

From Transactions to Transformation: Rethinking Business Management Education Through Service-Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of service-learning as a pedagogical approach in a course offered to business management students. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the research compared student outcomes between an experimental group that incorporated service-learning and a control group that underwent traditional teaching methods. These student outcomes included knowledge application, personal and professional skills, civic orientation and engagement, and self-awareness. The results revealed that students participating in service-learning significantly gained self-reflection skills, self-efficacy, and a sense of social responsibility compared to their peers undergoing traditional teaching approaches. However, no statistically significant differences were observed in the other areas. These results suggest that while service-learning offers unique advantages in specific areas, its broader impact may depend on the depth and duration of community immersion in service-learning. This study shows the transformative potential of service-learning in rethinking business management education, emphasizing its ability to bridge theory and practice while fostering socially responsible professionals.

Keywords: Service-Learning, Community Engagement, Business Management, Obligations and Contracts, Student Outcomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Students continue to show a strong interest in pursuing a bachelor's degree in business management, especially in institutions that embrace a liberal arts approach to education. These students are drawn to this field because of their broad applicability across various industries and their potential to open doors to diverse career paths. The integration of business management education within a liberal arts framework further enhances its appeal, as it combines practical business acumen with critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills [1].

However, several scholars have criticized contemporary business management education. First, the business management curriculum focuses on functional and

discrete knowledge rather than on cross-functional and holistic knowledge. This approach results in graduates struggling to integrate their specialized knowledge into a broader organizational context. Second, business management education tends to provide students with practical problem-solving skills, without delving into the underlying theoretical frameworks. Although this approach equips students with a set of skills, it limits their capacity to adapt to and innovate when confronted with unfamiliar problems. Third, business management education is more inclined to perceive human interactions through a transactional perspective. This narrow perspective stems from overreliance on economic models that prioritize individual gains and reduce complex social relationships to simple transactions. Lastly, the business management curriculum often perpetuates the notion that the ultimate moral purpose of a business is to maximize shareholder wealth. It neglects the broader responsibilities of businesses to their employees, communities, and the environment, reinforcing a narrow view of business management, wherein profit is prioritized over social impact [2].

These critiques draw attention to the need for a more holistic and ethically grounded approach to business management education that equips students with not only technical skills but also a broader understanding of the business' role in society. Among the pedagogical approaches in higher education, service-learning can address the narrow perspective and practice prevalent in contemporary business management education. By integrating community engagement with academic learning, service-learning can expand students' viewpoints and foster a more holistic and ethically informed understanding of business and its impact on society [2, 3].

Service-learning involves structured service initiatives that address community needs. By critically reflecting on these experiences, students enhance their grasp of course materials, broaden their understanding of their academic discipline, and develop heightened awareness of their civic responsibilities [4]. In turn, students find value in service-learning for its contribution to personal growth, citizenship skills development, and the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge in real-world contexts [5, 6].

However, business management education has only recently explored service-learning as a pedagogical approach. Most faculty members have limited familiarity with this teaching method and its prospective educational outcomes [7]. While service-learning is often associated with enhanced student engagement and skill development, there is a lack of quantitative studies measuring its outcomes in students compared to traditional methods. Existing research frequently relies on qualitative assessments or self-reported data, which may not provide objective comparisons [8, 9]. Additionally, there is a scarcity of studies comparing service-learning approaches with conventional teaching methods in developing competencies within the field of business management [10].

Hence, this study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of service-learning as a pedagogical approach in business management education compared to traditional teaching methods. Specifically, this research investigated whether there were significant differences in educational outcomes from pre- to post-test between service-learning and non-service-learning students in a business management class. The measured student outcomes included knowledge application, personal and professional skills, civic orientation and engagement, and self-awareness.

