

Transformative Effects of the Coastal Clean-Drive on Criminology Students Skills Development and Social Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

Environmental issues and community engagement have sparked numerous sustainability and social responsibility programs. Community service fosters relationships that facilitate community growth, and collaborating with academic institutions and other organizations can assist in fulfilling the mission of enhancing living conditions for underprivileged communities. The purpose of this research study is to determine the effects of a clean-up drive on criminology students in a university setting by identifying the knowledge, skills development, and values and attitudes of these students upon participating in a clean-up drive; this study aims to shed light on the potential outcomes and benefits associated with such community-based activities. This study is a descriptive research design that was conducted on College of Criminology students who are currently enrolled in the first semester of 2023-2024. There are a total of ninety-five (95) students who responded to the survey from all year levels. Weighted mean was used to determine the results. Studies revealed that upon participating in the coastal clean-up drive, volunteers gain a better understanding of the importance of environmental preservation. The volunteer was able to develop teamwork among others and became more disciplined after participating in the clean-up drive.

Keywords: reflective evaluation, transformative reflection, community extension, community services, coastal clean-up, Cebu, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues and community engagement have drawn a lot of attention, resulting in a multitude of programs encouraging sustainability and social responsibility. With a solid understanding of the ecological, social, and economic impact of marine plastic, it is advantageous to be informed about the global transition in how we make, use, and reuse plastic in such a way that negative impacts are eliminated, with implications for public behavior, legislation and governance, industry, and commerce (Pahl et al., 2017).

The organization of clean-up drives, which focus on removing rubbish and enhancing the cleanliness of public spaces, is one such activity. Community service is about building relationships that help communities thrive. Its goal is to enhance social and personal development (Rubio et al., 2016). A community's growth is a dynamic process that encompasses all aspects of the community. The key to this process is to establish and maintain communication and interaction channels among local groups that are otherwise preoccupied with more individualized concerns (Chua et al., 2014).

Creating a community that requires help from diverse entities such as academic institutions, is one way to carry out the mission of not only improving the living conditions of the underprivileged but also having a greater impact on the morals and principles of the volunteers who participated in community extension-related activities (Montebon et al., 2022).

Through physical entanglement and damage, marine plastic has the ability to change the efficiency and production of commercial fisheries and aquaculture, as well as by providing a direct risk to fish stocks (Mouat et al., 2010). Plastic is ingested by a diverse range of marine species, including those directly responsible for food provision, such as shellfish and fish (Rochman et al., 2015), throughout every stage of their lifecycle (Steer et al., 2017; Lusher et al., 2012). Setälä et al. (2014) found that this plastic can be ingested directly or indirectly through contaminated prey.

The costs of marine litter pollution are usually not borne directly by the producers or the polluters (Gago et al., 2020), and this has been considered the root of the problem of litter accumulation in the oceans (Bergmann et al., 2015). As global environmental concerns grow, people are taking action like never before. The environment is getting much attention, and all sectors are working together to help and participate in the most pressing issues (Peleman, 2016). Waste can negate the psychological advantages that the coast typically produces, showing that, in addition to environmental costs, there are also human costs associated with marine waste. Litter from the general public had the most significant harmful impact (Wyles et al., 2016).

Wyles, Pahl, Thomas, and Thompson (2016) compared littered and clean coastal scenes and discovered that rubbish potentially left by the public (e.g., food wrappers) was especially disliked, associated with making people sad, and reduced the restorative qualities of the environment when compared to other environmental conditions. With an estimated increasing trend in production of 5% per year, an additional 33 billion tons of plastic will have entered the oceans by 2050 if no action is taken (Rochman et al., 2013).

This research study aims to determine the effects of a clean-up drive on criminology students in a university setting. By identifying these students' knowledge, skills development, values, and attitudes upon participating in a clean-up drive, this study aims to shed light on the potential outcomes and benefits of such community-based activities. The findings of this study will contribute to existing knowledge on community engagement and its effects on criminology students. It will provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and practitioners in criminology and criminal justice, enabling them to design more comprehensive and impactful curricula and initiatives that address the practical needs of students and the communities they serve. Thus, this study seeks to expand our understanding of the transformative power of community engagement on criminology students' personal and professional development.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive, quantitative research design was conducted on the College of Criminology students currently enrolled in the first semester of 2023-2024. Ninety-five (95) students responded to the survey from various year levels. The survey was done online through a Google form. The survey delves into determining the effects of participating in the clean-up drive on the students regarding knowledge, skills development, values, and attitude. Weighted mean was used to determine the findings of the study. Thus, this is a convenience sampling in which the Google form was sent through Messenger and email.

The data was solely gathered based on the number of answers from informants. Following that, the researcher compiled and analyzed the data from the Google form. Considering ethical issues are of the utmost importance in this investigation, the informants' identities were kept anonymous. Another ethical aspect is data privacy and confidentiality, which ensures that all data obtained is solely for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data's findings are presented in this section. The section provides information on the respondent's response in terms of knowledge, skills and development, and values and attitude.

