Impact of service-learning interventions on civic values in the COVID-19 era

Yolanda Ruiz-Ordoñez [a*], University of Valencia, Faculty of Psychology, Spain

Amparo Salcedo-Mateu [b], University of Valencia, Faculty of Psychology, Spain

Carmen Moret-Tatay moret [c], University of Valencia, Faculty of Psychology, Spain

Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought about challenges to all fields, civic values included. The service-learning (SL) disciplines can offer a useful tool in this scenario, where human rights are most vulnerable. Given the need to face current challenges in university education, this study aimed to propose a pre–post analysis of an SL intervention for the Spanish University population during the COVID-19 outbreak. Ninety-two Spanish undergraduate psychology students participated in the study. The Values and Civic Attitudes (VAL-U) scale was employed for the pre–post assessment. The analyses were developed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 22 and Amos 18.0 modules. The results have shown an effect on civic values after an intervention. Therefore, the VAL-U scale might be considered a valuable tool for assessing resilience in Spanish-speaking university students' SL in the post-COVID-19 era.

Keywords: Attitude, civic, COVID-19, pre–post, service-learning, values;

---

* ***** ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Name, Surname, Affiliation, Address, City and Postcode, Country.
E-mail address: yolanda.ruiz@ucv.es

1. Introduction

The university not only has the mission of researching and training future professionals, but it must respond to new social challenges, emphasising, on the one hand, the acquisition of content and specialised training, and on the other, no less important, training that contemplates the axiological and humanistic dimension of attitudes and values. In this scenario, the COVID-19 outbreak has brought about challenges to all fields, civic values included. The service-learning (SL) disciplines can offer a useful tool in this scenario, where human rights are more vulnerable than in previous times. In this regard, the development of competencies linked to social and ethical issues seems to be of interest (Escofet, Folgueiras, Luna, & Palou, 2016, p. 931; Utemissova, Danna, & Nikolaevna, 2021).

It is a priority that the student is an agent of social change by favouring 'the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to promote a sustainable, peaceful, prosperous and equitable life for all' (Sandia & Montilva, 2020, p. 132). In this way, the SL methodology promotes the acquisition of curricular competencies while providing service to the community, thus guaranteeing the acquisition of civic and social values. In this way, it contributes to the development of anti-racist behaviour, as well as to the promotion of values, such as commitment and responsibility. Putting this methodology into practice, the student approaches reality from different points of view, activating his/her belief system, providing at the same time a world view, placing the student in situations of social challenge, developing civic participation and the spiritual dimension (Helm, Kipley, & Pheifer, 2018).

This practice is a real way for them to develop civic awareness and public participation (Domingo, 2017), as well as responsibility through a commitment to the community from academic learning, thus strengthening the sense of citizenship (Deeley, 2016). The value of active citizenship is related to caring for the public; moral development; a sense of social, personal and civic responsibility (Lovat & Clement, 2016; Zayas, Gozálvez, & Gracia, 2017); participation; consensus; and co-responsibility (García, 2011; Puig, Batlle, Bosch, & Palos, 2007). The SL is a pedagogical opportunity for the implementation of an ethics of care for the community and universalistic ethics of justice (Carmen, 2018; Zayas et al., 2017, p. 5).

On the other hand, SL methodology contributes to the development of moral consciousness (Lovat and Clement, 2016) through continuous spaces of critical reflection. Although there are not many studies that prevail in the university environment, it can be said that it allows a deeper understanding of moral issues, since 'Dewey's theory of experiential learning does not only emphasise cognitive development, but also moral and aesthetic growth' (Zhuran & Rud, 2010, p. 37), along these lines, and given the scarce production of questionnaires that shed light on the impact of SL methodology, there are experiences in the design of instruments, such as the Values and Civic Attitudes (VAL-U) scale, which allows the measurement of different constructs related to this methodology, confirming and validating appropriate psychometric properties; the instrument itself is based on the CASD-14 (Kelkay, Sahile, A., Mola, S., & Yeshiwas, 2020; Ruiz-Ordóñez, Salcedo-Mateu, Turbi-Pinazo, Novella-García, & Moret-Tatay, 2020).

1.1. Purpose of the study

The current work aims to examine the role of an SL intervention programme on civic values during the COVID-19 outbreak. One should bear in mind that measures of interest can be non-normally distributed, so other approaches might be of interest to shed light on the barriers to reaching assumptions such as data normality. In this way, the Bayes factor notation (BF10) was employed to support H_1 over H_0 where, according to medium theories, word recognition and reading times predict comprehension, and differences might appear across mediums of support.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Participants

Participants collaborated voluntarily and received no compensation. First, a sample of 92 Spanish undergraduate psychology students (76.1% were women, 18.5% were men and 5.4% did not report their sex) with an age range between 18 and 31 years (M = 21.39, SD = 2.48) participated in the study. Because of dropout in the assessments, the final sample was composed of 87 students.

