

Service-Learning Experiences of Students in a Private Higher Education Institution During Community Extension Program Implementation

Ricardo F. Uy Jr.¹, Jazzel R. Garcia²

Philippine College Foundation Incorporated, Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700200>

Received: 15 July 2026; Accepted: 20 July 2026; Published: 29 July 2026

ABSTRACT

Service learning emerged as a meaningful approach in higher education, integrating academic instruction with community engagement to foster civic responsibility and holistic development. This study explored the lived experiences of students at the Philippine College Foundation Incorporated in delivering community extension programs. Anchored in a qualitative phenomenological design, this study utilized purposive sampling to select participants actively involved in service-learning initiatives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions and analyzed using thematic analysis to capture shared meanings and essences of participants' experiences. Findings revealed that service learning is a meaningful and transformative experience for students. Students demonstrated the formation of social responsibility, experiential learning and personal growth, empathy and compassion, and building meaningful connections. Despite these positive experiences, participants encountered challenges in navigating academic and personal demands and developing readiness for community engagement. Furthermore, the study found that service learning significantly influences the formation of civic identity and social responsibility, as well as the development of professional competence and personal transformation. These findings emphasize the importance of student engagement and institutional support in sustainable community extension projects.

Keywords: Service learning, community extension services, student engagement, phenomenological research

INTRODUCTION

Service-learning has become an established pedagogical approach in higher education, integrating academic coursework with structured community engagement to enhance student learning and foster civic responsibility. By situating disciplinary knowledge within authentic community contexts, service-learning facilitates the development of social awareness, ethical sensitivity, and critical reflection on complex societal issues. Empirical evidence consistently indicates that participation in well-designed service-learning initiatives is associated with improvements in empathy, leadership competencies, and sustained civic engagement, as well as positive academic outcomes (Salam et al., 2019; Bringle et al., 2016).

Within the Philippine higher education institutions, community extension constitutes one of the trifocal mandates of higher education institutions (HEIs), alongside instruction and research, and is frequently operationalized through service-learning embedded in academic programs. National and institutional frameworks emphasize that such initiatives should be needs-based, sustainable, and community-centered, contributing to inclusive development and social transformation (Angco, 2026; Garcia & Uy, 2025). Empirical studies in the Philippine context further demonstrate that well-designed extension and service-learning programs can promote community empowerment, skills development, and local capacity building, particularly when institutional efforts are aligned with articulated community needs and supported by active stakeholder participation (Dalagan et al., 2021; Malibiran, 2023). In addition, service quality and student satisfaction have been identified as important indicators of program effectiveness within private higher education institutions (Bartolo et al., 2024).

Despite this growing body of literature, existing research on community extension and service-learning in Philippine HEIs predominantly emphasizes program outcomes and impact metrics, including indicators of community empowerment, service quality, and institutional performance (Albanesi & Compare, 2023; Choi et al., 2023). While these studies provide valuable insights into effectiveness and sustainability, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to students' lived experiences during program implementation. There remains a paucity of research examining how students cognitively and emotionally navigate their roles in community engagement, including the challenges, tensions, and developmental opportunities inherent in these contexts (Delaine et al., 2024; Gordon et al., 2022). Moreover, although broader syntheses highlight the importance of contextual and relational dimensions in extension work, phenomenological investigations focusing specifically on private higher education institutions remain scarce (Resch & Schrittmesser, 2023), despite evidence that institutional context shapes the design and implementation of service-learning initiatives (Fernández-Martín & Ayllón-Salas, 2026).

Addressing these gaps, the present study explores the service-learning experiences of students in a private higher education institution engaged in community extension programs. Employing a phenomenological, student-centered perspective, the study divulges students' narratives, meaning-making processes, and reflective accounts. This aims to elucidate how they interpret their engagement with communities, negotiate their emerging civic identities, and respond to the constraints of mandated extension activities. By generating context-specific and empirically grounded insights, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the transformative dimensions of service-learning as lived by students in private Philippine HEIs.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the lived experiences of students in delivering community extension programs through service learning. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of students in service learning?
2. What challenges do students encounter in delivering community extension programs?
3. How does service-learning influence the personal development of students?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of students who participated in service-learning through the implementation of community extension programs at the Philippine College Foundation Incorporated. Phenomenology was selected because it seeks to understand and describe the essence of individuals lived experiences of a particular phenomenon from their own perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). Through this approach, the study examined how students perceived, interpreted, and assigned meaning to their participation in community engagement activities and how these experiences influenced their personal, civic, and professional development.

