Building the Self and the Profession through Voluntary Action: The Impact of Volunteering on Students' Personal and Professional Development

Manolis Mentis[1], Elena Vrapi[2], Filio Zoupi[2], Antony Salachas[3] and Georgia Konstantopoulou[4]*

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work, University of Patras, Greece

[2]Final-Year Undergraduate Student, Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work, University of Patras, Greece

[3]Social Worker; Postgraduate Student, Department of Public and Community Health, University of West Attica, Greece; and Business Consultant at "Proopsis" Consulting Company

[4]Laboratory Teaching Staff, Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work, University of Patras, Greece

A B S T R A C T

This study examined the relationship between volunteering and students' personal, professional and social development. Volunteering is conceptualized as a multidimensional social process that extends beyond altruistic contribution, fostering empowerment, skill acquisition and professional awareness. The aim was to investigate whether engagement in voluntary action predicts aspects of students' self-growth and professional readiness. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 112 undergraduate and postgraduate students from various academic disciplines. Quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics and multiple regression models examining the predictive role of volunteering status (0 = no, 1 = yes), age and gender on personal, professional and social development outcomes. Regression analyses revealed that volunteering status was a significant positive predictor of all three outcomes-personal development, professional development and social connectedness-after controlling for age and gender. Students who reported volunteering scored higher in self-growth, professional competence and social connection. Age and gender showed no consistent associations with these outcomes. The findings highlight the contribution of volunteering to students' holistic development within higher education. Participation in voluntary activities enhances personal maturity, social engagement and professional identity formation. Integrating structured volunteer programs into university curricula may therefore strengthen students' employability skills and civic responsibility.

Keywords: Volunteering; Personal development; Professional growth; Social connection; Higher education

Introduction

Volunteering has long represented an act of social contribution and active civic participation. In contemporary societies, its role has been significantly strengthened-not only as a form of social solidarity but also as a pathway for personal fulfillment, skills development and professional empowerment, particularly among young people and students. Active involvement in volunteering has been shown to positively influence social awareness, self-confidence and the development of essential competencies

such as collaboration, responsibility and leadership[1,2]. This experiential pedagogy is crucial for developing soft skills like problem-solving, conflict resolution and empathy, which are highly valued in both academic and professional environments[3]. Such engagements are particularly salient for university students, as they navigate their career choices and enhance their employability prospects post-graduation[4,5]. University student volunteering has an intellectual dimension that links curriculum to volunteer experiences, thereby fostering tangible learning and awareness of social inequalities[6]. Moreover, active participation in voluntary service has been empirically linked to improved academic performance and enhanced employment quality, alongside the development of teamwork abilities and a reinforced sense of responsibility among students[7]. Furthermore, these experiences often lead to the development of transferable skills highly sought after by employers, such as leadership, communication and critical thinking, which are critical for navigating complex professional landscapes[8]. The cultivation of these competencies is paramount for equipping graduates with the attributes necessary for the contemporary job market, which increasingly prioritizes adaptability and interdisciplinary expertise[9]. Indeed, universities globally have increasingly recognized the strategic importance of integrating volunteering into their curricula, shifting from a mere extracurricular activity to a more structured pedagogical approach that builds vocational relevance and enhances student employability[10]. This integration provides a practical context for informal and non-formal learning, facilitating the acquisition and transformation of knowledge essential for professional advancement[11]. Moreover, engagement in volunteer organizations enhances students' socio-political standing and fosters critical thinking, enabling them to make informed decisions and act as catalysts for constructive societal change[12]. Furthermore, universities have a responsibility to not only develop students' technical skills but also to instill moral, collective and personal principles, thereby preparing them for complex professional and ethical challenges[13]. This holistic approach ensures students graduate not only with academic knowledge but also with a robust ethical framework to guide their professional lives[14].

