

DOES SERVICE LEARNING IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE?

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Abstract

Service Learning has been found to benefit students' understanding of course material (Primavera, 1999), increase grades (Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000), and improve attendance and skills acquisition (Kozeracki, 2000; Robinson, 2000). However, there is a lack of robust literature as to what the ramifications of service learning are on students' mental health and quality of life. Thus, with the present study, participants from a Catholic high school who were engaged in service learning, were given the Quality of Life Scale and the Beck Depression Inventory at the beginning of their course and three months after beginning to engage in service learning. The participants' Quality of Life Scale scores significantly increased over the course of the experiment; however, their depression scores did not significantly change.

Key words: service learning, quality of life, depression, high school students

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There are numerous positive effects when people participate in service learning (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011) and community service (Primavera, 1999; Wheeler, Gorey, & Greenblatt, 1998). The National and Community Service Acts of 1990 and 1993 receive credit for the movement towards increasing volunteerism in higher education (Primavera, 1999). As a result, there is growing support for service learning (SL) programs that is evidenced by the conception of The Corporation for National and Community Service, which has funded Learn and Serve America, AmeriCorps, Campus Compact, and Community Higher Education School Partnerships (England & Marcinkowski, 2007). Because of the increase in SL as well as the rise in SL curriculum requirements, there has been an expansion in research on the ramifications of SL. Research on SL has been conducted for almost 30 years; and since 2000, the research on SL has more than doubled (Furco, 2013). However, despite the fact that there has been an increase in SL in K-12 education over 30 years, less than 30% of schools include SL in their curriculum (Spring, Grimm, & Dietz, 2008). Possible reasons that more schools do not engage in SL include the fact that schools must meet state curriculum requirements as well as deal with potential budget shortages which could prevent teachers from finding the time to oversee SL activities (National Youth Leadership Council, 2009).

Service learning (SL) is defined as a way to formally engage students in the learning process by fostering opportunities for them to provide service to other people, connect the service experience to the academic curriculum, and often reflect on the process (England & Marcinkowski, 2007; Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996; Moely, Billing, & Holland, 2009). SL is offered at approximately 56,000 public kindergarten

through grade 12 schools in the United States (Kielsmeier, Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Neal, 2004). Additionally, roughly 23,000 public schools have SL programs or projects formally in place. There has also been an increased effort to engage youth in community service over the past few decades (Richards et al., 2013).

Along with an increased movement to engage youth in service, Furco (2000b) has identified outcomes of SL that fit into 6 domains: 1) academic achievement and success; 2) career development; 3) social and interpersonal development; 4) personal development; 5) ethical and moral development; and 6) development of civic responsibility. The majority of these areas outlined by Furco (2000b) as well as additional outcomes will be addressed in this paper.

Benefits of Service Learning

Many benefits of SL have been observed. For instance, Celio, et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis on outcomes of SL programs and concluded that students benefited from SL socially, civically, personally, and academically. Moreover, SL has improved students' knowledge, attendance, and skills acquisition (Kozeracki, 2000; Robinson, 2000) as well as their desire to refrain from dropping out of school (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006). Additionally, Furco (2013) reviewed approximately 500 studies that cited SL; and he found that overall, SL positively affected students' learning, grades, standardized test performance, school attendance, engagement in school, and motivation to learn.

Academic achievement and success. Weiler, LaGoy, Crane, and Rovner (1998) found benefits of SL to extend to communities, schools, and teachers. Quantitative findings from Weiler et al. (1998) included that students increased their level of engagement with the school, raised achievement test scores in language arts or reading classes, improved educational competence, completed more homework, and had an increased understanding of their educational aspirations. Additionally, Weiler et al. (1998) identified qualitative findings, including that students had a greater interest in school, an increased understanding of the course curriculum, and an improvement in academic self-confidence. Due to interviews and observations, researchers concluded that service learning led to benefits in educational domains, increased educational goals for students, and elevated scores for academic achievement (Weiler et al., 1998).

Another benefit of SL, is the potential to reduce the achievement gap between students from high socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds and students from low SES backgrounds (Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, & Benson, 2006). Scales et al. (2006) found that the students with low SES who provided service demonstrated a greater commitment to learning. Additionally, the students from low SES who participated in SL had equivalent or elevated scores on most of the academic success variables, as compared to their low SES peers who were not engaged in service.

Practical application of academic material. In addition to the potential to reduce the academic achievement gap for students from various SES backgrounds, another academic of benefit of SL is the enhanced practical application of the course material learned (Boylan, 2010; Glover, Sewry, Bromley, Davies-Coleman, & Hlengwa, 2013). For example, Glover et al. (2013) conducted research in which they assessed

undergraduate students' understanding of dyes in an introduction to chemistry lab. The students needed to teach the lab to secondary-students as part of their SL experience. The researchers found that the undergraduate students interacted more with the chemistry lab than students had in previous classes because the assignment had practical application. In another study, SL allowed students to partake in meaningful experiences, which helped them to connect their coursework to current issues in the community that they lived in (Boylan, 2010). Moreover, all of the students in a study by Primavera (1999) recognized benefits of SL to be that the coursework informed their activities in the community and that there was also improvement in their academic behaviors, performance, and understanding of the course material.

Career and vocational development. SL can also be seen as beneficial because it provides students opportunities to learn about possible careers, and therefore can assist students with making decisions about their future career paths (Coulter-Kern, Coulter-Kern, Schenkel, Walker, & Fogle, 2013). For instance, participants in a study by Primavera (1999) stated that the volunteering assisted them in selecting directions that they wanted to explore for future vocations. Similarly, researchers concluded that participants who engaged in SL were more confident with the professional paths that they chose (McClam, Diambra, Burton, Fuss, & Fudge, 2008).