2.2. Procedure and instruments

The VAL-U scale was employed for the pre–post assessment (Ruiz-Ordóñez et al., 2020). This is composed of 14 items that measure civic values under a Likert scale. It has provided good goodness of fit and reliability in previous literature for the Spanish population. A longitudinal analysis of 6 months was carried out, starting with a pre-assessment and ending with a post-assessment after this period. The intervention took place during the first confinement in Spanish because of COVID-19.

2.3. Analysis

The analyses were developed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 22 and Amos 18.0 modules. Assumptions were checked to ensure the application of factor analysis, such as high sample size, multivariate normality, linearity and correlation between variables. Furthermore, Bayesian inference was carried out using the BF10. This indicates evidence to support H_1 over H_0. Data analysis was performed using JASP (version 0.12.2) (computer software).

2.4. Ethics

The university's ethics committee's approval of the study was obtained, ensuring that the principles of the Helsinki declaration were followed. University students were contacted to participate in the study with prior informed consent.

3. Results

McDonald's ω was 0.73 and 0.76 in the pre-moment and the post moment, respectively. Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis and the student test for paired samples. 95% CI for Cohen's *d* was employed (CI −1.43 to −0.97). Moreover, Figure 1 shows the descriptive analysis, but it also a Bayesian approach to reject H_0

Table 1. Descriptives and *t*-test

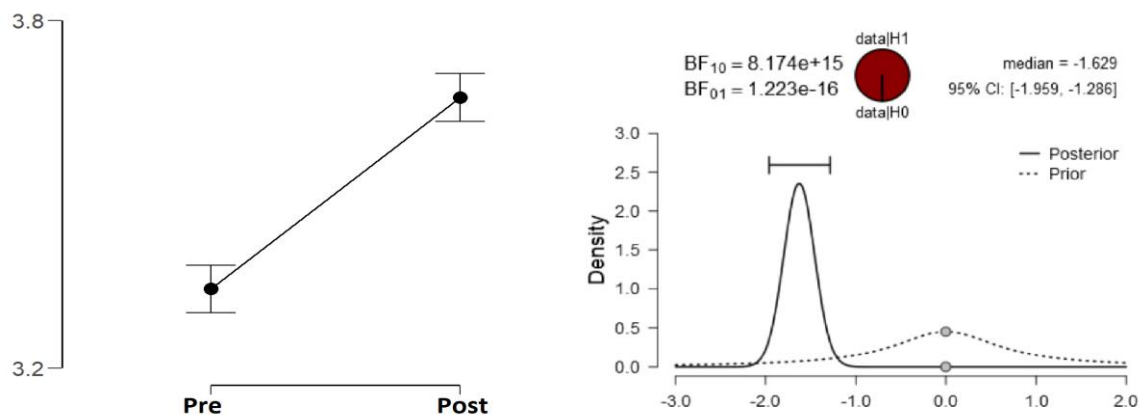|	N	Mean	SD	p
Pre-moment	92	3.337	0.357	<0.001
Post-moment	92	3.667	0.294	

Figure 1. Bayes factor robustness checks for differences between pre- and post-moments
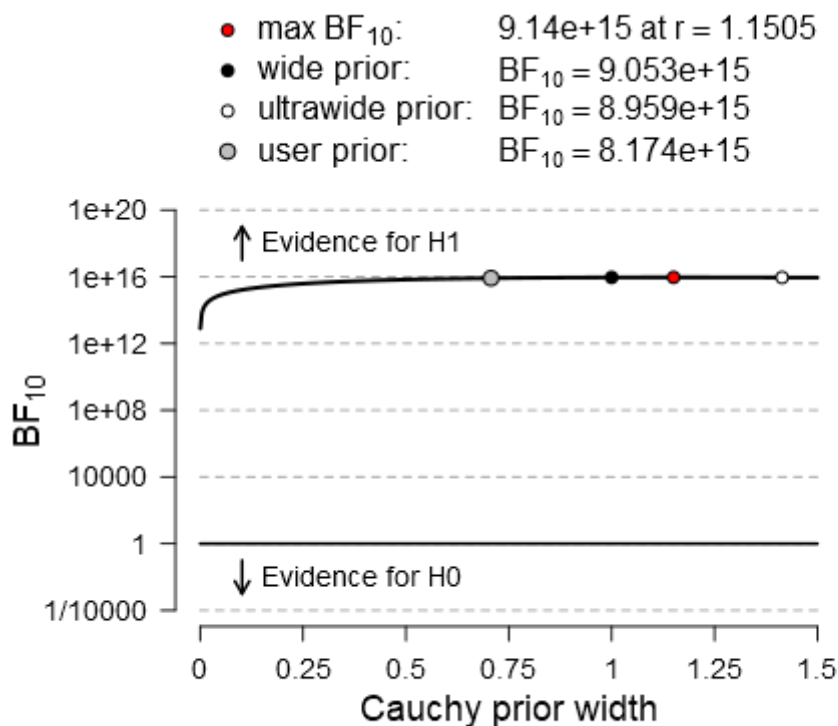

