication, and organizational abilities. People could even volunteer their way into an appealing career to get a taste of it before committing long-term. Students can also develop their abilities through volunteering, and they will have an advantage over individuals who lack volunteer experience.

In a community-based educational setting, participants in the learning process include students, nursing educators, community members, and representatives from other industries. Nursing education programs rooted in the community are essential for maintaining, promoting, and preventing illness. Additionally, when students become more aware of the context in which health and sickness occur, it encourages their personal, social, and psychological development and their ability to innovate, communicate, and develop critical thinking abilities. It gives nursing students a chance to learn about society's economic, political, and cultural facets of health and illness (Zeydani et al., 2021).

Enriches the culture of generosity

Students' and alumni participation in the gift-giving and other related activities paved the way to preserving and promoting the culture of Filipinos being generous givers. Sharing not only their skills but also their resources is a noble act of a person. It illuminates others and enables others to realize and reflect that underprivileged communities are an opportunity for anyone to help and give.

The foundation of volunteerism or community service is giving back and helping others. It demonstrates the importance of lending a hand to those in need and those less fortunate than us. Community service is significant because it strengthens our ties to the neighborhood and makes it a better place for all of us to live. (Strange et al., 2014).

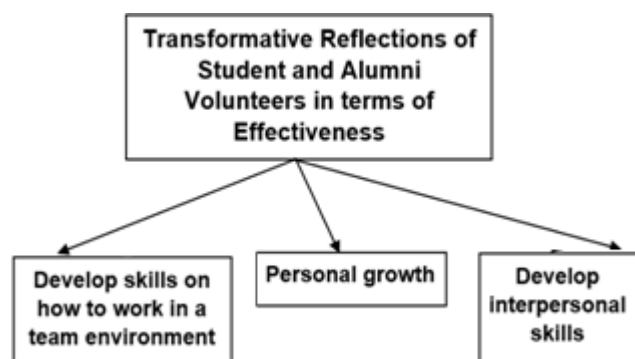


Figure 3: Reflections of students and alumni volunteers in terms of Effectiveness

Figure 3 presents the thematic categories of key informants' transformative reflection regarding effectiveness.

The CARES activities are adequate for the students and alumni volunteers in the self-development aspect. The following themes were identified:

Develop skills on how to work in a team environment

The involvement of students and alumni volunteers in community services provides knowledge on how to work

with others and helps work as a team. Because of the various activities in the community, they often coordinate with those concerned and discuss what should be done to successfully provide services to those in need. Although concepts like cooperation can be theoretically taught, one can only truly understand their significance by participating in activities that depend on everyone's participation to succeed. Participating in volunteer work helps a person gain confidence and a sense of responsibility.

Volunteering is a fantastic method to experience working in a team because it is collaborative. Given that many companies are moving toward cross-functional collaborative teams, it will be highly beneficial to be able to provide potential employers with specific instances of how a person has worked in a group. Students will become accustomed to mingling with other students who share their interests while attending college. However, volunteering draws people of diverse ages, professions, and backgrounds, like in the real world. Developing patience, sensitivity, understanding, and communication skills are critical through working with people from different backgrounds, and these are all crucial soft talents employers value (Rotman et al., 2012).

Personal growth

The participation of nursing students and alumni in community extension services allows for the growth of their aspects of life. It enables them to develop their habits, behaviors, actions, and reactions. Due to their frequent participation in community extension services, they have a more significant opportunity to develop their personality.

Volunteering can help a person get out of their comfort zone and develop the ability to adapt to any form of work. Being a volunteer is a fantastic way to gain confidence. Practical work experience increases self-esteem, enabling people to push themselves beyond their comfort zones. A person can learn and employ a variety of talents through volunteering, which helps them feel truly accomplished (Silva et al., 2018).

Experience with volunteering can be very beneficial. It demonstrates to potential employers that a person has the initiative and is prepared to volunteer their time to make the world better for others. It can test out a new career without committing for the long term by volunteering. It is an excellent approach to developing experience in a new industry. In some professions, a person can directly volunteer at a company that carries out the work they are interested in working. For instance, a person may volunteer at a hospital or nursing home if interested in nursing. Voluntary work may also introduce a person to businesses or internships that could advance their career (Garthwaite, 2016).