Social and personal development. Above are many ramifications of SL related to academic benefits, practical application of course material, and career development. Research on SL tends to focus on complex issues of social structure and the community as a whole, rather than interpersonal or personal development (Eyler & Giles, 1999). In addition to improved academic achievement, self-esteem and personal growth are noted

outcomes of SL (Conrad & Hedin, 1982) as are social and personal growth (Weiler et al., 1998). Conrad and Hedin (1982) summarized findings from a national study of 27 experiential education programs. They found that experiential education, or SL programs, can positively affect the intellectual, social, and psychological development of adolescents (Conrad & Hedin, 1982). More specifically, students in SL programs showed increases in self-esteem, moral reasoning, attitudes towards adults and others, social and personal responsibility, career exploration, empathy and complexity of thought.

Self-esteem improvements through service learning. Engagement in SL can also benefit the person's self-esteem (Primavera, 1999; Weiler, Haddock, Zimmerman, Krafchick, Henry, & Rudisill, 2013). Self-esteem can be defined as an overall evaluation of a person's worthiness and belief that he/she is a good and valuable person (Neff, 2011). Weiler et al. (2013) researched college students who were required to engage in SL by means of mentoring at-risk youth. They compared students who participated in an SL course to students not in an SL course, and the results illustrated that students who engaged in SL had higher scores regarding mentors' civic attitudes, interpersonal problem-solving skills, community service, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Weiler et al., 2013).

Similarly, Primavera (1999) found effects of SL to include benefits in self-esteem, personal growth, and personal efficacy. She assessed the unintended ramifications of 112 undergraduate students who volunteered as language tutors with preschool age children in an urban Head Start program. Seventy two percent of the students reported feeling very satisfied, 26% were somewhat satisfied, and 5% reported somewhat dissatisfied with the experience. The qualitative results illustrated that 78% of the participants felt that

their satisfaction with the experience was due to their personal connection with the children and the children's responses to them.

Wellbeing improvements through service learning. Not only can self-esteem be positively impacted by SL, but so too, can a person's wellbeing (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). Wellbeing is defined as a positive state of affairs in which relational, personal, and collective aspirations as well as the needs of communities and individuals are satisfied (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). Wellbeing is related to self-esteem because people who have a high self-esteem, feel superior and have greater self-confidence, which impacts his/her overall wellbeing (Neff, 2011).

Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) described signs of personal wellbeing for youth as self-efficacy, self-determination and a personal sense of control, mental and physical health, meaning, spirituality, and optimism. Furthermore, Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) suggested that the best way to enhance wellbeing is to combine strategies of personal, relational, and collective wellbeing. Relational wellbeing can be improved through supportive, nurturing relationships, which include healthy attachments. Moreover, relationship wellbeing is promoted by empathy as well as the option to be in a reciprocal relationship, which involves care and compassion. As people collaboratively work toward collective wellbeing, personal wellbeing, which depends upon relationship wellbeing, is often enhanced. For instance, people often find pleasure in participating in group activities and working towards a common goal. The personal benefits of collaboration can include a sense of purpose and meaning in life and improvements in personal mental health.

Moreover, Jarvie and Paule-Koba (2012) conducted a study in which they assessed the perceptions and effects of student athletes' participation in community service. They concluded that participants felt better about themselves due to their engagement with the community. Furthermore, the participants stated that they would have felt bad about themselves if they had decided not to engage in an offered community service activity. The participants also felt like they made a difference because of their volunteering and that they received pleasure from their service activities (Jarvie & Paule-Koba, 2012). Hence, personal self-esteem and overall wellbeing were positively impacted when the participants collaborated with their community partners.

More specifically than overall wellbeing, psychological wellbeing was researched by Matz-Costa, Besen, James, Pitt-Catsouphes, (2012) when they studied participants who were engaged at various levels of paid work, volunteering, and caregiving. The results illustrated that paid and volunteer participants who were highly engaged in the activity reported greater psychological wellbeing than participants who were not greatly involved in such activities. Furthermore, activities that were engaged in as well as a person's level of engagement impacted participants' overall wellbeing. Wheeler et al. (1998) also concluded that when elder people volunteer, their sense of wellbeing significantly increased.

In addition to the benefits of the mental wellbeing, positive physical wellbeing effects exist for SL as well (Kirby, 2001; Tebes et al., 2007). For example, researchers found that students who were required to engage in community service through a school curriculum were less likely to use marijuana, alcohol and other drugs, and were more likely to perceive drugs as harmful (Tebes et al., 2007). Other researchers reviewed teen

pregnancy prevention programs and found that the programs were most effective at reducing pregnancy and risky sexual behavior when the programs included SL (Kirby, 2001).

Development of civic responsibility. Civic engagement is also positively impacted from SL (Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2012; Nicotera, Brewer, & DesMarais, 2013; Weiler et al., 1998). Michael Delli Carpini, noted that civic engagement is a broader term that encompasses SL (as cited by the American Psychological Association, n.d.). According to Carpini, (as cited by the American Psychological Association) civic engagement can be defined as,

individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting. (n.d.)

Thus, SL can be a form of civic engagement; and researchers found that students who participated in civic engagement programs, demonstrated an improvement in civic attitudes, an increased sense of belonging in their school community, a feeling that adults truly listened to their concerns and ideas, and a personal belief that they could work with others to make changes in their communities (Nicotera, et al., 2013). Not only does SL promote an improvement in civic beliefs, but Kahne, Crow, and Lee (2012) also found

that SL and discussions of societal issues support political and civic engagement by cultivating improvements in volunteering, voting, interest in politics, and commitment to civic participation. Moreover, Kahne et al. (2012) found that the SL component promoted expressive, youth-centered, engagement in the community.

Other researchers have assessed students' political and moral identity after engaging in civic activities, and the results illustrated that moral identity was positively correlated with expressive political involvement and service (Porter, 2013). Therefore, involvement in SL activities can have a positive impact on students' civic engagement.