Research Participants

The study involved eight (8) undergraduate students who actively participated in institutional community extension programs implemented through service-learning. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that only information-rich individuals capable of providing meaningful descriptions of the phenomenon were included. To qualify for participation, students had to (1) be officially enrolled at the institution during the conduct of the study; (2) have participated in at least three community extension activities within the previous academic year; (3) have been directly involved in planning, implementing, facilitating, or participating in service-learning activities rather than serving solely as observers; and (4) voluntarily agree to participate by

providing informed consent. The participants represented different academic programs and year levels, providing diverse perspectives on service-learning experiences. Their prolonged involvement in community extension activities enabled them to provide rich descriptions of the meanings, challenges, and developmental outcomes associated with community engagement.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to describe their experiences, challenges, reflections, and perceived influence of service-learning on their personal and professional development. Follow-up probing questions were used to clarify responses and obtain deeper descriptions of participants lived experiences. Each individual interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, while each focus group discussion lasted approximately 60–90 minutes. With participants' permission, all interviews and discussions were audio-recorded and supplemented by field notes documenting nonverbal cues, contextual observations, and researchers' reflections. Interviews were conducted primarily in Cebuano and English to allow participants to express themselves comfortably. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and Cebuano excerpts included in the manuscript were translated into English by the researchers while preserving their original meanings. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved, wherein no new themes or meaningful insights emerged from subsequent interviews, indicating that the collected narratives sufficiently represented the phenomenon under investigation.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), consistent with phenomenological inquiry. Initially, all interview transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve immersion in the data and develop familiarity with participants' narratives. Significant statements describing students' service-learning experiences were then identified and assigned initial codes. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into categories representing shared meanings across participants. Through constant comparison and iterative analysis, broader themes were developed to capture the essential structures of students' lived experiences. Emerging themes were continuously reviewed against the original transcripts to ensure that they accurately reflected participants' narratives. Theme names, descriptions, and interpretations were refined through repeated discussions among the researchers until consensus was achieved. The final themes represented the shared meanings that characterized students' experiences of participating in community extension programs through service-learning.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the rigor of the qualitative findings, the study established trustworthiness following the criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with participants during interviews and focus group discussions. Method triangulation was achieved by integrating data obtained from both individual interviews and focus group discussions. In addition, member checking was conducted by presenting summaries of the interpreted findings to selected participants to verify whether the themes accurately reflected their lived experiences. Dependability was established through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting the research process, including methodological decisions, coding procedures, category development, and theme refinement. Regular discussions among the researchers also served as peer debriefing, allowing emerging interpretations to be critically examined and refined. Confirmability was strengthened by maintaining reflexive notes throughout the research process to acknowledge and minimize potential researcher biases. The researchers continuously compared interpretations with participants' original narratives to ensure that findings were grounded in the data rather than personal assumptions. Transferability was facilitated through rich and detailed descriptions of the research context,

participant characteristics, sampling procedures, data collection methods, and analytical processes. These detailed descriptions enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational contexts.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate institutional authority before data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all participants provided written informed consent after receiving a clear explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. To protect confidentiality and anonymity, participants were assigned identification codes (e.g., ST1, ST2, ST3) instead of using their real names. Audio recordings, transcripts, and research documents were securely stored and were accessible only to the researchers. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Throughout the research process, the dignity, privacy, and emotional well-being of all participants were respected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored the lived experiences, challenges, and developmental outcomes of students who delivered community extension programs in the community as part of their civic service initiative at Philippine College Foundation. Through a qualitative phenomenological approach, the narratives reveal rich, multi-layered insights into the transformative potential of service learning as well as the structural and personal barriers inherent in its implementation.

Lived Experiences of Students Participating in Community Extension Services

Community extension services immerse students in authentic social contexts, facilitating learning that extends beyond classroom instruction and promotes personal, civic, and professional development. Through direct engagement with community members, students encounter real-world situations that prompt reflection on their roles as learners, future professionals, and responsible citizens. Employing an interpretative phenomenological approach, this study examined the lived experiences of students who participated in community extension programs at the Philippine College Foundation. Analysis of interview transcripts revealed four interrelated themes: (1) Formation of Social Responsibility, (2) Experiential Learning and Personal Growth, (3) Empathy and Compassion, and (4) Building Meaningful Connections. These themes suggest that community extension is a transformative educational experience that shapes students' values, learning, relationships, and emerging professional identities, rather than merely serving as an extracurricular activity.