This study contributes to educational theory by exploring how service-learning aligns with theories of experiential and transformative learning. By comparing its effectiveness with traditional teaching methods, this research corroborates service-learning's potential to address critiques of contemporary business management education. By demonstrating service-learning's benefits, this study provides insights for curriculum developers in business management programs. The results can guide the integration of service-learning into courses by fostering an educational experience that combines technical, interpersonal, and civic competencies. With limited faculty familiarity with service-learning, this research serves as a resource for educators. It shows the educational outcomes of service-learning and offers evidence-based recommendations for implementation in business management classes. The findings can help higher education institutions better prepare students for careers demanding adaptability, ethical decision-making, and social consciousness.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Service-learning in the Asian context has been tailored to reflect local cultural and educational values. Unlike their Western counterparts, which may prioritize democratic engagement and social justice, Asian service-learning programs emphasize moral development, practical skills, and self-reflection. It prepares students not only to excel in their careers but also to contribute meaningfully to society, embodying both personal development and collective

well-being, which are central to many Asian cultures [11, 12].

The conceptual framework used in this study to assess student outcomes through service-learning programs within an Asian context is built on four overarching domains that involve 11 learning subdomains. These student outcomes include knowledge application, personal and professional skills (creative problem-solving skills, relationship and team skills, self-reflection skills, and critical thinking skills), civic orientation and engagement (community commitment and understanding, caring and respect, and sense of social responsibility), and self-awareness (self-efficacy, self-understanding, and commitment to self-improvement) [11].

One of the most significant outcomes of service-learning is the ability of students to apply academic knowledge to real-world situations. This knowledge application helps bridge the gap between theoretical concepts taught in classrooms and the complex challenges faced in community settings by engaging students with projects that demand innovative and thoughtful applications for their learning [12, 13].

Service-learning can also equip students with creative problem-solving skills, which are essential to today's complex and rapidly changing world. This pedagogical approach immerses students in real-world scenarios, often characterized by unpredictable challenges and constraints. Through this, students not only generate ideas and methods to solve problems but also adapt strategies when initial solutions fall short [11].

Additionally, service-learning provides students with meaningful opportunities to develop relationship and team skills. Working collaboratively to address community needs prepares students for professional environments in which teamwork and interpersonal skills are crucial. This helps them understand the nuances of teamwork, including task delegation, conflict resolution, and consensus-building, and learn to navigate group dynamics, including managing differing opinions and personalities [12].

An integral part of service-learning is the process of reflection, in which students assess their personal and professional growth. Structured reflection necessitates students to evaluate their performance, identify areas for improvement, and celebrate successes. This self-reflection helps them recognize their strengths and areas of development, which is a vital aspect of lifelong learning [11, 12].

Service-learning can sharpen critical thinking skills, as students analyze community problems, identify solutions, and evaluate the effectiveness of their actions. Understanding the needs of the community requires students to gather and analyze data, observe social dynamics, and consider the cultural, economic, and

environmental factors that contribute to the issue. The iterative nature of service-learning strengthens students' ability to adapt and refine their solutions to community problems based on feedback and observed outcomes [12, 13].

Service-learning also plays a pivotal role in fostering civic orientation and engagement, helping students understand the unique challenges, needs, and strengths of the community they serve, recognize their roles in society, and develop a sense of responsibility toward others. The real-world experience in service-learning cultivates a sense of commitment to the community among students by deepening their emotional investment in meaningfully contributing to society. Given that service-learning often exposes students to perspectives and lived realities different from their own, students learn to approach others with care, understanding, and respect. They, in turn, develop a strong sense of responsibility to effect social change [11, 12, 13].

Another significant outcome of service-learning is self-awareness. Community engagement in service-learning challenges students in realizing their potential, recognizing areas for growth, and taking proactive steps to enhance themselves. Service-learning facilitates self-efficacy or the confidence to effect change and solve problems by allowing students to see the tangible outcomes of their actions. Self-understanding also develops as students gain insights into their strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations by reflecting on their service-learning experiences. This self-understanding allows them to align their personal goals with broader societal needs. Commitment to self-improvement is also a key aspect, as students are challenged to seek opportunities for growth and develop resilience in the face of challenges [11, 12, 14].

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to measure the differences in outcomes between business management students participating in service-learning and those not involved in such community engagement. A quasi-experimental design resembles true experiments but lacks the key feature of random assignment of study participants to experimental and control groups. A common experimental design in educational research is the non-equivalent control group design, featuring an experimental group and a control group that both underwent a pre- and post-test. However, these experimental and control groups are not equivalent, or may differ in characteristics that could influence the results of the study [15].