Community benefits. Not only does SL benefit students, but community members and communities as a whole can reap the positive ramifications of SL (Hardy & Schaen, 2000; Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2013; Lerner, 2004). For instance, Henderson et al. (2013) led a study in which they conducted semi-structured interviews and gave surveys to students and community members who participated in a high school community service program. The community members, who the students interacted with, often cited the benefits of the SL projects (Henderson et al., 2013). Likewise, the students in the study stated that mandatory volunteering yielded the same benefits as voluntary community involvement. In fact, mandatory volunteering positively affected the students and community participants, and fostered a sense of civic engagement. Students also acknowledged that the community participation helped them meet new people, gain a sense of satisfaction from helping other people, and that the experience could assist them in getting into a school or job. The majority of the words that the participants used to describe their experience were related to positive personal growth and emotional development. In line with these findings, other studies have shown that students and community members at learning sites reported high levels of satisfaction and increased confidence in the students' abilities (Hardy and Schaen, 2000). Likewise, when youth are civically engaged with their

community, their engagement can assist them with developing into healthy adolescents (Lerner, 2004).

Drawbacks of Service Learning

While there are many meaningful and positive ramifications of SL, there are also unfavorable outcomes of requiring students to participate in service activities (Boylan, 2010; Henderson et al., 2013; Weiler et al., 1998). Students have not always agreed that their SL experiences have impacted them in positive ways. For instance, students sometimes develop feelings of frustration when they do not see progress from their work (Boylan, 2010). Moreover, Weiler et al. (1998), found that some of the students in her study reported on quantitative measures that they did not receive benefits from SL.

Additionally, Henderson et al. (2013) found that although students involved in a SL curriculum believed that the SL experience could potentially benefit students and community participants, some of the students also thought that the experience would not be as beneficial if the SL activity was forced upon the students. However, less than 1% of the students thought that requiring the SL activity threatened the potential positive impacts of the SL for both the students and the community participants (Henderson et al., 2013).

Service Learning in Catholic Schools

Outcomes of SL, specifically relating to Catholic students, have also been researched. Service learning is not new to students in Catholic institutions as social justice work and Catholic Social Teaching have been encouraged for many years. Pope John Paul II urged Catholic high school institutions to serve people who are vulnerable (Trainor, 2006). Catholic Social Teaching (CST) focuses on disparities in global harmony, economic, and political ways of life (World Synod of Catholic Bishops, Rome,

1971). The Office of Social Justice of the St. Paul/Minneapolis Archdiocese interpreted CST to include the 10 following themes: 1) Human Dignity; 2) Community and the Common Good; 3) Rights and Responsibilities; 4) Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; 5) Participation; 6) Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers; 7) Stewardship of Creation; 8) Solidarity; 9) Role of Government and 10) Promotion of Peace (Catholic Charities, 2012). Furthermore, the intention of CST is not simply to fulfill a curriculum requirement in a specific course, but rather CST should aim to function as a systemic change across Catholic, as well as public, schools (Whipp & Scanlan, 2009). This systemic change can be applied to engraining social justice values in organizational practices, governance, financing, and service delivery (Scanlan, 2008).

The CST principles can be used as a guide for social justice and SL programs in high schools and colleges. For example, one college social work program included the 10 key principles of CST, which resulted in a renewed commitment to social justice for students (Brenden & Shank, 2012). This specific CST was a form of SL because it was a social justice activity that was required as part of an educational program. Therefore, this type of SL can reinforce students' interest in social justice.

The Practice of Service Learning

In addition to the CST themes than can be found in SL, there are also standards that have been established over the years to assist instructors with the pedagogy of SL (Dymond, Chun, Kim, & Renzaglia, 2013). These standards were developed to help teachers effectively structure SL experiences and the recommendations for SL programs to include scheduling activities on and off of the campus and utilizing a time block that

allows students to go to sites off of campus at the end of the day (England & Marcinkowski, 2007).

Additionally, instructors are encouraged to utilize multiple modalities for students to reflect upon their experiences, including reflective questions, journaling, and portfolios. SL is a motivator for students to engage in reflection about their relationship with society (Youniss & Yates, 1997). Therefore, the reflective component of SL is imperative and assists with students' processes of discovering their self-identities. Thus, guidelines to assist teachers with efficiently integrating SL into their curriculums often include a focus on students reflecting upon their SL experiences.

Motivation for students to engage in service learning. Students' reflections of the SL process have provided researchers with their findings, whether the reflections were through assessments, oral, or in written journals. Researchers found that students often begin service learning due to external reasons such as enhancing their resume (Chesbrough, 2011); however, after participating in SL, they often develop intrinsic motivation to help others by engaging in service behaviors. This motivation may wax or wane based on several factors. One such factor is time during the semester. For instance, Darby, Longmire-Avital, Chenault, and Haglund (2013) assessed 134 college student participants at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester and found that there was a significant decrease in motivation for students to go to their SL site over the course of the semester (Darby et al., 2013). Despite this reduction in enthusiasm, the students continued to be highly motivated to recommend the course with SL to other students. Another factor which influences students' desire to engage in the SL activities is whether they think their efforts make a difference in their community. For instance, Darby et al. (2013) found that when students did not think that their efforts impacted their community, their motivation levels toward service learning diminished (Darby et al., 2013).

Quality of Service Learning Research

Even though there are potential negative and positive effects of SL, the quality of research on the ramifications of SL continues to vary. Despite the generally positive results of SL, the overall effect size of the SL experience is relatively small (Furco, 2013). Moreover, in one study, the researchers concluded from the follow-up assessment that the improvement in academic gains for SL students had dissipated a year after SL (Melchior, 1998). However, the SL students in that study continued to remain more engaged in learning a year after the SL activity than the students who did not partake in SL. Likewise, Scales, Blyth, Berkas, and Kielsmeier (2000) concluded that improvements in grades were maintained over time depending on the students' motivation to engage in community service and SL, the amount and type of their reflection, and if the students completed 31 or more SL hours.