Develop interpersonal skills

The participation of nursing students and alumni in the university's community extension services helps them further develop their knowledge in interacting with different types of people. It also develops their verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

Interpersonal skills are the qualities, traits, and talents a person uses to collaborate with people and manage relationships. To be a competent leader for others and support their efforts to attain goals requires highly developed interpersonal skills. Volunteering can help a person gain the listening skills and optimism necessary for success, whether a person wants to be the team leader on her next project at work or lead a group of friends on a road trip (Sabancı et al., 2016).

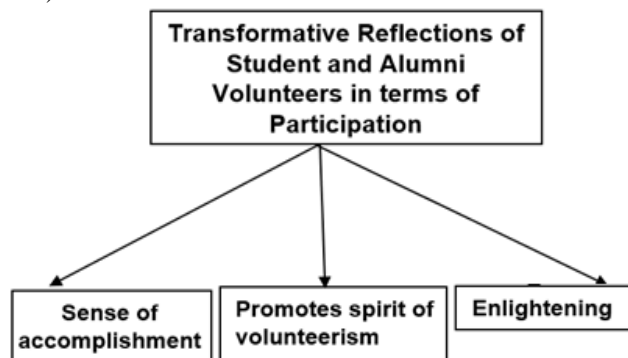


Figure 4: Reflections of students and alumni volunteers in terms of participation

Figure 4 presents the thematic categories of key informants' transformative reflection in terms of participation. The following themes were identified:

Sense of accomplishment

Nursing students and alumni volunteer brings them great joy and happiness, giving them incomparable fulfillment in themselves. They feel the satisfaction they can only feel whenever they help others, especially those in need.

A person may feel proud of and connected to himself because of his volunteer work. Moreover, the more confident a person feels in himself, the more probable he will have a positive outlook on his life and future aspirations. He feels naturally accomplished since he is helping people and the community. People frequently donate their time to causes or organizations they feel are important or have a unique connection since volunteering involves deciding to labor without obtaining monetary remuneration (Bowe et al., 2020).

Promotes the spirits of volunteerism

The participation of students and alumni in community service can promote the spirit of volunteerism among themselves and others who see what they are doing. It also gives an idea to others about the importance of being helpful to others by participating in various community services.

People who participate in community service are more likely to commit to volunteering, and volunteering promotes civic engagement. Volunteering and performing community service are investments in our local community and its residents (Mallari et al., 2020).

Enlightening

The participation in community service of nursing students and alumni brings a deep meaning that serves as an eye-opener not only to them as volunteers but to people who are capable of helping others. It also serves as a reminder that

even if a person is sometimes lacking and even if the status in life is difficult, he still has something to contribute to people who need help more. Volunteering also gives a person new inspiration, drive, and creativity that he may use in his personal and professional life (Kaweckyj, 2018).

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The majority of the key informants are female and at the 4th-year level.
- The top 3 community extension services participated mainly by the key informants are the Coastal Clean-up, Blood pressure, vital sign, and weight-taking activity, and both gift-giving and Breakfast Club ranked third.
- In terms of relevance, the key informants' reflections on their community extension services participation are centered on promoting environmental preservation, catalysts in promoting health to the community, which is directly connected to being of use in their future nursing career. Lastly, it enriches their culture of generosity.
- In effectivity, key informants' reflections on their community extension services participation are centered on developing skills in working in a team environment, personal growth, and interpersonal skills.
- In terms of participation, key informants' reflections on their community extension services participation are centered on a sense of accomplishment, promoting the spirit of volunteerism, and enlightening.

5. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations were drawn;

- Encourage student volunteers to continue their advocacy in serving the community.
- The university should award student and alumni volunteers merits to foster participation in all community extension services of the university.
- Conduct a tracer study on the student volunteers working in the industry to determine if their volunteerism in college significantly impacts their career path.

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