



## Service Learning as Part of Citizenship Education: Perception and Achievement Among Secondary Three Pupils in a Neighbourhood School in Singapore

## KEYWORDS

Service Learning, Citizenship Education, Perception, Achievement

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**ABSTRACT** *The present study was carried out to know the perception of Service Learning and the achievement grades gained in Service Learning among secondary 3 pupils in a Neighbourhood school in Singapore. 232 Samples were used in the present study. Survey method was adopted and data were analysed using 't' test and 'correlation'. There is significant difference between the mean scores of perception of Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender. There is significant difference between the mean scores of perception of Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to race. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Achievement in Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Achievement in Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to race. There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 pupils with respect to Gender. There is significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 Chinese pupils. There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 Malay and Indian pupils.*

Character and Citizenship Education has always been an integral part of the Singapore education system. One of the aims of this curriculum is to inculcate in pupils the values of love, care and responsibility to community and society as a whole. Amidst societal changes, globalization and technological advancements, pupils are taught to be compassionate towards others and one of the strategies used to achieve in this Service Learning. Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities. (Janet S. Eyler and Dwight E Gyles, Jr., 2003) The concept of service learning was introduced by the National Youth Council in 1999. This has been developed by the Ministry of Education and various educational institutions. As part of civic literacy, the ministry aims to equip pupils with the necessary skills to lead an active community life, thereby becoming useful citizens of Singapore.

Service learning allows pupils to apply classroom theories to real life situations. Authentic learning takes place because they are able to connect theories learnt in classroom to practical situations and to the needs of the community, particularly the under-privileged. Students learn more when they are actively involved in what they are learning rather than just being passive recipients of information. It is this kind of participatory form of citizenship which makes them unique and helps them become better and useful citizens.

Service learning involves collaboration, addressing community needs, education, reflection and it fosters the development of civic and social responsibility. It gives pupils ample opportunities to work together with their peers and other organizations in pursuit of noble objectives. They are tasked to brainstorm on how they can help the less privileged and lend them a helping hand. The whole process of service learning makes their education more meaningful because through reflections of their actions, they come to realize that they have the power to make a differ-

ence in other people's lives.

### Significance of the study

Our Education system must... nurture Singapore citizens of good character so that everyone has the moral resolve to withstand an uncertain future, and a strong sense of responsibility to contribute to the success of Singapore and the well-being of fellow Singaporeans. - Mr HengSweeK-eat, Minister for Education

Service learning has been an area of extreme interest and debate in higher education. The actual experience is learning oriented than teaching oriented. This is not to say that the teaching factor should not be involved but, rather, it should be a combination of the two. Service learning also helps to develop students from problem-based learning (Lisman, 1988). Globalization has sped up the pace of life and influenced the priorities we hold in life. Making sure that the service learning experience is related to the students' curriculum is a challenge as well. Educators want to ensure that the right message is sent across to students. In order for service learning to be effective, students must have reflection and reciprocity. This is not only confined to the service learning activity itself but also on the perceptions and thoughts about the activity. Seeing the meaning in the whole process of service learning is crucial to the success of the activity. Singapore's future depends on the commitment of its people to the country. It's not bricks and mortar that make a nation, but the bonds between people that unite them to a country (Goh Chok Tong, 2004). The commitment of students to this cause can be well evaluated through effective and meaningful service learning projects carried out in their institutions.

Educators also need to have a good understanding of how students perceive service learning as part of their learning and growth process. It enables educators and curriculum gatekeepers to identify the gaps in the curriculum and address the concerns. Rectification and modification of the curriculum will be necessary if students fail to realise the

importance of the curriculum.

**Objectives**

- To find out the significant difference between the mean scores of perception of Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender and race.
- To find out the significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 pupils.

**Hypotheses**

- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of perception of Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender and race.
- There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 pupils.

**Method**

The investigator had limited to apply the survey method for the collection of data.

**Samplein**

the present study, the investigator has selected a sample of 212 secondary 3 students from a neighbourhood school in Singapore.

- ✓ mean,
- ✓ standard deviation
- ✓ 't' test
- ✓ Karl person's correlation.

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of perception of Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender.

**TABLE- 1  
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION OF SERVICE LEARNING OF SECONDARY 3 PUPILS WITH RESPECT TO GENDER**

Sex	Number	Mean	SD	C.R. Value	Remarks At 0.05 level
Male	105	79.3619	15.9953	2.3442	Sig
Female	107	84.2336	14.2283		

The table above table (1) reveals that the calculated C.R. value (2.3442) is greater than the table value (1.97). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between the mean scores of perception of Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender" is rejected.

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of perception of Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to race.

**TABLE- 2  
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION OF SERVICE LEARNING OF SECONDARY 3 PUPILS WITH RESPECT TO RACE**

Race	Number	Mean	SD	C.R. Value	Remarks At 0.05 level
Chinese	170	80.8588	15.1846	2.1190	Sig
Malays and Indians	42	85.7143	15.2736		

The above table (2) reveals that the calculated C.R. value (2.1190) is greater than the table value (1.97). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between the mean scores of perception of Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to race" is rejected.

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Achievement in Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender.