In addition to the overall small effect size of SL (Furco, 2013) and the possible dissipation of the positive effects of SL (Melchior, 1998; Scales et al., 2000), Furco (2013) noted that supporters of SL are often people who have personally witnessed the positive effects of SL. Thus, these people believe in the potential and promise of SL because of their firsthand experiences with SL. Furco (2013) also urges readers to be aware that many of the studies cited in the SL literature are done by SL practitioners who have created their own SL programs or evaluations and the studies are often driven by the program goals and agendas of SL funders. Therefore, the results of studies on SL may not have been scrutinized to the fullest degree. Furco and Root (2010) noted that only 25% of the 68 research studies cited in K-12 SL literature have been tested under the research conditions required by the U.S. Department of Education. Thus, Furco and Root (2010)

encouraged future researchers to follow these recommendations for their studies:

“Conduct more true experiments and build on the existing body of quasi-experimental studies...Conduct correlational studies...Ensure that the intervention under study qualifies as high-quality service learning...Replicate high-quality studies...Focus on probable effects” (pp. 18-19).

Depression and Quality of Life

Even though researchers continue to expand upon the SL literature, little research has been found that directly correlates SL with depression or quality of life. However, there is evidence that there might be an inverse relationship between depression and SL and a direct relationship between SL and quality of life. For instance, Cuijpers, van Straten, and Warmerdam (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of studies which required people to engage in scheduled activities of daily living. They concluded that there is a large difference between intervention and control conditions at post-test for people who engage in activity scheduling as well as a decrease in their levels of depression.

In addition to a relationship between depression and activity scheduling, Volkert, Schultz, Brutt, and Andreas (2014) found that participants who had depression also had a diminished sense of meaning in their life. However, as these individuals engaged in social relationships, their meaning of life increased and depression decreased (Volkert et al., 2014). Therefore, students who engage in SL may have lower depression scores and higher quality of life scores, because they are engaging with other people on a regular basis via meaningful relationships.

Rationale

It is apparent that researchers continue to work towards executing further sound research methodology to illustrate the benefits of SL. However, the majority of the benefits in the literature are predominantly about academic achievement, career interests (Furco, 2013), schools' goals (Lyday, Winecoff, & Hiott, 1998), and improvements in relationships with community partners (Weiler et al., 1998). There have also been researchers who noted enhancements in meaningful relationships and personal wellbeing (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007; Matz-Costa et al., 2012). However, one question remains: What are the relationships between SL and depression and SL and quality of life? It is important to highlight the potential benefits of SL for students who are not focused on their academic and vocational careers. For example, a student who is not concerned about his/her course grades might not understand that he/she can experience benefits from engaging in SL. Thus, the findings of this study could potentially assist teachers in communicating a non-academic benefit of SL to encourage the students to participate in SL to improve their overall quality of life. Additionally, this research study is important for teachers to provide them with further evidence for why requiring SL in courses is important for students.

Hypotheses

Possible relationships between SL and depression and SL and quality of life were explored in the present study. Students who engaged in SL completed a Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) and a Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) at the beginning of their SL course and they completed the assessments again after three months of engaging in SL. I

hypothesized students' QOLS would increase and that on average their BDI scores would decrease.

Chapter 2: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The present study was a quasi-experiment with a one group pretest-posttest design. I assessed students' scores for depression and quality of life over the course of a three month period as they were engaged in SL.

Sample and Participant Selection

The participants were senior students who were obligated to participate in SL per a course requirement. Seventy one participants were recruited from a Catholic high school in a metropolitan area in Minnesota. However, the sample decreased to 69 participants over the course of the three month period of the study. Students came from two classes; the first class decreased from 32 to 31 participants and the second class declined from 39 to 38. There were 20 males and 49 females, with a mean age of 17.1 and age range of 16 to 18. The final sample was comprised of 61 Caucasians, three Asian Americans, one Asian American and Caucasian, one Black or African American, one Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, one Hispanic and Caucasian, and one Hispanic and Iraqi. Each participant's name was put into a drawing for a \$20 visa gift card.

Assessments and Measures

Materials needed for this quasi-experiment included an informed consent for parents of all of the students, an informed consent for students, a demographic questionnaire (Appendix A), the Quality of Life Scale (Flanagan, 1978) (Appendix B), the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck et al., 1996), and a debriefing form.

Quality of Life Scale. The Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) was originally developed in the 1970s by John Flanagan, an American psychologist (Burckhardt & Anderson, 2003). There are five sub-headings of the QOLS and those headings and their sub-categories are as follows: 1) Physical and Material Well-Being: A) Material well-being and financial security, B) Health and personal safety; 2) Relations with Other People: C) Relations with spouse, D) Having and raising children, E) Relations with parents, siblings, or other relatives, F) Relations with friends; 3) Social, Community, and Civic Activities: G) Activities related to helping or encouraging other people, H) Activities relating to local and national governments; 4) Personal Development and Fulfillment: I) Intellectual development, J) Personal understanding and planning, K) Occupational role, L) Creativity and personal expression; 5) Recreation: M) Socializing, N) Passive and observational recreational activities, O) Active and participatory recreational activities (Flanagan, 1978).