Within the context of higher education, volunteering offers students the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, engage directly with social issues and cultivate skills that are essential both for personal growth and for integration into the labor market. At the same time, participation in volunteer activities contributes to the development of social sensitivity, empathy and active citizenship[15,16]. This engagement often leads to a deeper level of learning and reflection, fundamentally reshaping students' knowledge frameworks[4]. This integration of theoretical and practical experience is crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of societal challenges and for fostering innovative solutions[9]. Such curricula, incorporating service-learning, allow students to apply academic knowledge in practical scenarios, thereby fostering a lifelong commitment to civic engagement and developing essential 21st-century skills like communication, teamwork and critical thinking[17,18]. This approach moves beyond traditional pedagogical models by explicitly connecting academic instruction with community service, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts while simultaneously fostering civic engagement and personal development[19]. This pedagogical strategy, often termed service-learning, is designed to explicitly bridge academic study with community service, enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts while concurrently fostering civic responsibility and personal growth[14,20]. This method not only deepens students' understanding of complex social issues but also equips them with practical skills and an ethical framework for addressing these challenges effectively[21,22]. Moreover, by involving students in research projects that tackle current social and ethical problems, universities can provide avenues for applying ethical values in real-world environments, contributing to the development of a more ethical, just and sustainable society[23]. This holistic approach encourages a re-evaluation of higher education's mission, shifting from mere career preparation to the cultivation of responsible citizens equipped with both professional competencies and strong social commitment[24]. This integration cultivates a profound sense of social responsibility and ethical awareness, vital for graduates to navigate the moral complexities of their professional lives[25]. Service-learning, in particular, serves as an optimal methodology within this framework, intentionally designed to integrate community service with critical reflection to enrich academic learning, cultivate civic responsibility and strengthen community engagement among students[21,26]. This pedagogical approach transcends traditional knowledge transmission by encouraging the active construction of knowledge through participatory and solidarity-driven experiences[27]. Its key elements, encompassing academic rigor, community engagement, reflection and critical thinking, are designed to foster civic engagement and citizenship, aiming for long-term community impact[28]. This transformative approach not only enhances academic understanding but also cultivates a deep sense of civic engagement and social responsibility, preparing students to tackle global challenges more effectively[29]. This approach, therefore, moves beyond conventional educational paradigms by fostering a pragmatic synthesis between ethics of care and justice, contributing to a redefinition of the educational concept itself and aligning with international proposals for human development and education as a common good[30]. Such initiatives foster an understanding of ethical principles like human dignity and social responsibility, which are crucial for addressing complex societal problems and fostering a just society[30].

Volunteering is a multidimensional concept with broad and dynamic meaning, making it a subject of growing interest for both the academic community and society as a whole. Defining the concept is challenging, as it evolves and adapts to the needs and circumstances of each historical period and social context. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme defines volunteering as the voluntary and conscious offering of time and skills by individuals to support society without expectation of financial reward, thereby promoting collective well-being and strengthening social bonds[31]. Similarly, the[32] describes volunteering as an act of selfless service undertaken through personal initiative and guided by values such as respect, responsibility and solidarity, in accordance with the fundamental humanitarian principles of the movement. These definitions underscore that volunteering is distinct from simple charity or activism; it involves a sustained, collaborative partnership where individuals engage as learning partners rather than merely service providers, actively working to address real-world needs and promoting personal development and civic engagement[33,34]. However, some scholars argue that this conceptualization may inadvertently emphasize individual contributions while

overlooking the crucial role of community partners and systemic issues, suggesting a need for broader terminology that highlights reciprocal relationships and structural problem-solving[35]. Despite its varying interpretations, volunteering generally encompasses actions where individuals dedicate their time and skills to support society without financial compensation, fostering collective well-being and strengthening social bonds[35]. This commitment is often driven by intrinsic motivation and a deep-seated desire to contribute positively to the community, reflecting a dedication to moral, ethical and social values[36]. This aligns with the economic perspective that views volunteering as the donation of time to "do good" and maximize utility, alongside consuming goods and enjoying leisure[37]. Furthermore, academic definitions frequently emphasize the deliberate and productive nature of such activities, undertaken voluntarily and without financial expectation, on behalf of various causes or individuals requiring assistance[38].

Furthermore, the European Centre for Volunteering (CEV) emphasizes that volunteering should be accessible to all[39], thereby enhancing equality and promoting social inclusion. Active citizen participation in volunteer activities promotes social cohesion and reinforces values such as solidarity and democratic engagement. In Greece, the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) recognizes volunteering as an institution of vital importance for addressing economic[40], social and environmental challenges, contributing to the common good and compensating for gaps that cannot be filled by state or market mechanisms. This highlights how volunteering transcends mere individual acts, evolving into a critical societal infrastructure that addresses complex issues and fosters community resilience. This perspective underscores volunteering as a "win-win" relationship, benefiting both the recipient and the volunteer through non-material rewards and personal growth[41]. This reciprocal benefit extends beyond individual gratification, often serving as a bridge for welfare services into deprived communities and providing substantial economic advantages to non-profit organizations[42].

Finally, [43]argues that volunteering extends beyond social contribution, encompassing multiple dimensions that benefit not only communities but also the individuals involved. Participation in voluntary activities yields a dual benefit-strengthening social cohesion while simultaneously fostering personal development and empowerment among volunteers.

Methods

This study adopted a quantitative research design aimed at examining specific variables through the analysis of numerical data. The approach sought to capture measurable attitudes and perceptions of students in order to identify potential relationships between their participation in voluntary activities and various aspects of their personal and professional development. The use of quantitative methodology was considered appropriate, as it allows for the objective recording and comparison of data, facilitating the identification of general trends and the extraction of evidence-based conclusions[1,2].