Formation of Social Responsibility

The prominent theme identified in participants' narratives was the development of social responsibility. Students consistently described their involvement in community extension activities as a pivotal experience that transformed their understanding of education and their roles in society. Before participating, several students viewed academic learning primarily as a means of achieving degree requirements. However, direct engagement with community members broadened their perspectives, leading to recognition of the social purpose of education. Through these experiences, participants came to give value that, even as students, they possessed knowledge and skills that could positively impact the lives of others, as highlighted by the account of ST3, who shared, *"Sa pag-participate nako, na-realize gyud nako nga even as students, naa diay mi ma-contribute sa society."* (Participating made me realize that even as students, we can contribute to society.) Rather than viewing social change as the exclusive responsibility of established professionals, the participants recognized that students also play meaningful roles in addressing community concerns.

Similarly, ST1 emphasized the transformative effect of community engagement on personal values by stating, *"Na-open gyud akong eyes sa kaimportante sa pag-help sa uban."* (It opened my eyes to the importance of helping others.) For this participant, service-learning fostered a deeper appreciation for altruism and community involvement. The experience extended beyond fulfilling academic requirements, prompting a reassessment of personal priorities and highlighting the ethical responsibility to use education in the service of others. Exposure

to diverse community realities encouraged the participant to regard helping others as essential to becoming an educated and socially responsible professional. Participants also described how these experiences inspired a sustained commitment to community service. As ST5 reflected, *"This experience really inspired me to return and give back to my community in the future."* This narrative suggests that participation in community extension influenced both immediate learning outcomes and future intentions. Such reflections indicate that service-learning foster enduring civic commitment by nurturing intrinsic motivation to contribute to community development throughout a professional career.

Another participant further emphasized the broader purpose of education, stating, *"Narealize nako nga ang learning dili lang para sa akong sarili, but dapat makatabang pud sa uban."* (I realized learning should benefit others, not just myself.) (ST2) This statement reflects a transformation in the participant's educational philosophy. Knowledge was no longer regarded solely as a means of personal advancement but as a resource to be shared for the benefit of others. These perspectives demonstrate that community extension experiences encouraged students to redefine academic success in terms of social contribution rather than individual achievement.

These findings align with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which posits that meaningful learning occurs when experience is transformed into knowledge through reflection. By engaging directly with community members, students moved beyond abstract classroom concepts and developed a deeper understanding of the social implications of their education. Similarly, Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991) suggests that significant experiences can challenge existing assumptions and prompt individuals to reconstruct their perspectives. The participants' narratives illustrate this process of perspective transformation as they redefined education from a personal endeavor to a socially responsive practice. The present findings are further supported by contemporary service-learning research. In a systematic review, Celio et al. (2011) concluded that service-learning significantly enhances students' sense of personal and social responsibility while strengthening civic engagement through meaningful community participation. Similarly, Gordon et al. (2022) found that community-engaged learning promotes empathy and prosocial orientations, particularly when students participate in authentic interactions with community members and engage in structured reflection. More recently, Plessas et al. (2024) reported that community-engaged educational experiences contribute to students' development of social accountability, empathy, and professional identity by exposing them to the realities and needs of diverse communities. These studies reinforce the present findings by demonstrating that service-learning extends beyond academic achievement to cultivate socially responsible graduates who acknowledge the ethical responsibility to use their knowledge and skills for the common good of others.

Experiential Learning and Personal Growth

The second theme identified in participants' narratives is Experiential Learning and Personal Growth. Participants consistently described their experiences as opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in authentic community contexts, thereby moving beyond theoretical learning. These experiences enabled participants to strengthen their grasp of academic concepts and develop communication skills, adaptability, and a greater appreciation of their abilities. The narratives suggest that meaningful learning resulted from active participation, reflection, and engagement with real-world situations, supporting growth as both learners and individuals. One participant explained that teaching community members significantly enhanced understanding of classroom lessons: *"Pag-teach namo sa community, mas nasabtan gyud nako ang lessons sa mas malalum nga paagi."* (Teaching helped me understand lessons more deeply.) (ST6) This reflection demonstrates that teaching others extends the participant's learning process. Instead of simply recalling classroom information, the participant needed to organize, interpret, and communicate knowledge in ways accessible and relevant to community members.