The QOLS has 15 questions and participants respond on a seven point Likert scale. The seven point options are: delighted, pleased, mostly satisfied, mixed, mostly dissatisfied, unhappy, and terrible (Burckhardt, n.d.). The QOLS is internally consistent as evaluated by Cronbach's alpha, and has high test-retest reliability over a three week period with participants with chronic illness (Burckhardt, Woods, Schultz, & Ziebarth, 1989). High correlations between the QOLS and the Life Satisfaction Index-Z also led researchers to conclude that there is convergent and discriminant validity of the QOLS (Wood, Wylie, & Sheafor, 1969). Burckhardt & Anderson (2003, p. 3) stated that "The QOLS is a reliable and valid instrument for measuring life from the perspective of the patient."

Beck Depression Inventory. The Beck Depression inventory II (BDI) is a 21 question self-report questionnaire that was originally developed to rate the severity of depressive symptoms and has been validated in many samples (Warmenhoven et al., 2012). The BDI has been found to be valid among psychiatric and non-psychiatric populations, as well as with African-Americans and Hispanics (Beck, Brown, & Steer, 1996). There do not appear to be differences in reliability and validity across cultures and the BDI has been translated into Spanish. Furthermore, the BDI has moderate correlations with other psychometric depression assessments, including the Hamilton Psychiatric Rating Scale for Depression (.71) and the SCL-90-R Depression dimension (.89) (Beck et al., 1996). The questions have a four point rating scale in which the respondent marks what he/she has felt or thought in the last two weeks, with the exception of items 16 and 18 which have a seven point rating scale and address changes in appetite and changes in sleep patterns, respectively (Beck et al., 1996). The BDI also has moderate to high correlations with clinical ratings for psychiatric patients (Beck et al., 1996). Its internal consistency ranges from .89 to .94 (Arnau, Meagher, Norris, & Branson, 2001; Beck et al., 1996; Dozois, Dobson, & Ahnberg, 1998). Arnau et al. (2001) evaluated the internal consistency of the BDI item scores and item-total correlations and concluded that there was high internal consistency with an alpha correlation of .94. Additionally, the BDI has a test-retest reliability over a one week period of .93 (Beck et al., 1996).

Demographic questionnaire. This researcher developed a ten question demographics survey, which consisted of four multiple choice questions, four Likert rating scale questions, and one fill-in-the-blank question. Each participant was instructed to check a box to indicate his/her answer for each of the questions. However, three blank lines were included for questions in case the participant did not think that any of the answers provided accurately represented his/her response. There was also a blank line for the students to write in their SL site. Along with the multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank questions, there were four questions with a four point Likert scale of: Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, and Strongly Agree. The four questions were: 1) Service learning (volunteering) through your class is a benefit to you; 2) Service learning (volunteering) through your class is a benefit to your community; 3) Service learning (volunteering) through your class is a benefit to your school; and 4) Service learning (volunteering) through your class would be more beneficial if it was not required.

Procedure

The students were from two sections of the same course and were treated with the same procedure. During the beginning of the academic year, the three teachers provided the students with a description of each of the possible SL sites and then the students selected their most preferred sites to engage with. After the students were matched with their SL sites, they began providing service at the site in September. Students engaged in small discussion groups and recorded reflective video interviews about their SL experiences as part of the course requirement. However, the interviews and discussions were not part of the present study as they were completed after the present study data collection concluded.

All of the students from both sections were invited to participate in the study via an informed consent letter. Those students who provided their own consent and also received parental consent to participate were assessed, at the beginning of their academic year, in September, and then again at a second assessment period, in the middle of December. For the first assessment period, the participants completed a six question demographics survey (Appendix A), the QOLS (Appendix B) and the BDI. Participants completed the QOLS and BDI again during the second assessment period.

Chapter 3: Results

The following statistics are based on the 69 participants who completed the entire study. The first assessment period was in September, which is when the participants completed a demographic questionnaire, Quality of Life Scale (QOLS), and Beck Depression Inventory II (BDI). The second assessment period was in December when the participants once again completed a QOLS and BDI.

Descriptive Statistics

The mean score for the BDI at time one was 7.87 with a standard deviation of 11.35 and for time two the mean was 5.88 with a standard deviation of 5.38. The mean score for the QOLS was 81.46 with a standard deviation of 17.30 the first time the participants were assessed, and the mean for the second assessment with the QOLS was 87.61 with a standard deviation of 7.4. In comparison, the average healthy person scores 90 or above on the QOLS (Burckhardt & Anderson, 2003). For more descriptive statistics, see Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Beck Depression Inventory and the Quality of Life Scale

Assessment and Time	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
BDI 1	7.8696	11.34604
BDI 2	5.8841	5.37570
QOLS 1	81.4638	17.30231
QOLS 2	87.6087	7.42059

Along with the QOLS and BDI, participants were asked to rate four questions on their beliefs about SL. The questions were rated on a four point Likert scale of: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Somewhat Disagree; (3) Somewhat Agree; and (4) Strongly Agree. The four questions were: 1) Service learning through your class is a benefit to you; 2) Service learning through your class is a benefit to your community; 3) Service learning through your class is a benefit to your school; and 4) Service learning through your class would be more beneficial if it was not required. The mean score for the first three questions were 3.83, 3.91, and 3.57, respectively (see Table 2). This means that overall, the participants believed that SL was a benefit to themselves, their community, and their school. However, for the fourth question, in which the students were asked if the benefits of SL would be heightened if the SL was not a requirement, the participants on average rated the question with a 2.16. Thus, the participants did not, as a whole, strongly agree or strongly disagree that the SL would have been more beneficial if it was not required.