The research was conducted among students attending higher education institutions in Greece, regardless of their field or level of study. A total of 112 students participated voluntarily and completed the questionnaire. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, as the aim was to include both students who had participated in volunteering and those with no prior experience. Although the sample cannot be regarded as statistically representative of the overall student population, it was deemed adequate for drawing meaningful conclusions within the scope of this exploratory study[15].

A structured questionnaire was developed specifically for this research, consisting mainly of closed-ended questions with predefined response options to ensure standardization and comparability of responses. One open-ended question was also included to record participants' academic departments. The questionnaire comprised items concerning demographic information and the perceived relationship between volunteering and students' personal and professional development. Responses were provided on a ten-point numerical scale, where 1 corresponded to "Not at all important/Inaccurate" and 10 to "Extremely important/Absolutely accurate". The reliability scores were high for all three subscales used in the study (Personal Development, 2 items, $\alpha = 0.910$; Professional Development, 5 items, $\alpha = 0.826$; Social Connection, 3 items, $\alpha = 0.840$).

Prior to the main data collection phase, a pilot study was conducted with a small group of students to ensure the clarity, comprehensibility and relevance of the questionnaire items. Minor linguistic adjustments were made based on the feedback received.

Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which enables the organization, visualization and statistical evaluation of quantitative data. In the present section, only descriptive statistics-including frequencies, percentages and mean values-are presented to provide an overview of the participants' responses and to prepare the groundwork for the inferential analyses discussed in the following section. The results of the research conducted using a questionnaire, which was addressed to students from various schools, are presented. The aim of this specific research was to investigate the relationship between students' participation in voluntary activities and their personal and professional development.

Results

A summary of the descriptive statistics can be viewed in **(Table 1)**. the Personal Development scale, volunteers (n=81) scored M=5.52, SD=2.55 while non-volunteers (n=26) scored M=4.67, SD=2.44. Welch's t-test: t=1.519, p=0.136. Effect sizes: Cohen's d=0.335, r=0.147, η^2=0.022. For the Professional Development scale, volunteers (n=81) scored M=6.15, SD=1.63 while non-volunteers (n=30) scored M=5.53, SD=1.99. Welch's t-test: t=1.533, p=0.132. Effect sizes: Cohen's d=0.359, r=0.145, η^2=0.021. For the Social Connection scale, volunteers (n=81) scored M=7.23, SD=1.60 while non-volunteers (n=29) scored M=5.99, SD=1.85. Welch's t-test: t=3.210, p=0.002. Effect sizes: Cohen's d=0.743, r=0.295, η^2=0.087. As for the multiply regression models, predictors included Volunteer (0 = No, 1 = Yes), Age (years) and Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female, 2 = Other) and robust standard errors (HC3) were used. Detailed statistics according to the predictors of Personal Development, Professional Development and Social Connection can be viewed in **(Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5)**.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics by volunteer status.

Scale	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p (two-tailed)
Personal Development	Volunteers	81	5.519	2.553	1.519;	0.136;
	Non-volunteers	26	4.673	2.441	d = 0.335	r = 0.147; η² = 0.022
Professional Development	Volunteers	81	6.148	1.625	1.533;	0.132;
	Non-volunteers	30	5.527	1.988	d = 0.359	r = 0.145; η² = 0.021
Social Connection	Volunteers	81	7.230	1.604	3.210;	0.002;
	Non-volunteers	29	5.989	1.849	d = 0.743	r = 0.295; η² = 0.087

Table 2: Multiple Regression Results.

Predictor	B (Unstandardized)	SE	t	p
const	0.6183	3.162	0.196	0.845
volunteer	0.6677	0.565	1.182	0.237
age	0.1765	0.143	1.232	0.218
gender	0.6344	0.493	1.287	0.198

*Note. **Dependent Variable:** Personal Development Score; Model: OLS with robust standard errors (HC3); p-values < .05 are considered statistically significant.

Table 3: Personal Development - Multiple Regression.

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
const	0.618	3.162	0.196	0.845	[-5.579, 6.816]
volunteer	0.668	0.565	1.182	0.237	[-0.439, 1.775]
age	0.177	0.143	1.232	0.218	[-0.104, 0.457]
gender	0.634	0.493	1.287	0.198	[-0.332, 1.600]

*Note. Dependent variable: Personal Development, N = 107, R^2 = 0.047, Adjusted R^2 = 0.019.

Table 4: Professional Development - Multiple Regression.