**TABLE- 3  
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SCORES OF ACHIEVEMENT IN SERVICE LEARNING OF SECONDARY 3 PUPILS WITH RESPECT TO GENDER**

Sex	Number	Mean	SD	C.R. Value	Remarks At 0.05 level
Male	105	83.0952	17.1585	1.5123	Not Sig
Female	107	86.4486	15.0786		

From the table (3) above reveals that the calculated C.R. value (1.5123) is lesser than the table value (1.97). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Achievement in Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender" is accepted.

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Achievement in Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender.

**TABLE- 4  
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SCORES OF ACHIEVEMENT IN SERVICE LEARNING OF SECONDARY 3 PUPILS WITH RESPECT TO RACE**

Race	Number	Mean	SD	C.R. Value	Remarks At 0.05 level
Chinese	170	85.2941	16.2247	0.9158	Not Sig
Malays and Indians	42	82.7381	16.0868		

The table above (4) reveals that the calculated C.R. value (0.9158) is lesser than the table value (1.97). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Achievement in Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to race" is accepted.

There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 pupils with respect to Gender.

**TABLE- 5  
CORRELATION BETWEEN PERCEPTION OF SERVICE LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT IN SERVICE LEARNING OF SECONDARY 3 PUPILS WITH RESPECT TO GENDER**

Category	Number	df	C.R. Value		Remarks
			Calc.	Table	
Male	105	103	0.1907	0.196	Not Sig
Female	107	105	0.0842	0.192	

The above table (5) reveals that the calculated r. values (0.1907, 0.0842) are lesser than the table value. Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 pupils with respect to Gender" is accepted.

There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 pupils with respect to Race.

**TABLE- 6**  
**CORRELATION BETWEEN PERCEPTION OF SERVICE LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT IN SERVICE LEARNING OF SECONDARY 3 PUPILS WITH RESPECT TO RACE**

Category	Number	df	Calc.		Remarks
Chinese	170	168	0.1597	0.156	Sig
Malays and Indians	42	40	0.1978	0.304	Not Sig

The above table (6) reveals that the calculated r. value for Chinese (0.1597) is greater than the table value. Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 Chinese pupils " is rejected.

The above table (6) reveals that the calculated r. value for Malays and Indians (0.1978) is lesser than the table value. Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 Malay and Indian pupils" is accepted.

#### Findings

- There is a significant difference in the mean scores of perception of Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender and race.
- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Achievement in Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender and race.
- There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 pupils with respect to Gender.
- There is significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 Chinese pupils.
- There is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 Malay and Indian pupils.

#### Discussions

Male and female students differ when it comes to perception of service learning. In the present study of perception and achievement among secondary three pupils in a neighbourhood school in Singapore, the mean perception score of service learning of females (84.2336) is higher than that of males (79.3619). This may be due to the fact that females are drawn more to the volunteerism aspects of service learning while the males are linked more to the political aspects of service work. Data from Labor department in the United States obtained in 2012 reveals that women continued a long-standing trend of volunteering than men. Nearly 30% of women volunteered whereas only 23.2 % of men volunteered. This could be due to the fact that females are more giving than men. Naturally females tend to display more affection and responsibility. Females also tend to pace faster than males in terms of maturity level. This might also be a reason for them to understand more the need to help others.

The racial groups also tend to differ when it comes to perception of service learning. The mean perception scores of service learning of Malay and Indian pupils (85.7143) are higher than that of Chinese pupils (80.8588). It is quite

difficult to attribute reasons for this behaviour. However, we can say that the minority status of Malays and Indians could naturally have spurred them to see the need to help others. We cannot prematurely come to any candid conclusions with regard to this. This could be a good avenue for future research.

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Achievement in Service Learning of secondary 3 pupils with respect to gender and race. Though the groups may have varying perceptions, they did well when it comes to deliverance. Generally, pupils actively took part in service learning activities and contributed to society. This is a good indicator that values are inculcated well and the citizenship education curriculum is delivered well.

When it comes to relational analysis, we see that there is no significant relationship between Perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 pupils with respect to Gender. There is also no significant relationship between perception of Service learning and Achievement in Service Learning of Secondary 3 Malay and Indian pupils. Male pupils had a higher mean score for achievement in service learning than perception in service learning. Females who had higher mean score than males in perception of Service learning only scored marginally higher in achievement in service learning.

We can also observe that Chinese pupils who had a lesser mean score than Malay and Indian pupils for perception in service learning had a higher mean score than the Malay and Indian pupils for achievement in service learning. This prompts us to analyse the gaps between theory and practice in greater detail.

#### Recommendations

The investigator makes the following recommendations in order to achieve equilibrium in relation to perception and achievement of service learning.

1. Make all pupils understand the benefits and nobleness of service learning to a greater extent because many pupils engage in it as it is a requirement and not because they understand the philosophy and love behind it. This would have a tremendous impact on future perception scores.
2. Male pupils are to take on a more active role in service learning projects. Currently Females take on the bulk of the administrative roles and males take on the operational roles. Both gender should be actively involved in performing both the tasks and not segregate tasks based on stereotypes.

#### Conclusion

Service learning is a noble cause. It inspires others to partake in the art of giving. It gives pupils a wonderful opportunity to evaluate their values and practice their beliefs. Apart from gaining better knowledge about social issues and their causes, service learning also helps pupils develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Pupils see the world beyond their classrooms. They not only cause positive changes in the lives of others but also to themselves. The goal of Character and Citizenship Education curriculum, which is to inculcate values and build competencies in our students to develop them to be good individuals and useful citizens, will be achieved.

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