Table 2

Beliefs about Service Learning

Question	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
SL Benefits the Participant?	3.8261	.38181
SL Benefits the Community?	3.9130	.33162
SL Benefits the School?	3.5652	.62962
SL would have a Greater Benefit if it was Not Required?	2.1159	.75802

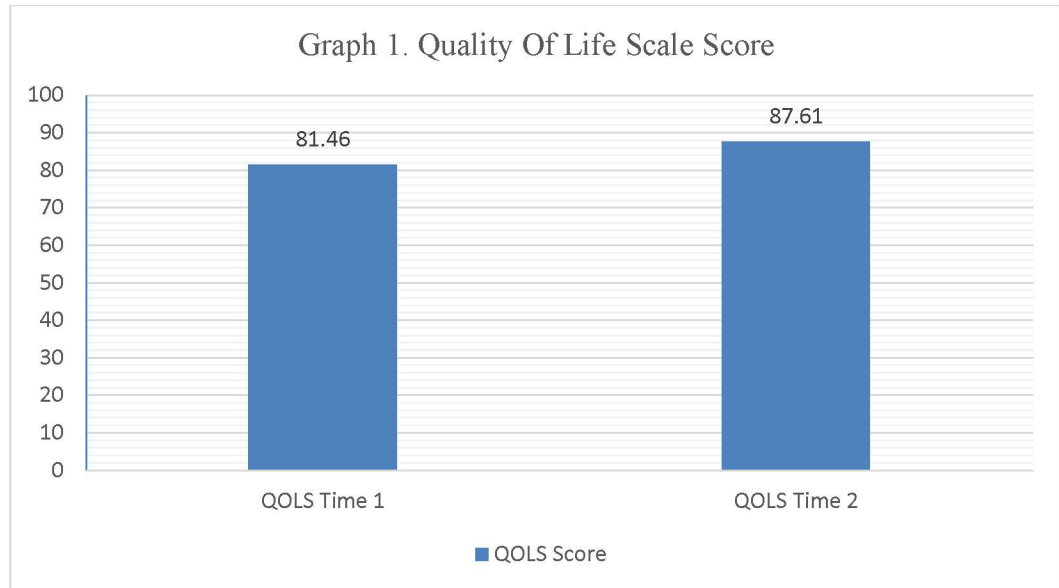
Note. Likert Scale: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Somewhat Disagree; (3) Somewhat Agree; (4) Strongly Agree

Inferential Statistics

Participants were from two sections of the same course, with one class meeting in the morning and the other class meeting in the afternoon. In order to determine whether differences existed between these two classes, a MANOVA was conducted between group one and group two for time one and time two. However, there were not any statistically significant differences between the two groups for either the BDI or the QOLS, thus the classes were grouped together for the following analyses.

All data were analyzed using a series of dependent samples t-tests with service learning (SL) as the quasi-independent variable and the scores on the BDI or QOLS as the dependent variables. A statistically significant result was found for the t-test which analyzed the QOLS assessment ($t(68) = -2.94, p < .005, r = .20$). On average, participants experienced an increase in their QOLS score over the three month period of the study ($M = -6.14, SE = 2.09$), indicating that their quality of life improved as they engaged in SL. However, no statistical significance was found for the analysis of the BDI ($t(68) = 1.50, p > .05, r = .30$). On average, participants did not experience a statistically significant decrease in their BDI score over the three month period ($M = 1.99, SE = 1.32$).

The statistically significant increase on the QOLS between time one ($M = 81.46$) and time two ($M = 87.61$) can be viewed below in Graph 1.



Graph 1. is a visual representation illustrating that the participants' QOLS scores significantly improved over the course of the semester while they engaged in SL.

A MANOVA was also conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences between gender, morning and afternoon groups, ethnicity and personal thoughts about SL from the demographic questionnaire; however, there were not any statistically significant differences found.

Summary

In summary, the participants in the one group pretest-posttest design demonstrated that on average there was an increase in QOLS scores over the three months of engaging in SL. Conversely, the decrease in BDI scores over time was not statistically significant. Additionally, the participants' ratings of their thoughts about SL, illustrated that they agree that SL is beneficial to themselves, their community, and their school. However, the participants did not, as a whole, strongly agree or disagree that the benefits of SL would be enhanced if SL was not a requirement of the class.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Overall, the quality of life for students who participated in SL increased over the assessment period. However, even though depression scores also slightly decreased over the time students engaged in SL, the decrease was not statistically significant. Hence, the hypothesis that SL improves quality of life was supported and the hypothesis that SL decreases depression scores was not supported by the results.

Interpretation

Quality of life. The relationships between quality of life, SL and depression have not been researched as much as other SL variables. As previously stated in the literature review, the majority of SL outcomes that have been researched are in regard to academics. SL research is typically focused on complex issues of the structure of society and the community as a whole, as opposed to interpersonal or personal development of the individuals who engage in SL (Eyler & Giles, 1999). In contrast, the present study focused on the dependent variable of quality of life which can be related to a person's perceived wellbeing.

Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) concluded that self-efficacy, self-determination and a personal sense of control, mental and physical health, meaning and spirituality, and optimism are signs of personal wellbeing for youth. The best way to enhance wellbeing is to combine strategies of personal, relational, and collective wellbeing (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). As people work together toward collective wellbeing, the individual's personal wellbeing, which is reliant upon relationship wellbeing, is often enhanced. The personal benefits, such as a sense of purpose and meaning in life and improvements in personal mental health, can be enhanced as a result of collaborating

with others (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). Hence, if a student works at a SL site towards the betterment of a group as a whole, then the student's personal wellbeing can be positively impacted. Thus, the present finding that students' quality of life improves after engaging in SL, coincides with the conclusion that an individual's wellbeing can be enhanced when he/she collaborates with others for the good of the whole. This wellbeing research is relevant to the quality of life variable in the present study because subjective well-being is the overall assessment of a person's quality of life (Deiner, 2009).

The finding from the current study that SL enhances quality of life, is also in line with the work of Jarvie and Paule-Koba (2012) whose participants thought that their volunteering was pleasurable and that they made a positive difference in the lives of the people who they worked with. Thus, the participants' self-esteem and wellbeing were positively impacted when they collaborated with their community partners. Additionally, the researchers concluded that paid and volunteer participants who were highly engaged in these activities, reported greater psychological wellbeing than participants who were not involved in such activities (Matz-Costa, Besen, James, Pitt-Catsoupes, 2012). Therefore, an improvement in psychological wellbeing supports the finding that SL improves quality of life for participants of SL.