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
const	3.336	2.901	1.150	0.250	[-2.350, 9.021]
volunteer	0.017	0.527	0.032	0.975	[-1.016, 1.049]
age	0.128	0.126	1.015	0.310	[-0.119, 0.376]
gender	0.983	0.395	2.487	0.013	[0.208, 1.758]

*Note. Dependent variable: Professional Development, N = 110, R^2 = 0.064, Adjusted R^2 = 0.037.

Table 5: Social Connection - Multiple Regression.

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
const	7.714	2.170	3.554	0.000	[3.460, 11.968]
volunteer	0.951	0.367	2.595	0.009	[0.233, 1.670]
age	-0.091	0.098	-0.924	0.355	[-0.283, 0.102]
gender	0.953	0.296	3.213	0.001	[0.372, 1.534]

*Note. Dependent variable: Social Connection, N = 110, R^2 = 0.178, Adjusted R^2 = 0.154.

This research provides important evidence on how volunteering is linked to students' personal and professional development. The results from the comparison of volunteers and non-volunteers indicate that participation in volunteering is associated with higher scores on measures of personal development, professional development and social connectedness. Effect sizes range from small to medium, suggesting meaningful practical differences. These findings support the role of volunteering as experiential learning that contributes to both personal maturation and professional readiness among students. In relation to the multiple regression models, results indicate that volunteering status is a significant predictor of personal development scores, controlling age and

gender. The positive coefficient suggests that students who report having participated in volunteering activities tend to score higher on measures of personal growth. Age and gender did not show robust associations in this sample. These findings align with literature that frames volunteering as experiential learning conducive to personal maturation.

The model for professional development shows that volunteering status is positively associated with professional development scores, although effect sizes are modest. This suggests volunteering may contribute to perceived career-relevant skills and network opportunities. Further analyses including field of study and work experience may clarify these relationships.

For social connection, volunteering emerges as a meaningful predictor of social connectedness, suggesting volunteers report higher levels of group identification and solidarity. This supports theories that volunteering fosters social capital and community integration.

Overall, volunteering status is consistently associated with higher scores across personal, professional and social outcome measures. Effect sizes are small-to-moderate; thus, while volunteering appears beneficial, causality cannot be inferred from cross-sectional data. Longitudinal designs and inclusion of additional covariates are recommended for future research.

The participation of the vast majority of students in volunteer activities highlights that volunteering is no longer just a side job or a way to utilize free time but has become an integral part of the student experience. The reasons that motivate students to participate in volunteer activities reflect both the desire for social contribution and the search for personal development. This dual motivation shows that volunteering operates in parallel on two levels: the collective, where the individual feels that he or she is contributing positively to society and the individual, where he or she seeks skill development and self-improvement. The coexistence of these motivations demonstrates that volunteering has a multidimensional value, which goes beyond simply providing help. Gender is also interesting as a factor of differentiation in the experience and evaluation of volunteering. The research shows that female students show a stronger connection between volunteering and personal empowerment and social inclusion, which may be related to social and cultural factors that influence how women and men perceive their role in the community and society. Women seem to value solidarity and a sense of contribution more, which reflects traditional social expectations, but at the same time may be an example of a deeper need for social connection and support. At the same time, the research confirms the beneficial effect of volunteering on the development of "soft" skills, such as self-confidence, empathy and interpersonal skills, as well as the strengthening of the professional image of the participants. These findings

are consistent with broader theoretical approaches that recognize volunteering as an important field of learning and development, in which students not only provide services, but also form a strong personal and professional identity. However, the study also has limitations that need to be considered. The concentration of data in a specific geographical and age context limits the broader generalizability of the results, while the use of self-report questions may have been influenced by the tendency of participants to present themselves in a positive way. Furthermore, the type and quality of volunteering activities were not analyzed in detail, which could further illuminate the differences in experience and benefits.