Research Setting and Context

Ateneo de Manila University, located in the capital of the Philippines, is renowned for its Jesuit tradition in liberal

arts education. The University's educational approach seeks to nurture students into professionals with conscience, competence, compassion, and commitment [16]. Service-learning is a cornerstone of the University's educational philosophy that seamlessly integrates community engagement with academic learning. This form of experiential learning allows students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world challenges, particularly within the Philippine context [17].

The use of service-learning in business management, particularly in the course delivery of Obligations and Contracts (LLAW 113), remains underexplored throughout the University. LLAW 113 is a three-unit undergraduate course that is part of the curriculum of most business management students. It is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the legal principles governing obligations and contracts. This requires students to apply the relevant legal principles on obligations and contracts in a given business case, situation, or transaction. The course is divided into modules covering basic legal concepts and their applications; definitions of obligations and their nature, types, and effects, including their extinguishment; formation, interpretation, and essential elements of contracts; legal remedies and implications of defective contracts; and obligations arising from quasi-contracts and related acts without contracts.

In the first semester of academic year 2024 to 2025, three teachers taught LLAW 113. They used case studies and class discussions to facilitate students' understanding of obligations and contracts. They employed a mix of formative and summative assessments, including quizzes and exams, that require problem-solving for common legal issues.

However, the teacher of LLAW 113-A incorporated a service-learning component, where students engaged with a social enterprise catering to marginalized communities to explore real-world applications of obligations and contracts to enhance their understanding of societal needs and legal principles. The community engagement included activities, such as consulting with the social enterprise to understand their legal concerns and providing guidance grounded in the principles of obligations and contracts. After community engagement, the students submitted a written reflection that detailed their insights into the application of course content and opportunities for personal, professional, and socio-civic growth. This structured approach allowed students to demonstrate their ability to apply legal knowledge while fostering personal and civic growth.

On the other hand, LLAW 113-B and 113-C teachers required their students to carry out group projects involving simulated learning. Groups of LLAW 113-B students created a "network" of businesses, with each group representing a business dealing with at least two to

three other groups. Using the legal principles learned in class, the groups negotiated with each other to create contracts in conformity with the law and were best suited for the purposes of their businesses. In LLAW 113-C, students formed groups to prepare a standard contract for an assigned business type (e.g., restaurants, markets, advertising agencies, security agencies, or accounting firms), incorporating key concepts from obligations and contracts. Each group shared their contracts with another group for review and analysis.

Study Participants

Business management students enrolled in LLAW 113 at Ateneo de Manila University during the first semester of the academic year 2024 to 2025 were recruited to participate in the study. Only those students who provided informed consent to participate in the study were included. LLAW 113-A students were assigned to the experimental group (with service-learning), while LLAW 113-B and 113-C students were delegated to the control groups (without service-learning). Students who did not complete the pre- and post-tests were excluded from the study.

Data Gathering and Analysis

To measure the effectiveness of service-learning as a pedagogical approach to LLAW-113 compared to conventional teaching methods, the Service-Learning Outcomes Measurement Scale (S-LOMS) was used. S-LOMS proposed knowledge application, personal and professional skills (creative problem-solving skills, relationship and team skills, self-reflection skills, and critical thinking skills), civic orientation and engagement (community commitment and understanding, caring and respect, and sense of social responsibility), and self-awareness (self-efficacy, self-understanding, and commitment to self-improvement) as possible student outcomes from service-learning. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) ranging from 0.75 to 0.96 [11, 12]. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that its domains and subdomains could accurately measure the intended constructs in Asian contexts [14].

S-LOMS was administered using Google Forms to both experimental and control groups at the start (pre-test) and end of the semester (post-test). Study participants were asked to rate each S-LOMS item on a ten-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicated stronger agreement with the construct being measured. Each subdomain consisted of multiple items. The scores for each subdomain were calculated by averaging the responses to all items under the construct. The scores for each domain were then aggregated. Finally, scores from all domains were combined to obtain an overall score.