Similarly, another participant emphasized that knowledge became more meaningful when it was shared with others, *"Mas meaningful ang learning kung ma-share nimo siya sa uban."* (Learning became more meaningful when shared.) (ST7) This statement reflects a shift from viewing education as an individual endeavor to recognizing learning as a collaborative, socially responsive process that shares knowledge, transforming academic learning into a meaningful experience, as participants observed the practical value of their education.

Rather than measuring success solely through examinations or grades, students experienced fulfillment when their knowledge addressed community needs. These reflections suggest that learning acquires greater significance when it leads to positive outcomes beyond the classroom. Another participant further emphasized the practical application of academic knowledge, *"Nakita gyud nako how the knowledge we learned can be applied in real life."* (It showed how knowledge applies in real life.) (ST8) The participant's account emphasizes the importance of authentic learning environments in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Through community engagement, participants developed a clearer appreciation of the practical implications of their academic preparation and gained confidence in applying their knowledge to real-life problems.

Beyond academic learning, participants consistently described how community engagement contributed to their personal development. For many, interacting with community members improved their confidence and interpersonal skills. As ST2 shared, *"Mas naging confident ko sa pag-interact sa other people."* (I became more confident interacting with others.) The participant's statement suggests that repeated engagement with diverse individuals gradually reduced feelings of hesitation and uncertainty. Through authentic interactions, students developed greater confidence in communicating with people from various backgrounds, thereby strengthening interpersonal competence beyond academic contexts. Such experiences are particularly valuable for future professionals whose careers require effective communication, collaboration, and community engagement. Community extension also provided opportunities for self-discovery. As ST5 explained, *"Na-discover nako nga naa diay koy skills nga wala pa nako nahibal-an before."* (I discovered skills I did not know I had.) This reflection suggests that authentic community experiences enabled students to identify strengths that had previously remained unrecognized in traditional classroom environments. By assuming responsibilities, collaborating with others, and responding to community needs, participants became more aware of their capabilities in leadership, communication, organization, and problem-solving. Participants likewise described community engagement as an experience that challenged them to move beyond familiar routines. As ST7 remarked, *"Na-push gyud ko outside my comfort zone."* (It pushed me outside my comfort zone.) Entering unfamiliar environments requires students to adapt to new situations, interact with diverse groups, and respond to unexpected challenges.

The present findings are supported by contemporary literature on service-learning and experiential education. A systematic review by Culcasi and Paz Fontana Venegas (2023) concluded that participation in service-learning consistently improves communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and other transferable competencies essential for professional practice. Plessas et al. (2024) further reported that community-engaged education substantially contributes to students' professional identity formation, communication skills, confidence, and social accountability by exposing learners to authentic community contexts. Likewise, Salam et al. (2019), in a comprehensive review of service-learning in higher education, emphasized that meaningful community engagement promotes holistic student development by integrating academic learning with civic responsibility and personal growth. Collectively, these studies reinforce the present findings by demonstrating that experiential learning enables students to develop not only disciplinary knowledge but also the interpersonal, reflective, and professional competencies required in an increasingly complex society.

Empathy and Compassion

A third theme identified in the participants lived experiences was the development of empathy and compassion. Students described community extension services as opportunities to encounter realities that differ substantially from their own. Direct interactions with community members enabled participants to appreciate others' challenges, fostering greater emotional sensitivity and a deeper understanding of diverse life circumstances. Rather than observing social issues from a distance, participants engaged with them through personal encounters, fostering empathy through genuine human relationships. These experiences broadened perspectives and nurtured a stronger sense of compassion toward individuals and communities facing adversity.

One participant reflected on the emotional impact of listening to community members' personal experiences: *"Pagpaminaw nako sa ilang stories, mas naging empathetic gyud ko sa ilang situation."* (Listening to their stories made me more empathetic to their situation.) (ST5) This statement illustrates that empathy develops through attentive listening and meaningful interpersonal interaction, rather than through observation alone. By hearing firsthand accounts of community members' daily struggles, the student moved beyond intellectual awareness of

social issues toward emotional understanding. Such encounters enabled participants to recognize the human experiences underlying social and economic challenges. This finding suggests that authentic dialogue with community members serves as a powerful catalyst for empathy, enabling students to connect with individuals on a personal rather than abstract level. Similarly, ST1 described how community engagement deepened understanding of other people's lives: *"Mas nasabtan gyud nako ang ilang kahimtang ug ang mga struggles nga ilang giatubang."* (I developed a deeper understanding of others and the struggles they face.) Participants developed a more nuanced appreciation of the complexities surrounding community members' circumstances. Direct exposure encouraged students to suspend assumptions and consider the social, economic, and personal factors influencing people's lives. Such understanding represents an important aspect of perspective-taking, allowing participants to recognize that broader contextual realities shape individual experiences.