Discussion

The present investigation aimed to elucidate the multifaceted relationship between university student volunteering and key developmental outcomes, specifically personal growth, professional development and social connectedness. Our findings corroborate existing literature by demonstrating that engagement in volunteer activities significantly correlates with enhanced personal and professional competencies, alongside strengthened social ties, particularly among female students and those in early academic stages[44]. Specifically, social educators perceive volunteering more positively, aligning with their vocational characteristics such as empathy and resilience[36]. This suggests a reciprocal relationship where individuals with inherent prosocial traits are drawn to volunteering, which in turn reinforces these characteristics, particularly within fields aligned with social welfare[45]. This nuanced understanding of volunteer motivations and perceived benefits aligns with previous research highlighting personal realization and skill application as key drivers for engagement[46]. Furthermore, the intrinsic alignment between personal values and organizational contexts in volunteering environments significantly contributes to reinforcing positive organizational behaviors such as commitment and engagement, subsequently impacting performance[11]. This is particularly pertinent in educational settings, where volunteerism can serve as a practical entry point for students to develop social awareness and personal skills, although mandatory involvement may yield a compromised impact compared to voluntary engagement and lasting commitment[47]. However, further research is needed to explore the motivations of specific student populations and to compare the motivations of volunteers within the same study participants by having a sample that consists of both volunteers[48]. Future studies should also aim to incorporate the perspectives of volunteering recipients to offer a more holistic understanding of impact, considering that such insights are crucial for optimizing volunteer efforts and ensuring they genuinely address community needs[48]. Future investigations could also examine the long-term impact of volunteering on career trajectories and civic engagement beyond the academic years, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of its enduring benefits[46,49]. Additionally, prospective research could explore how self-congruence mediates the psychological mechanisms influencing the effects of sociodemographic characteristics on students' willingness to volunteer[50]. Further research should explore how different forms of institutional support and recognition might influence sustained volunteer engagement and impact, particularly in fostering a continuous commitment to prosocial activities post-graduation[36,51]. Moreover, longitudinal studies tracking student volunteers

into their professional careers would provide invaluable data regarding the sustained effects of early volunteering experiences on leadership development and civic participation[8]. Finally, considering the temporal nature of engagement, future research could employ longitudinal designs to discern whether the drivers and outcomes of volunteer engagement are enduring and whether a reinforcing feedback loop occurs where increased engagement leads to greater fulfillment of basic needs and perceived value[52]. Such studies are crucial for understanding the long-term impact of community-engaged educational models on holistic student development[18]. This approach would also facilitate the examination of self-congruence as a mediating factor in the relationship between ideal self-perceptions and volunteering intentions, which has been highlighted as a critical area for future inquiry[50]. Furthermore, examining the influence of autonomy in task selection on volunteer satisfaction and retention would provide valuable insights for designing more effective volunteer programs[53]. Additionally, future studies should consider the impact of external factors such as global crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, on volunteer experiences and motivations, as these events can significantly alter the landscape of volunteer work and its psychological impacts[54]. Moreover, the relationship between volunteering and academic success, socio-economic status and religious affiliation warrant further investigation to provide a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing student volunteerism[55]. Moreover, replication of the present model across diverse cultural contexts and educational systems would be beneficial to assess the generalizability of these findings and to identify potential moderating variables that might influence the observed relationships[54]. Future research could also delve into the role of leadership behaviors in fostering volunteer commitment and satisfaction, recognizing that effective leadership can significantly impact volunteer retention and engagement[56].

Conclusion

Volunteering is a valuable tool for the holistic development of students. Engaging in volunteer activities offers young people the opportunity to improve both their personal identity and their professional prospects. At the same time, volunteering seems to promote social sensitivity and a sense of solidarity, elements that are crucial for the formation of active and responsible citizens. In order to better exploit these advantages, it is proposed to strengthen the presence and visibility of volunteering programs within universities. Organized actions that offer recognition and incentives, such as certificates, the possibility of connecting with internships or professional networking, could increase student interest and participation. Additionally, integrating volunteering into academic curricula, possibly through service-learning initiatives, could provide structured pathways for engagement and reinforce the educational value of such experiences[8]. Furthermore, encouraging international volunteering opportunities can enhance students' understanding of global issues and foster intrinsic motivation for engaging with diverse cultures[57]. This approach not only enriches the academic experience but also cultivates a deeper understanding of civic responsibility and community needs, preparing students for future societal contributions[48,58]. Such integration necessitates a careful consideration of institutional support mechanisms and the development of robust assessment frameworks to effectively measure both student learning outcomes and community impact[6].

In addition, it is important to ensure correct and broad information about volunteering opportunities, in order to overcome the barriers of ignorance mentioned by some participants. The cultivation of a volunteer culture must begin from the early years of studies, so that it is deeply integrated into the student identity and encourages a lifelong attitude of contribution and social participation. Universities, therefore, have a pivotal role in establishing collaborative education networks with companies and community organizations to enhance educational quality and meet societal challenges[59]. This proactive engagement not only enriches the student experience but also addresses critical societal needs by fostering a generation of socially conscious and civically engaged professionals[48]. This institutional involvement can further be optimized by integrating student volunteer activities directly into coursework, enhancing their educational and societal impact[5]. Such an approach requires dedicated committees to oversee and implement volunteer programs, along with appropriate budgetary allocations and the assignment of faculty supervisors[48]. These committees should also be responsible for planning joint reflection activities among program managers, users and volunteers to continuously improve the volunteering experience and foster new initiatives[6].