Depression. In addition to assessing for the effect that SL has on quality of life, an evaluation was also completed to determine if there was a potential relationship between SL and depression. However, there was not a statistically significant relationship between depression score and quality of life in the present study. This is most likely because the majority of the participants were not depressed; therefore, their depression score did not improve. Despite the fact that a statistically significant relationship was not seen between the participants' depression score on the BDI and SL, other researchers have found relationships between these two variables.

For example, Cuijpers et al. (2007) found a significant difference in depression levels between those engaged in scheduled activities and those who did not. Other researchers have observed a significant relationship between the number of pleasant activities a person engages in and his/her mood (Gallagher, 1981; Lewinsohn & Graf, 1973; Lewinsohn & Libet, 1972). Moreover, people who struggle with depression tend to engage in fewer pleasant activities (MacPhillamy & Lewinsohn, 1974). Thus, encouraging people who struggle with depression to engage in pleasant scheduled SL activities could improve their mood. Additionally, researchers have found that people's meaning in life increased and their depression decreased when they engaged in social relationships (Volkert et al., 2014), and SL often involves students developing relationships with people in their community. In summary, even though researchers have found a relationship between depression and SL (Cuijpers et al., 2007) and depression and scheduled activities (Gallagher, 1981; Lewinsohn & Graf, 1973; Lewinsohn & Libet, 1972), this present study did not yield a relationship between SL and depression. One possible reason for why a significant decrease in depression was not observed as a result of engaging in SL, is because the students were in the minimal depression range at the beginning of the study and therefore their BDI scores had little room to improve.

Beliefs about service learning. In addition to assessing for relationships between SL and depression and SL and quality of life, the participants in the present study were asked whether they thought SL benefited them, the community, and their school. The mean answers illustrated that the participants did think that SL was a benefit to themselves, their community, and their school. Similarly, Henderson et al. (2013) found that students believed that SL could benefit students and community partners.

Additionally, the students were asked if they thought that SL would be more beneficial if it was not required. The results were not conclusive as to whether the participants strongly believed that SL would benefit them more if it was or was not

required. Hence, some participants believed that the positive outcomes of SL were not impacted by requiring the SL; whereas other participants did believe that SL would be more beneficial if it was not required as part of a course. Analogous to the results of the present study, some of the students in the Henderson et al. (2013) study also noted that they did not think SL would be as beneficial to the students if it was required as part of a course curriculum. However, Youniss and Yates (1997) found that there was not a significant difference in the benefits of volunteering whether the volunteering was mandated or not.

Limitations

Quality of Life Scale. While there are strengths of the present study, there are also weaknesses and limitations. One weakness is that the QOLS was used to assess quality of life in a population with a mean age of 17.1. The present author has not found research regarding the use of the QOLS with adolescent populations. The youngest sample population that the QOLS has been used with is young adults with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and the mean age of the sample was 21 years (Burckhardt & Anderson, 2003). Burckhardt and Anderson (2003) stated that they did not think that the QOLS was an appropriate measure for children. However, I chose to use it based on its availability and because the sample consisted of juniors and seniors, which means that they were nearly adults. Although the participants were approaching adulthood, some of them may not have yet achieved certain important “quality of life experiences.” For example, the participants were prompted to rate on a 7 point Likert scale their satisfaction with 4) having and rearing children; 5) close relationships with spouse or significant other; and 11) work - job or in home. It is possible that the participants were confused by these questions because none of them were married or had children and several students were not employed. Therefore, the students might have scored items four, five, and 11 as negative or neutral the first time that they took the assessment; and they could have increased their ratings the second time if they noticed that the

directions stated to rate their current level of satisfaction with each item. The average healthy person scores 90 or above (Burckhardt & Anderson, 2003) and the mean scores on the QOLS were 81.46 and 87.60 respectively. This means that this healthy sample of participants, on average, scored slightly lower than the mean for healthy populations. This lower than average score could be due to the three items noted above because these are topics that 17 year olds might not think are as relevant to them or they might not feel fully satisfied with these areas in their lives.

Moreover, one participant received a score of 15 on the first QOLS that she took despite the fact that her school counselor described her as a “happy student.” Hence, it is possible that she inadvertently rated the QOLS in the opposite order; meaning that she attributed a score of one to be “delighted” instead of the intended “terrible.” For the second assessment period, she scored 99 on the QOLS, indicating that an error might have occurred on her first measurement.

Beck Depression Inventory. Another limitation of the present study was the use of a depression measurement. The BDI was used and was selected as a measurement apparatus, because it has been proven reliable and valid for people ages 13 and older (Beck et al., 1996). While the BDI is a sound instrument to use with the age range of this population, there likely was not a statistically significant difference in scores between the first and second assessment periods because, as a whole, the students were not depressed. BDI scores of zero to 13 indicate minimal depressive symptoms (Beck et al., 1996). The mean BDI scores for this sample were 7.87 and 5.88 for the first and second assessment periods respectively. Thus, the participants were not depressed and therefore their scores did not significantly change. Hence, there is a floor effect, which refers to the cluster of BDI scores in the low range, which allowed for little to no possibility for the scores to decrease in value (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003, p. 108) Future researchers could choose to use another measurement instrument that would measure quality of

life instead of depressive symptoms. Alternatively, the methodology could include assessing participants with the BDI who have depression and who engage in SL.