Table 1: Effects of Coastal Clean-Up on the Volunteers in terms of knowledge

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I gained better understanding about the importance of environmental preservation.	3.65	Strongly Agree
I learned the importance of proper segregation.	3.62	Strongly Agree
I fully understand the community's needs.	3.6	Strongly Agree
I discover the genuine significance and benefit of volunteering.	3.61	Strongly Agree
I comprehend the true purpose of participating in community development initiatives in addressing issues related to the environment.	3.6	Strongly Agree
I gain additional knowledge in the new enterprise.	3.56	Strongly Agree
I learned to cope with life challenges and had a greater willingness to take in the place where I live.	3.61	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	3.61	Strongly Agree

Table 1 shows the effects of the coastal clean-up on the volunteers in terms of knowledge. It reveals that the highest mean is 3.65, interpreted as strongly agree. It indicates that participating in the clean-up drive gives a better understanding to the volunteers about the importance of environmental preservation. Moreover, the grand mean is 3.61, interpreted as strongly agree, signifying that the activity provides learning and realizations to the volunteers.

Plastic litter's presence and accumulation have been recognized as a significant environmental problem due to its adverse impacts on marine ecosystems and ecosystem services (Beaumont et al., 2019; Law, 2017). Student organizations may provide a successful tool in accelerating the development of aware and motivated students. Its members can actively participate in the transition to a more sustainable society (Weidner, 2014).

Table 2: Effects of Coastal Clean-Up to the Volunteers in terms of Skills Development

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I am able to develop teamwork among the volunteers.	3.59	Strongly Agree
I develop practical skills shared among the volunteers and constituents.	3.55	Strongly Agree
I improve my communication skills used in dealing with beneficiaries and co-service providers.	3.55	Strongly Agree
I develop quick decision-making and judgment in the activities implemented.	3.55	Strongly Agree
I acquire good networking/linking skills.	3.52	Strongly Agree
I also apply leadership skills in communicating with others, critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, etc.	3.55	Strongly Agree
I am able to join expanded connection among people groups and organization.	3.54	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	3.55	Strongly Agree

Table 2 depicts the respondents' responses on the coastal clean-up's effects on the volunteers regarding skills and development. It reveals that the highest mean is 3.59, interpreted as strongly agree. This means that the volunteer was able to develop teamwork among others. Furthermore, it has a grand mean of 3.55, interpreted as strongly agree, implying that the volunteers acquire skills, especially in communicating and collaborating with others.

Volunteerism is where a person or group works to share resources with others in need without anticipating financial or other material gains (Llenares & Deocarís, 2015). Volunteering can boost one's self-confidence, self-esteem, and sense of fulfillment in life (Bautista Jr. et al., 2021; Escolar Chua et al., 2014).

According to Khasanzyanova (2017), learning through action is essential to acquiring soft skills. One way of acquiring soft skills is volunteering with associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), where students develop skills linked to their future professional careers that they reflect on consciously and feel enriched by the experience.

Table 3: Effects of Coastal Clean-Up to the Volunteers in terms of Values and Attitude

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I feel more empowered to take an active part in solving community problem.	3.49	Strongly Agree
I felt that I have to set a good example to others.	3.57	Strongly Agree
I became more disciplined.	3.58	Strongly Agree
I became more aware and concerned to the environment.	3.6	Strongly Agree
I developed the spirit of volunteerism.	3.51	Strongly Agree
I better understood the value of service.	3.56	Strongly Agree
I became more aware about myself to live a long life by helping others especially those in need.	3.57	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean	3.55	Strongly Agree

Table 3 displays the respondents' responses regarding values and attitudes regarding the coastal clean-up's effects on the volunteers. It reveals that the highest mean is 3.58, interpreted as strongly agree. This indicates that the volunteers became more disciplined after the clean-up drive. Likewise, it has a grand mean of 3.55, interpreted as strongly agree, implying that the exposure of the volunteers to the community gives them realization and awareness to be more concerned on the environmental issues.

Volunteering increases self-esteem, which can then be extended to "normal" activities, resulting in a more optimistic attitude on life and one's objectives (Fairley et al., 2016; Gaber et al., 2020). A specific study by Cnaan et al. (2020) highlighted the positive effects of community engagement on various aspects of individual development, including personal growth, social awareness, and civic responsibility. Community service activities, for example, have been shown in studies to increase self-esteem, foster empathy, and promote a sense of belonging and social cohesion.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions were reached:

- Upon participating in the coastal clean-up drive, volunteers better understand the importance of environmental preservation.
- The volunteer was able to develop teamwork among others.
- The volunteers became more disciplined after participating in the clean-up drive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were reached;

- Intensify the participation of the students in the community extension services
- Support various activities where student volunteers can practice their skills and develop their potential.
- Introduce community extension activities that are connected and aligned with students' reasons for volunteering.

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