Figure 2. Bayes factor robustness checks for differences between pre- and post-moments

Lastly, no differences were found across men and women for the pre–post-moments under a *t*-test for paired samples (all $p > 0.05$).

4. Discussion

An educational experience, from the SL methodology, promotes greater sensitivity to the needs of the community since the student can empathise and recognise considering his or her decisions may have repercussions on people. In this way, moral habits, such as sensitivity, care (Zhuran & Rud,

2010, p. 39), altruism and empathy, are developed (Lovat & Clement, 2016). This is of interest in the current situation, i.e., in the era of COVID-19.

The results suggest that the intervention might improve civic values in the population under study. One should bear in mind that spaces for reflection form part of the pedagogical dynamics that give rise to education in values such as 'respect, understanding, tolerance, inclusion, care, compassion, freedom, honesty, integrity, responsibility, empathy...' (Iyera, Carringtona, Mercerb, & Selvaa, 2018, p. 136–137), and social justice (Clifford, 2017). This value or sense of social justice is produced because a greater understanding of social issues is developed, with students questioning themselves and responding to situations of injustice through empathy, civic commitment, social responsibility and social justice (Engberg, Carrera, & Mika, 2018).

The gift formed by the attitudes of giving, receiving and returning favours the humanisation of the student, with service being the visible result of returning to society all that has been received and learned, developing behaviours aimed at the good of the community. This pedagogy of gift leads to solidarity and commitment (Martín, Gijón, & Puig Rovira, 2019; Ozcan & Uzunboylu, 2020). Thus, these results might be of interest for facing the current barriers in education. Of note, SL promotes philanthropic values by encouraging voluntary behaviour for the common good and involving students in civil society through direct knowledge of social problems (Hatcher & Studer, 2015).

On the other hand, this pedagogy allows 'the development of positive attitudes and values to promote diversity and inclusion' (Mergler, Carringtong, Boman, Kimber, & Bland, 2017, p. 76). In this way, a community is built that is capable of awakening critical citizenship based on democracy and justice, even in the current circumstances. With the SL methodology, spaces of encounter, co-participation and co-responsibility are created based on social cohesion and solidarity might occur even in times of confinement. We cannot ignore the need to promote research that relates this methodology to the development of values or attitudes such as empathy and civic commitment (Chan, Ng, & Chan, 2016), particularly to face the current challenges.

5. Conclusion

The current work aimed to examine the role of an SL intervention programme on civic values during the COVID-19 outbreak. This methodology is an opportunity to educate and strengthen global citizenship, responding to the multiculturalism and cultural diversity that permeates all areas of our society today, particularly in the current situation, or better to say, in the era post-COVID-19.

Service, being the other basic component of this methodology, strengthens social capital and places young people as the protagonists of the donation, capable of promoting processes of transformation in the community through altruistic actions. This altruism is understood as the practice of living donation.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Carmen, V. G. (2018). Training and employability: What are the LSPs looking for and what can the graduates offer? *International Journal of Innovative Research in Education*, *5*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.18844/ijire.v5i1.3461

Chan, K., Ng, E., & Chan, C. C. (2016). Empowering students through service-learning of community psychology: A case in Hong Kong. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *20*(4), 25–36. Retrieved from https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/1306

Clifford, J. (2017). Talking about service-learning: Product or process? Reciprocity or solidarity? *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *21*(4), 1–13. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1163945

Deeley, S. J. (2016). El Aprendizaje-Servicio en educación superior. In *Teoría, práctica y perspectiva crítica.* Madrid: Narcea. Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=of3EDQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA100&dq=Deeley,+S.J.+(2016).+El+Aprendizaje-Servicio+en+educaci%C3%B3n+superior.+Teor%C3%ADa,+pr%C3%A1ctica+y+perspectiva+cr%C3%ADtica.+Madrid:+Narcea.&ots=u1Fi3D-fls&sig=d_TmT0N1wgYMP57EP1bajxa7Fuo

Domingo M. A. (2017). Conocimiento responsable y ciudadanía activa. En Domingo Moratalla. In *Condición humana y ecología integral. El Horizonte educativo para una ciudadanía global* (pp. 101–121) Madrid, Spain: PPC.