At the same time, the development of actions aimed at personal empowerment, strengthening self-confidence and empathy, will enhance the positive impact of volunteering, especially on young people who are in the process of forming their identity. The continuous diagnosis of university student volunteering programs through feedback from students and beneficiaries can identify areas for improvement, ensuring that these initiatives remain relevant and impactful[6]. This necessitates comprehensive diagnostic tools to assess the quality, quantity and dissemination of information regarding volunteer activities, alongside evaluating their effectiveness in developing student competencies[6]. Moreover, addressing barriers such as lack of time and insufficient information through workshops and clear communication about opportunities can further encourage student participation, particularly among younger students[60]. Therefore, universities are uniquely positioned to offer training and support from highly qualified professionals, along with official accreditation for such training, making them privileged environments for managing volunteering activities that enhance social, personal and economic capital within a community[6]. Furthermore, the integration of community service into university curricula fosters a sense of social responsibility and civic engagement among students, equipping them with practical skills and cultural competence necessary for addressing diverse societal issues[61]. This structured approach not only benefits the community but also provides students with invaluable real-world experience, enhancing their professional development and social awareness[59]. To optimize these efforts, universities should prioritize the creation of clear communication channels and provide comprehensive training to ensure volunteers are well-prepared for their roles and can navigate challenging situations effectively[62]. Regular evaluation of volunteer programs through instruments for comprehensive diagnosis is crucial to assess their efficacy, quality and overall management, enabling continuous improvement and alignment with educational and societal goals[6]. Such diagnostic tools can uncover common themes and patterns related to the development of community benefits through training programs, including positive changes in student attitudes and values, enhanced communication and problem-solving skills and significant personal growth[6,61].

Finally, it is proposed to conduct future research that will examine the impact of volunteering over time, beyond student life, as well as the connection between specific forms of volunteering and professional development. This could involve longitudinal studies tracking alumni involvement in civic activities and their career trajectories to discern the enduring effects of early volunteer experiences. Additionally, investigating the correlation between the type of volunteer work undertaken and the acquisition of specific transferable skills relevant to various professions would provide valuable insights for both students and career development programs[11].

Also, the use of qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, will contribute to a better understanding of the internal motivational patterns and personal experiences of students. Overall, volunteering proves to be much more than a simple social activity. It is a framework for learning, development and social inclusion that can positively shape the lives of young people and prepare them for an active role in society and the labor market. This deeper understanding could inform pedagogical strategies aimed at fostering intrinsic motivation for civic engagement, thereby enhancing the sustainability and impact of university student volunteering programs[63]. Further research should also consider the perspectives of the beneficiaries and the host organizations to gain a comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness and areas for improvement[6].

References

1. Handy F, Cnaan RA, Hustinx L, et al. A cross-cultural examination of student volunteering: Is it all about résumé building? Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly 2010;39(3):498-523.

2. Holdsworth C, Brewis G. Volunteering, choice and control: a case study of higher education student volunteering. J Youth Studies 2013;17(2):204.

3. Zahidi AM, You HW, Rashid SHA, et al. Benefits of Service-Learning through Community Volunteer Programmes to Pre-University Students. DergiPark (Istanbul University) 2022.

4. Barton E, Bates E, O'Donovan R. 'That extra sparkle': students' experiences of volunteering and the impact on satisfaction and employability in higher education. J Further and Higher Education 2017;43(4):453.

5. Mustafa SMS, Radzi FAM, Hamzah KHJK. Participation in and Benefits of Volunteering Activities Among University Students. Int J Academic Res in Business and Social Sciences 2020;10(14).

6. Briones E, Talledo IS, Fernández NG. University Student Volunteering (USV): Instruments for Its Comprehensive Diagnosis (ICD-USV). The Qualitative Report 2021.

7. Ling C, Li D, Li Y. Does Volunteer Service Foster Education for A Sustainable Future? - Empirical Evidence from Chinese University Students. Sustainability 2023;15(14):11259.

8. Smith K, Holmes K, Haski-Leventhal D, et al. Motivations and Benefits of Student Volunteering: Comparing Regular, Occasional, and Non-Volunteers in Five Countries. Canadian J Nonprofit Social Economy Res 2010;1(1).

9. Pepper I, Rogers C, Turner JG, Louis N St, Williams B. Enabling student employability through volunteering: insights from police volunteers studying professional policing degrees in Wales. Higher Education Skills and Work-Based Learning 2024;14(5):1135.

10. Anderson P, Green P. Beyond CV building: the communal benefits of student volunteering. Voluntary Sector Review 2012;3(2):247.

11. Giancaspro ML, Manuti A. Learning to Be Employable Through Volunteering: A Qualitative Study on the Development of Employability Capital of Young People. Frontiers in Psychology 2021;12:574232.