The spreadsheet containing the study participants' responses at the pre- and post-tests underwent data

cleaning and matching prior to data analysis. To determine if there were significant differences in educational outcomes from pre- to post-test between the experimental and control groups, Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA was performed at 0.05 level of significance using Jamovi Statistical Software. This study used non-parametric statistics because of the small sample size. A p-value of greater than 0.05 was considered statistically insignificant.

4. RESULTS

This study comprised 43 students with a mean age of 19.37 years \pm 0.90, ranging from 17 to 22 years old. 51.16% (22 students) of the study participants were male, 46.51% (20 students) were female, and 2.33% (one student) preferred not to disclose their gender. 58.14% (25 students) came from BS Management Engineering, 25.58% (11 students) from BS Management Applied Chemistry, and 16.28% (seven students) from other business management programs. 30.23% (13 students) were enrolled in LLAW 113-A, 18.60% (eight students) in LLAW 113-B, and 51.63% (22 students) in LLAW 113-C.

As shown in Table 1, the statistical results of the gathered data using S-LOMS revealed significant differences between the experimental and control groups in several student outcomes. These results underscore the added value of incorporating service-learning into business management education.

For knowledge application, the mean differences in the pre- and post-test scores across all groups were not statistically significant ($p = 0.53$). This result suggests that service-learning did not considerably impact this domain compared to traditional teaching methods. Nonetheless, the observed increase in post-test scores for the three groups indicates that both service-learning and traditional methods are similarly effective in offering opportunities for the application of course content in real-world situations.

Statistical analysis showed evidence that service-learning can foster personal and professional skills, with 14% of the changes in scores explained by this pedagogical approach ($p = 0.05$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.14$). The post-test scores demonstrated substantial improvement in the experimental group, particularly in self-reflection skills ($p = 0.02$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.18$). This result signifies that service-learning can enhance students' ability to critically evaluate their actions, thoughts, and growth. However, the mean differences in the pre- and post-test scores in other subdomains—creative problem-solving skills ($p = 0.93$), relationship and team skills ($p = 0.12$), and critical thinking skills ($p = 0.15$)—were not statistically significant between the experimental and control groups. While these skills were enhanced across all groups by the end of the semester, the lack of statistical significance implies that service-learning may not have a distinct advantage over conventional teaching methods in these areas.

Table 1. Comparison of Student Outcomes between the Experimental and Control Groups

Student Outcomes	LLAW 113-A		LLAW 113-B		LLAW 113-C		p-value
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test	
<i>Knowledge Application</i>	7.46 ± 1.11	8.23 ± 1.47	7.38 ± 0.99	7.72 ± 1.40	7.97 ± 1.28	8.44 ± 1.28	0.53
<i>Personal and Professional Skills</i>	28.61 ± 4.40	31.09 ± 5.31	30.74 ± 3.45	33.44 ± 3.77	32.33 ± 4.62	32.70 ± 4.10	0.05
Creative Problem-Solving Skills	7.13 ± 1.26	7.57 ± 1.44	7.73 ± 0.97	8.36 ± 1.30	7.92 ± 1.26	8.23 ± 1.31	0.93
Relationship and Team Skills	6.57 ± 1.14	7.42 ± 1.51	6.69 ± 1.48	7.75 ± 1.55	7.51 ± 1.53	7.72 ± 1.12	0.12
Self-Reflection Skills	7.40 ± 1.68	8.10 ± 1.50	8.03 ± 1.30	8.88 ± 1.11	8.78 ± 1.39	8.43 ± 1.35	0.02
Critical Thinking Skills	7.51 ± 1.18	8.00 ± 1.39	8.29 ± 0.68	8.46 ± 0.89	8.12 ± 1.39	8.32 ± 1.52	0.15
<i>Civic Orientation and Engagement</i>	23.08 ± 3.13	25.34 ± 4.66	23.95 ± 2.55	25.28 ± 3.03	25.96 ± 3.00	26.10 ± 2.42	0.04
Commitment and Understanding	7.04 ± 1.06	8.01 ± 1.53	6.75 ± 1.05	7.91 ± 0.93	7.77 ± 1.54	8.05 ± 1.26	0.11
Caring and Respect	8.63 ± 1.04	8.71 ± 1.50	9.07 ± 1.00	8.88 ± 1.11	9.49 ± 0.63	9.44 ± 0.71	0.83
Sense of Social Responsibility	7.41 ± 1.80	8.62 ± 1.79	8.13 ± 1.19	8.50 ± 1.31	8.70 ± 1.30	8.62 ± 1.21	0.02
<i>Self-Awareness</i>	19.97 ± 2.77	23.12 ± 4.69	22.92 ± 2.42	25.15 ± 2.20	23.46 ± 4.31	23.56 ± 4.60	0.02
Self-Efficacy	6.02 ± 0.95	7.52 ± 1.71	7.00 ± 1.48	7.94 ± 1.23	6.94 ± 1.91	7.20 ± 1.85	0.02
Self-Understanding	6.85 ± 1.01	7.67 ± 1.82	7.50 ± 1.27	8.38 ± 1.12	8.26 ± 1.68	8.15 ± 1.80	0.14
Commitment to Self-Improvement	7.10 ± 1.17	7.92 ± 1.67	8.42 ± 0.68	8.83 ± 0.82	8.26 ± 1.55	8.21 ± 1.54	0.17
<i>Total</i>	79.11 ± 9.52	87.77 ± 14.91	84.98 ± 8.40	91.59 ± 8.26	89.72 ± 12.01	90.81 ± 11.09	0.004