Engberg, M. E., Carrera, L. F., & Mika, L. P. (2018). Utilizing domestic off-campus experiences to influence social justice awareness and career development. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *22*(1), 63–86. Retrieved from https://tme.journals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/1372

Escofet, A., Folgueiras, P., Luna, E., & Palou, B. (2016). Elaboración y validación de un cuestionario para la valoración de proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, *21*(70), 929–949. Retrieved from http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1405-66662016000300929

García G. T. (2011). Aportaciones ciudadanas desde el aprendizaje servicio: Universidad, escuela y comunidad conectadas. *Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado*, *25*(2), 125–141. Retrieved from https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/274/27422047007.pdf

Hatcher, J. A., & Studer, M. L. (2015). Service-learning and philanthropy: Implications for course design. *Theory into Practice*, *54*(1), 11–19. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00405841.2015.977656

Helm S. R., Kipley, D., & Pheifer, T. (2018). The impact of a service-learning project on undergraduate students faith development and spiritual formation: Outcomes of an organization and administrative behavior course. *International Journal of Educational Methodology, 4*(3), 187–194. Retrieved from https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ijem/article/454834

Ruiz-Ordoñez, Y., Salcedo-Mateu, A. & Moret-Tatay, C. M. (2022). Impact of service-learning interventions on civic values in the COVID-19 era. *Global Journal of Psychology Research: New Trends and Issues*. *12*(2), 175-181 https://doi.org/10.18844/gjpr.v12i2.5397

Iyera, R. Carringtona, S., Mercerb, L., & Selvaa, G. (2018). Critical service-learning: promoting values orientation and enterprise skills in pre-service teacher programmes. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 46*(2), 133–147. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1359866X.2016.1210083

Kelkay, A. D., Sahile, A., Mola, S., & Yeshiwas, D. (2020). Selected demographic characteristics and employees' job satisfaction in government organizations: Dangila, Ethiopia: Job Satisfaction. *Global Journal of Psychology Research: New Trends and Issues*, *10*(2), 128–139. https://doi.org/10.18844/gjpr.v10i2.4818

Lovat, T., & Clement, N. (2016). Service learning as holistic values pedagogy. *Journal of Experiential Education, 39*(2), 115–129. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1053825916628548

Martín, X., Gijón, M., & Puig Rovira, J M. (2019). Pedagogía del don. Relación y servicio. *Estudios sobre Educación, 37*, 51–68. Retrieved from https://dadun.unav.edu/handle/10171/58384

Mergler, A., Carringtong, S.B., Boman, P., Kimber, M.P., & Bland, D. (2017). Exploring the value of service-learning on preservice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 42*(6), 68–80. Retrieved from https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/ielapa.952497301507861

Ozcan, D., & Uzunboylu, H. (2020). School counsellors' perceptions of working with gifted students. *South African Journal of Education*, *40*(1), S1–S9. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/view/196014

Puig, J. M., Batlle, R., Bosch, C., & Palos, J. (2007). Aprendizaje servicio. In *Educar para la ciudadanía.* Barcelona, Spain: Octaedro.

Ruiz-Ordóñez, Y., Salcedo-Mateu, A., Turbi-Pinazo, A.M., Novella-García, C., & Moret-Tatay, C. (2020). CASD-14: A questionnaire on civic attitudes and sustainable development values for service-learning. *Sustainability,* 1–12. Retrieved from https://www.mdpi.com/717092

Sandia, B., & Montilva, J. (2020). Tecnologías digitales en el aprendizaje-servicio para la formación ciudadana del nuevo milenio. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia, 23*(1) 29–148. Retrieved from https://www.redalyc.org/journal/3314/331462375007/331462375007.pdf

Utemissova, G. U., Danna, S., & Nikolaevna, V. N. (2021). Cyberbullying during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Global Journal of Guidance and Counseling in Schools: Current Perspectives*, *11*(2), 77–87. https://doi.org/10.18844/gjgc.v11i2.5471

Zayas, B., Gozálvez, V., & Gracia, J. (2017). La Dimensión Ética y Ciudadana del Aprendizaje Servicio: Una apuesta por su institucionalización en la Educación Superior. *Revista Complutense de Educación (faltarían paginas),* Retrieved from https://redined.educacion.gob.es/xmlui/handle/11162/192325

Zhuran, Y., & Rud, A. G. (2010). A model of dewey moral imagination for service learning: theoretical explorations and implications for practice in higher education. *Educación y Cultura, 26*(2), 36–51. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5703/educationculture.26.2.36