Demographic composition of the sample. The use of the specific assessment tools were not the only limitations in this study. The participants were from a Catholic high school located in a metropolitan city in Minnesota; therefore, the results of the study could be skewed due to the demographic composition of the participants. People who actively participate in a religion tend to be happier than people who do not engage in religion (Waite & Lehrer, 2003). This means that the participants in this study might have higher QOLS scores compared to their peers who were not actively involved with a religious school or church group. In the future, researchers could assess the quality of life in students who engage in SL, who do not attend a school affiliated with a religion to rule out for this extraneous variable.

Future Directions

Recommendations. Understanding the limitations of this study, such as the use of the QOLS, BDI, and Catholic participants, could assist researchers in developing methodology in future studies. Future researchers could also assess students of various ages, from public and private schools, and from various ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. Finally, additional quality of life measurement tools could be utilized to explore whether an effect exists between SL and improved quality of life. Next steps could be for researchers to use the Youth Quality of Life Research Version (YQOL-R), which is a quality of life measurement specifically intended for participants of 11 to 17 years of age (Salum, Patrick, Isolan, Manfro, & Fleck, 2012). This scale could be used with participants from a public school in an effort to generalize these results to students who do not attend a Catholic school. Additionally, future researchers could utilize a

mixed-methods research design to allow for a more comprehensive view of SL outcomes on students, which could include a case study or small group interviews.

Implications. The results from this quasi-experiment demonstrate that participation in SL can increase a person's quality of life. This means that if schools and teachers require SL as part of a course curriculum requirement, then students' quality of life could improve. The literature on SL is populated with the positive ramifications of SL relating to academic, social, civic, personal aspects of an individual (Celio, et al., 2011). There are many reasons that teachers are encouraged to require SL for their students, including benefits to students' learning, grades, standardized test performance, school attendance, engagement in school, and motivation to learn (Furco, 2013). The present study provides another reason to require SL, which is to help students feel more satisfied with their quality of life. Hence, this researcher believes that teachers should require SL of their students regardless of what the course topic is. For example, in addition to requiring students in Civic Engagement courses to complete SL, teachers for courses, such as History and Art, could require students to complete SL projects to improve the students' overall quality of life. Additionally, the teachers could explain to students that they can receive benefits of SL that are not only related to their academics. Therefore, hopefully students who do not focus on their academics and who do not plan to attend college, will still be motivated to participate in SL.

Conclusions

In summary, SL benefits students in many ways, including improving their quality of life. This finding is important as it means that SL can have positive benefits even for students who are not interested in improving their academics (Furco, 2013) or in

developing skills for a resume (Chesbrough, 2011). Thus, by requiring students to engage in SL, the students could foster relationships with community members (Weiler et al., 1998), improve their self-esteem (Primavera, 1999; Weiler et al., 2013), overall wellbeing (Jarvie & Paule-Koba, 2012; Matz-Costa et al., 2012) as well as increase their quality of life. Hence, these students could have greater satisfaction with their life even if they do not place importance on their academics or future vocation. Additionally, teachers can inspire students to become engaged in SL by explaining that the SL requirement is not simply used as a benefit for the course curriculum, but as a personal benefit for the students and their own quality of life. In conclusion, SL appears to improve student's quality of life; however, more studies should be completed to replicate these findings.

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Appendix A

Can the Type of Assignment Impact a Student's Emotions?

PSYC 8972 Doctoral Dissertation

Kelsey Scampoli, MA

Northwest University

Demographic QuestionsPlease check the one option that best describes you for the following questions

1. What is your age?

 16 years old 17 years old 18 years old 19 years old Other (Please write in): _____

2. Please select the one you most closely identify with:

 Male Female Transgender Male to Female Transgender Female to Male

3. Race/Ethnicity

- How do you describe yourself? Please check all that apply.

 American Indian or Alaska Native
Pacific Islander Hawaiian or Other Asian or Asian American
America Black or African Hispanic or Latino
White Non-Hispanic Other (Please write in) _____ Other (Please write in) _____

4. Volunteering:

- How often do you volunteer *other than what is required for class*

 More than 20 hours a month
week 2-5 hours each 1-2 hours each week I do not volunteer

- What organization are you volunteering through

 Church organization
Society National Honor School service club
in): _____ Other (Please write I do not volunteer

5. Service Learning: **(Please circle the one number response that fits you the best for each of the following questions.)**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

- Service learning (volunteering) through your class is a benefit to you.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

- Service learning (volunteering) through your class is a benefit to your community.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

- Service learning (volunteering) through your class is a benefit to your school.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

- Service learning (volunteering) through your class would be more beneficial if it was not required.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

6. Volunteering Site:

- What type of site are you volunteering at? (For example, a school, or working with the elder population.). Please write in.

- Are there any other students from your class at your volunteering site?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, 1 other student	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, 2 other students
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, 3 or more other students	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Appendix B

QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE (QOLS)

(Developed by John Flanagan and Research Rights granted by Carol Burckhardt)

Please read each item and **circle the number** that best describes how satisfied you are at this time. Please answer each item even if you do not currently participate in an activity or have a relationship. You can be satisfied or dissatisfied with not doing the activity or having the relationship.

	Delighted	Pleased	Mostly Satisfied	Mixed	Mostly Dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible
	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. Material comforts home, food, conveniences, financial security	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. Health - being physically fit and vigorous . . .	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. Relationships with parents, siblings & other relatives- communicating, visiting, helping . . .	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. Having and rearing children	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. Close relationships with spouse or significant other	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. Close friends	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. Helping and encouraging others, volunteering, giving advice	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. Participating in organizations and public affairs	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9. Learning- attending school, improving understanding, getting additional knowledge . .	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
10. Understanding yourself - knowing your assets and limitations - knowing what life is about . .	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
11. Work - job or in home	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
12. Expressing yourself creatively	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
13. Socializing - meeting other people, doing things, parties, etc	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
14. Reading, listening to music, or observing entertainment	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
15. Participating in active recreation	7	6	5	4	3	2	1