The civic orientation and engagement domain exhibited significant gains for the experimental group ($p = 0.04$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.15$), especially in the subdomain of sense of social responsibility ($p = 0.02$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.18$). Students in the experimental group demonstrated a stronger responsibility to contribute to societal well-being, illustrating the effectiveness of service-learning in fostering a sense of purpose in addressing broader social challenges. However, other subdomains within this domain, such as community commitment and understanding ($p = 0.11$) as well as caring and respect ($p = 0.83$), demonstrated no significant differences in mean scores between the experimental and control groups. These results suggest that while service-learning succeeded in instilling a sense of responsibility, it may not have fully engaged students in ways that deepened their connection to the community or enhanced their empathy and respect for diverse perspectives. Based on the faculty and students' feedback, one plausible reason is that many students in the experimental group interacted minimally with the partner beneficiaries, often engaging only with staff or through online channels, limiting opportunities for meaningful community engagement.

The domain of self-awareness displayed statistically significant changes in scores ($p = 0.02$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.19$) for the experimental group, reflecting the positive influence of service-learning on students' self-perception and personal growth. Specifically, the experimental group demonstrated a substantial increase ($p = 0.02$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.18$) in self-efficacy or confidence in solving problems and making meaningful contributions. While growth was noted in self-understanding ($p = 0.14$) and commitment to self-improvement ($p = 0.17$), particularly among LLAW 113-A and 113-B students, the mean differences in the scores for these subdomains were not statistically significant. These results suggest that students in the experimental group may not have engaged in the depth of reflection needed to fully understand their strengths, limitations, and motivations, or commit to ongoing personal development.

Nonetheless, the overall scores between the experimental and control groups were significantly different ($p = 0.004$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.18$). Students in the experimental group exhibited greater improvements from pre- to post-test compared to those in the conventional teaching methods. Contributories to these results are significant gains in areas such as self-reflection skills, sense of social responsibility, and self-efficacy in the experimental group. These results provide insights into the key benefits of service-learning as a pedagogical approach.

5. DISCUSSION

Service-learning provides students with invaluable opportunities to engage with their communities and to apply classroom knowledge to real-world challenges. In contrast to abstract learning, which is often associated with traditional classroom settings, this experiential approach immerses students in real-world situations, where they must work with others, consider multiple perspectives, and address complex problems. These experiences often challenge students to think critically, adapt to unforeseen circumstances, and develop innovative solutions to community issues [2].

Additionally, the reflection component inherent in service-learning encourages students to examine their experiences, connect them to theories, evaluate their own values and assumptions, and develop a more nuanced understanding of societal challenges [2, 18]. Reflection not only allows students to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world applications but also instills a lifelong commitment to community engagement and social responsibility [19].