Another participant described how these encounters influenced personal appreciation and gratitude: *"This experience made me appreciate more kung unsa ang naa nako karon."* (It made me appreciate what I have.) (ST2) Rather than evoking pity, the participant's reflection indicates that community engagement fostered self-reflection and gratitude. Encountering the realities community members face prompted the participant to reassess personal circumstances and recognize previously unacknowledged privileges. Such experiences demonstrate that empathy involves not only understanding others but also encourages critical reflection on one's own life and social position.

These narratives suggest that empathy develops through sustained interpersonal engagement rather than brief acts of service. Listening to personal stories, interacting with community members, and reflecting on these experiences enabled participants to develop greater emotional awareness, compassion, and sensitivity toward social realities. These findings indicate that community extension services create learning environments where emotional development occurs alongside academic learning, thereby contributing to students' holistic formation as socially responsible individuals. Recent empirical research further supports these findings (Mahmud & Ismail, 2024). A systematic review and meta-analysis by Gordon et al. (2022) found that service-learning has a significant positive effect on university students' empathy, with direct interaction with community members identified as the primary mechanism through which empathy develops. Moreover, Choi et al. (2023) found that meaningful service-learning experiences emerged when students addressed real community needs, collaborated closely with community members, and reflected critically on their experiences. Their participants reported that these authentic interactions expanded both personal and academic learning while encouraging greater awareness of their own abilities and social responsibilities (Rodriguez-Gallego et al. (2024). The emphasis on reflection and reciprocal engagement observed in their study closely mirrors the participants' experiences in the present investigation.

Building Meaningful Connections

The fourth theme identified in participants' narratives is Building Meaningful Connections, highlighting how community extension services fostered reciprocal relationships between students and community members. Beyond delivering extension activities, participants described these experiences as opportunities for mutual respect and enduring relationships. Students recognized themselves not only as providers of knowledge or assistance but also as learners who benefited from community members' insights. These reciprocal interactions transformed community extension into a collaborative partnership, enabling both students and beneficiaries to learn from one another. Such experiences cultivated the importance of authentic community engagement.

One participant recalled feeling immediately accepted by the community upon their arrival: *"Pag-abot pa lang namo, na-feel gyud nako nga welcome mi sa community."* (I felt welcomed by the community.) (ST4) This statement illustrates that feelings of acceptance established a positive foundation for meaningful engagement. Warm reception reduced anxiety and encouraged students to interact openly with community members. The participant's reflection indicates that a welcoming environment fostered trust, enabling more authentic communication and collaboration throughout the extension activities. These experiences suggest that meaningful community engagement depends not only on the services provided but also on the quality of interpersonal relationships between students and community members. Participants also described how expressions of gratitude from community members became memorable aspects of the experience. As ST7 reflected, *"Ang ilang*

gratitude maoy usa sa mga butang nga dili gyud nako malimtan."(Their gratitude made the experience unforgettable.) Rather than viewing gratitude solely as appreciation for services rendered, the participant interpreted these expressions as evidence that their efforts held genuine value. Feeling appreciated reinforced the significance of their contributions and strengthened their commitment to community service. The emotional impact of receiving gratitude encouraged participants to recognize that meaningful engagement involves mutual appreciation, respect, and acknowledgment between universities and communities.

Another participant emphasized that learning occurred in both directions: *"Murag mutual learning gyud siya kay dili lang sila ang nakat-on, kami pud."*(It felt like mutual learning because we also learned from them.) (ST3) This reflection highlights reciprocity as a defining characteristic of authentic service-learning. Rather than assuming the role of experts transferring knowledge to community members, participants acknowledged that communities possess valuable experiences, indigenous knowledge, and practical wisdom that students could also learn from. This recognition challenged traditional assumptions that learning occurs exclusively within educational institutions and emphasized the importance of respecting communities as equal partners in the educational process. Participants believed that the relationships they established would endure beyond the completion of the extension program. As ST5 shared, *"Kabalo ko nga ang connection nga among nabuild magpabilin gyud."*(The connections we built will stay with me.) The participants regarded these connections not as temporary interactions but as meaningful relationships that would continue to influence personal values and future community engagement.