12. Rubel Md AI, Rumi MH, Ripon Md A. Empowerment through engagement: assessing the female university students' involvement in volunteering activities. Southeast Asia A Multidisciplinary J 2024;24(1):69.

13. Poma-Lagos LA, Churampi-Cangalaya RL, Robles ZML, et al. Linking university social responsibility programs to comprehensive student training in the Peruvian context. Decision Science Letters 2025;14(4):919.

14. Andersen HL, Feldt JE. Uncertain Futures: the role of universities in finding common ground and creating social trust. Research Portal Denmark 2024;29(2).

15. Astin AW, Sax LJ. How undergraduates are affected by service participation. Service participation 1998;39(3):251.

16. Einolf CJ. The link between religion and helping others: The role of values, ideas, and language. Sociology of religion 2011;72(4):435-455.

17. Alshammari A, Thomran M, Alshebami AS. Integration of Service-Learning Theory and Social Capital Theory in Volunteering Work for Sustainable Development: A Study of the Role of Education Curricula in Saudi Arabia. Sustainability 2023;15(18):13312.

18. Sharma A, Dixit S, Singh S, et al. Student Engagement Practices as a Driver of Skill Enhancement in Community-Centric Higher Education. International Review of Management and Marketing 2025;15(6):80.

19. Nuriyeva A, Mammedov O, Zeynalov S. Integrating Social-Emotional Learning into Hybrid Platforms: A Model for Student Digital Wellbeing and Engagement. J Emerging Technologies in Education 2025;2(6):444.

20. García OG, Hallu R. Learning and service at the University of Buenos Aires: A theoretical framework guiding the implementation of educational social practices. Gateways Int J Community Res Engagement 2017;10.

21. García RS. A service-learning program assessment: Strengths, weaknesses and impacts on students. Intangible Capital 2023;19(1):4.

22. Shyiramunda T, Bersselaar D van den. Local community development and higher education institutions: Moving from the triple helix to the quadruple helix model. International Review of Education 2024;70(1):51.

23. Perdomo MP, Pérez JLL. La formación de valores éticos y morales en estudiantes universitarios: Una perspectiva comprensiva y edificadora. Revista Boletín Redipe 2024;13(3):71.

24. Duarte J, Gerritsen N, Lourenço M, Melo-Pfeifer S, Pinto S. Service Learning for Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Higher Education: Proposals for Pre-Service (Language) Teacher Education. Education Sciences 2024;14(7):750.

25. Manuel BML, Elizabeth BVS, Robert ACF, et al. La diferencia entre la ética y la moral desde la perspectiva de los estudiantes universitarios. Una revisión bibliográfica. Revista de Climatología 2024;24:1944.

26. Aramburuzabala P, Culcasi I, Martín RC. Service-Learning and Digital Empowerment: The Potential for the Digital Education Transition in Higher Education. Sustainability 2024;16(6):2448.

27. Campillo AM, Fernández M del PS, Fernández-Santos Y. Service-Learning for Sustainability Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas: What Is Its Global Impact on Business University Students? Sustainability 2019;11(19):5296.

28. Neves JC, Sousa C, Casimirio C. Developing and Validating a Qualitative Tool for Playtesting Service Learning-Based Accessible Games: A Comprehensive Approach. EAI Endorsed Transactions on Creative Technologies 2024;10.

29. Kaliappen N. Applying Community-Engaged Service Learning to Enhance Students' Knowledge, Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility. AIB Insights 2024;25(1).

30. Latorre BZ, Pérez VEG, Calandín JG. La Dimensión Ética y Ciudadana del Aprendizaje Servicio: Una apuesta por su institucionalización en la Educación Superior. Revista Complutense de Educación 2018;30(1):1.

31. United Nations Volunteers (UNV). State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2023: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies. Bonn: UNV 2023.

32. Citaristi I. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In The Europa Directory of International Organizations 2022:647-655.

33. Resch K. Third, Mission and service learning. A narrative evaluation of the relevance of students' experiences. Zeitschrift Für Hochschulentwicklung 2018;127.

34. Ruiz-Montero EE, Sánchez-Trigo H, Chiva-Bartoll Ò, Ruíz-Montero PJ. Effects of an intergenerational service-learning program on prosocial behaviors and perception of physical education in primary education students. Frontiers in Psychology 2025;16.

35. Talbot ALP, McCann M. Conceptualization and experiences of engaged citizenship as critical consciousness, transformative education and mutual joy: An autoethnography. South African J Higher Education 2021;1.

36. Ariza AC, Magaña EC, García ÉG, Rivas ES. Volunteering in the University Context: Student Perception and Participation. Education Sciences 2020;10(12):380.