Notable about service-learning is that the engagement is based on a reciprocal relationship between students and community partners [2, 20]. Both benefit from an exchange of knowledge, skills, and resources. This reciprocity helps students perceive business management

as more than just a transactional process [2]. When community engagement is built on reciprocity, service-learning can lead to transformative experiences for students and meaningful impacts on communities [21].

Knowledge application is often a core aspect of both service-learning and traditional teaching methods. In the control groups, case studies, group discussions, and problem-solving exercises might have effectively provided opportunities for students to apply theoretical concepts to practical scenarios, reducing the relative advantage of service-learning. In the experimental group, limited occasions for immersion might be contributory, since knowledge application requires longer engagement with real-world challenges or repeated opportunities to reinforce learning in various contexts. Students across all groups might also have similar levels of prior knowledge and competencies in applying legal principles. This comparable baseline knowledge could have lessened the observable impact of different teaching methodologies.

The results for self-reflection skills showed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group compared with the control groups. This finding suggests that service-learning effectively fosters students' ability to critically evaluate their actions, identify areas for growth, and internalize lessons from their experiences. Service-learning's experiential and reflective nature is likely a key factor in this outcome, as it encourages structured introspection and active engagement with real-world challenges.

However, there were no significant differences between the experimental and control groups in creative problem-solving skills, relationship and team skills, and critical thinking skills. The non-significant results for these subdomains may indicate that the traditional teaching methods used in the control groups, such as simulated business negotiations and contract drafting, were equally effective in developing problem-solving, teamwork, and critical thinking skills. These methods also emphasize collaboration, strategic decision-making, and practical application, which could reduce the observable impact of service-learning in these areas. Developing these personal and professional skills might also require more intensive service-learning experience to demonstrate statistically significant gains.

For the civic orientation and engagement domain, only a sense of social responsibility showed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the control groups. Service-learning likely encouraged the students to directly engage with real-world challenges, prompting them to reflect on their roles in addressing broader social issues. This engagement helped students feel a sense of duty and accountability toward their communities.

However, the lack of substantial improvements in community commitment and understanding as well as caring and respect in the experimental group raises important considerations in designing service-learning activities. These key civic orientation and engagement aspects necessitate deeper and sustained interactions with communities to develop a genuine sense of connection and empathy. Short-term service-learning engagements or activities with limited community interaction might not provide the immersive experience needed to foster these outcomes. Students' reflections on their experience in service-learning might have also fallen short in exploring the broader context of the community to gain deeper insights into their needs and truly relate with them.

As seen in this study, service-learning allowed students to reflect on themselves, their capabilities, and their personal growth, while also identifying areas where further improvement may be necessary. Specifically, the experimental group reported greater self-efficacy than the control groups. These results show that students who participated in service-learning tended to develop greater confidence in their ability to apply their skills effectively and make meaningful contributions to addressing real-world challenges. Witnessing the tangible outcomes of their efforts might have contributed to this self-efficacy.

However, the impact of service-learning on self-understanding and commitment to self-improvement was less pronounced. These findings suggest the need for more structured and intentional approaches to foster these dimensions of self-awareness. While students engaged in service-learning might have gained some insight into their strengths, weaknesses, and values, their community engagement experience might not have been sufficient to foster deeper levels of self-awareness. Focusing on task outcomes rather than meaningful personal insights might have limited the development of these dimensions.

6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study on the effectiveness of service-learning for business management education, particularly LLAW 113, offer important practical implications for its design and delivery. Service-learning stands out for its ability to immerse students in real-world challenges, encouraging them to connect theoretical knowledge with practical applications in meaningful community settings [22]. Unlike traditional classroom approaches, service-learning fosters a dynamic, experiential environment in which students engage with diverse perspectives, address complex societal problems, and navigate real-world uncertainties. However, the findings indicate that maximizing the benefits of service-learning requires intentionality in how activities are structured, delivered, and integrated into the curriculum.