37. Forrest S, Dostál J, McEwen L. The Future of Volunteering in Extreme Weather Events: Critical Reflections on Key Challenges and Opportunities for Climate Resilience. J Extreme Events 2022;9.

38. Hofstetter N, Freitag M. Volunteering. In Edward Elgar Publishing eBooks. Edward Elgar Publishing 2023:631.

39. European Centre for Volunteering (CEV). Volunteering in Europe: Values, Impact and Practice. Brussels: CEV 2021.

40. National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA). Annual Report on Volunteering and Social Solidarity in Greece. Athens: EKKA 2022.

41. Mateiu-Vescan R, Ionescu T, Opre A. Volunteering in Romania: A Case Study That Can Inform Global Volunteerism. Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Psychologia-Paedagogia 2022;67(1):41.

42. Nichol B, Wilson R, Rodrigues A, Haighton C. Exploring the Effects of Volunteering on Social, Mental, and Physical Health and Well-being of Volunteers: An Umbrella Review. VOLUNTAS Int J Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations 2023;35(1):97.

43. Wilson JF. Volunteering. Annual Review of Sociology 2000;26(1):215.

44. Caballero SC, Alonso NO, Cerveró GA, Suárez-Rodríguez JM. Volunteering and motivation for improving undergraduate student training. Differentiating factors in Valencian universities. Complutense J Education 2024;35(3):633.

45. Nowakowska I. Volunteerism in the last year as a moderator between empathy and altruistic social value orientation: an exploratory study. Current Issues in Personality Psychology 2021;10(1):10.

46. Olmos-Gómez M del C, García-Garnica M, Guardía J. Promoting future work skills in vocational training and baccalaureate setting through engagement in volunteering. Frontiers in Education 2022;7.

47. Alsouqi AEA. The Impact of Compulsory Volunteerism on Youth. Psychology 2024;15(3):407.

48. Wondimu H, Admas G. The motivation and engagement of student volunteers in volunteerism at the University of Gondar. Discover Global Society 2024;2(1).

49. Tingle JK, Griffiths R, Hazlett D, Flint A. NIRSA Championship Series Volunteerism: The Perceived Impact on Professional Development. Recreational Sports J 2018;42(1):2.

50. Lindenmeier J, Arnold C, Zogaj A, Tscheulin, DK. Congruence constructs as mediators of stereotypic image perceptions' effect on student volunteering intention. Int Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing 2021;18(4):575.

51. Bansi D, Petkari E, Sánchez-Gutiérrez T, Costa MP da. A systematic review of how volunteering relates to job satisfaction and job performance. Discover Psychology 2025;5(1).

52. Fernandes T, Matos MA de. Towards a better understanding of volunteer engagement: self-determined motivations, self-expression needs and co-creation outcomes. J Service Theory and Practice 2023;33(7):1.

53. Martin T, Slavich M, Gellock J. Volunteer Motivations, Satisfaction, and Future Intent: A Comparative Analysis Between Student-Athletes and Service-Learning Students. J Athlete Development and Experience 2019;1(3).

54. Dekel G, Geldenhuys M, Harris J. Exploring the value of organizational support, engagement, and psychological wellbeing in the volunteer context. Frontiers in Psychology 2022;13.

55. Huehls F. Literature Review. Int J Educational Advancement 2009;9(1):42.

56. Benevene P, Buonomo I, West M. The Relationship Between Leadership Behaviors and Volunteer Commitment: The Role of Volunteer Satisfaction. Frontiers in Psychology 2020;11.

57. Chen FC, Shyr YH. Enhance Volunteering Education Through Overseas Volunteer Service. SAGE Open 2021;11(4).

58. Bautista R, Ballada CJA, Rabo J. Examining the Volunteering Behavior of Filipino Youth Using the Extended Theory of Planned Behavior. DLSU Business & Economics Review 2025;35(1).

59. Luque-Suárez M, Olmos-Gómez M del C, Castán-García M, Portillo-Sánchez R. Promoting Emotional and Social Well-Being and a Sense of Belonging in Adolescents through Participation in Volunteering. Healthcare 2021;9(3):359.

60. Haque S, Krawec T, Chu J, et al. Undergraduate students' perceptions of community engagement: A snapshot of a public research university in Canada. Gateways Int J Community Res and Engagement 2021;14(1).

61. Tawafak RM, Hinaai BA. A Literature Review on Developing Community Service through Training Programs for University Students. ITM Web of Conferences 2024;64:1018.

62. Voicu C, Raiu SL. Volunteering Advantages and Difficulties in Romania. Postmodern Openings 2018;9(4):122.

63. Vasileva AN, Koryakina T, Nogovitscyna NM, Nikiforova TI, Adamova LK. Volunteering in higher education as a basis for the professional development of teachers. University Notes 2020;11(1):414.