Service-learning benefits significantly from extended engagement, as longer durations allow students to deepen

their understanding of community contexts and develop more meaningful relationships with the people they serve [22, 23, 24]. A year-long or multiphase project would allow them to see the outcomes of their efforts, refine their approaches, and adapt to evolving challenges, giving them opportunities to gain self-efficacy [25, 26]. This iterative learning process reinforces knowledge application along with personal and professional skills, as students experience the real-world complexities of sustaining initiatives over time. Additionally, prolonged service-learning experiences provide more opportunities for reflection, which is crucial for integrating course content with real-world experience. Extended engagement helps students develop a sense of ownership and a lasting commitment to community service [22, 24].

Sustained and immersive interactions with communities are essential to fostering empathy, understanding, and a genuine sense of civic commitment. Surface-level activities may fail to build the depth of connection needed for students to appreciate the lived realities of others. Community immersion can help students move beyond transactional relationships to develop authentic partnerships based on mutual respect and shared goals [27].

Finally, reflection in service-learning should be intentionally structured to maximize its impact on students' personal and professional growth. Reflection activities must go beyond simple summaries of experiences and encourage deep introspection [28]. Guided prompts could ask students to examine how their actions aligned with their values, what they learned about themselves and their community, and how they could apply these lessons to future endeavors. By connecting their service-learning experiences to theories and personal goals, students can better understand societal challenges and their roles in addressing them [26]. Structured reflection also supports the development of self-awareness by prompting students to critically evaluate their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth [26, 28].

7. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study employed a non-equivalent control group design to measure student outcomes of service-learning. Although this research design is suitable for educational research, it has inherent limitations. One key limitation was the lack of random assignment of participants to the experimental and control groups. As a result, differences between the groups, such as prior knowledge, learning preferences, or motivation, might have influenced the measured outcomes, reducing their ability to draw causal conclusions about the effectiveness of service-learning. To establish causal relationships, future studies should consider randomly assigning students to the experimental and control groups. This random assignment can minimize biases related to group differences and enhance the internal validity of the findings.

Another limitation is the small sample size, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Non-parametric tests, such as Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA, were used to accommodate this limitation. However, these tests are less sensitive in detecting subtle differences and can potentially underestimate the impact of service-learning. Larger and more diverse samples can improve the generalizability of the results.

Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data from S-LOMS. While validated and reliable, this scale is subject to social desirability bias. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups, or content analysis of reflective journals, can offer a richer understanding of students' experiences in service-learning and how these contribute to identified student outcomes.

The current research measures the immediate impact of service-learning on student outcomes within a single semester. While this provides valuable insights into short-term changes, it does not capture whether these developmental gains, such as self-awareness, self-efficacy, and civic orientation, are sustained over time or whether they translate into meaningful impacts on students' professional and civic lives after they leave the academic setting. Conducting longitudinal studies can address this limitation by exploring the long-term retention and application of skills acquired through service-learning.

Finally, the study was conducted in a specific cultural and institutional context. While this setting provides a rich context for service-learning, the findings may not be directly applicable to institutions with different educational philosophies or cultural norms. Including students from various institutions, disciplines, and cultural contexts can provide broader insights into the effectiveness of service-learning.

8. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show the transformative potential of service-learning in enriching the educational experience of business management students. The results revealed that service-learning effectively enhances specific student outcomes, particularly in fostering self-reflection skills, self-efficacy, and a sense of social responsibility. By engaging directly with community needs, students participating in service-learning demonstrated statistically significant improvements in these areas compared to their peers in traditional learning environments.

However, the study also points to limitations in service-learning's immediate impact on other key aspects. These findings suggest that while service-learning has distinct advantages in cultivating reflective and civic-minded individuals, its effectiveness in different areas may depend on the design, duration, and depth of engagement activities.

Overall, the evidence from this study supports the integration of service-learning into business management education. Its findings not only validate the relevance of service-learning in business management but also provide a roadmap for optimizing its design to ensure broader and deeper impacts on students and communities alike.

9. DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

10. DECLARATION OF USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Paperpal was used for the literature search and language editing, while Grammarly Premium was employed for copyediting.

11. ETHICS CLEARANCE

Ethics approval (ADMU_24_044) was obtained from Ateneo de Manila University prior to data collection.

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