Collectively, these narratives indicate that community extension services created opportunities for students to develop genuine relationships grounded in trust, mutual respect, and reciprocity. Rather than serving as one-directional outreach initiatives, the extension activities became collaborative learning experiences in which students and community members shared knowledge, experiences, and aspirations. These findings reinforce the perspective that relationship-building is central to meaningful community engagement and constitutes an essential outcome of service-learning. The findings align with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), which emphasizes that learning is fundamentally a social process occurring through interaction with others. Participants' narratives demonstrate that knowledge was co-constructed through dialogue, collaboration, and shared experiences with community members. Similarly, Lave and Wenger's (1991) Situated Learning Theory posits that learning occurs through participation within authentic communities of practice. By engaging directly with community members, students became active participants in social contexts where learning emerged through interaction, collaboration, and shared problem-solving.

Contemporary literature further supports these findings. Salam et al. (2019) concluded that reciprocal partnerships between universities and communities are fundamental to successful service-learning because they promote mutual learning, collaboration, and sustainable community engagement. Similarly, Bringle et al. (2022) argued that high-quality service-learning is characterized by reciprocal relationships in which students and community partners are recognized as co-educators and co-learners rather than as providers and recipients of knowledge. This perspective closely aligns with participants' descriptions of mutual learning and shared growth. Plessas et al. (2024) found that community-engaged educational experiences strengthen students' communication skills, professional identity, and appreciation of collaborative partnerships by encouraging respectful interaction with diverse populations. Likewise, Choi et al. (2023) reported that students considered reciprocal relationships with community members among the most meaningful aspects of service-learning because these interactions promoted trust, mutual respect, and authentic learning beyond the classroom (Gracia-Romero et al., 2024). Collectively, these studies affirm that meaningful relationships are not merely by-products of community extension but constitute one of its most significant educational outcomes.

Challenges Encountered by Students in Community Extension Services

While students described community extension services as meaningful and transformative learning experiences, they also acknowledged several challenges encountered throughout their participation. The findings indicate that students faced both academic and personal demands, requiring them to balance institutional responsibilities with community engagement. In addition, they expressed concerns regarding their preparedness for community work, particularly during the early stages of their participation. Despite these challenges, participants consistently

viewed these difficulties as opportunities for growth rather than barriers to learning. Analysis of the interview transcripts generated two interrelated themes: (1) Navigating Academic and Personal Demands (2) Developing Readiness For Community Engagement.

Navigating Academic and Personal Demands

One of the most significant challenges experienced by the participants was balancing the competing demands of academic responsibilities and community extension activities. While students recognized the educational value of participating in extension programs, they acknowledged that fulfilling course requirements alongside community engagements often created pressure and required careful time management. Beyond academic workload, participants described the emotional demands of witnessing the realities faced by community members. Although these experiences were emotionally challenging, they ultimately strengthened participants' resilience and reinforced their commitment to community service.

The challenge of balancing multiple responsibilities was evident in the account of ST6, who shared: *"Lisod usahay i-balance ang school requirements ug ang participation sa extension activities."* (It is challenging to balance school requirements and participation in extension activities.) This statement reflects the tension students experienced as they attempted to meet academic expectations while remaining actively involved in community programs. The narrative highlights that although service-learning offers valuable educational opportunities, students often face competing priorities that require effective planning and self-management.

Similarly, ST4 described the emotional pressure associated with managing these multiple responsibilities: *"Naay mga panahon nga ma-overwhelm gyud ko sa pag-manage sa akong school ug extension responsibilities."* (There are times when I feel overwhelmed managing both responsibilities.) The participant's reflection suggests that the demands of academic work and community engagement occasionally exceeded personal coping capacity. Feelings of being overwhelmed emerged not because participants lacked commitment, but because they were expected to perform well in multiple roles simultaneously. Nevertheless, the participant's willingness to continue participating indicates a strong sense of responsibility and dedication despite these pressures. Another participant expressed a similar concern: *"Gusto gyud ko mo-participate actively, pero usahay ang academic workload maoy makapugong sa akong involvement."* (I want to participate actively, but academic workload sometimes limits my involvement.) (ST3) This narrative illustrates the conflict between motivation and practical constraints. Participants demonstrated genuine enthusiasm for community engagement; however, academic obligations occasionally reduced their ability to participate fully. The finding suggests that institutional scheduling and workload distribution play important roles in determining students' level of engagement in extension activities.

Beyond academic responsibilities, participants described emotional challenges arising from their interactions with community members. Direct exposure to the lived realities of underserved populations often generated strong emotional responses. As ST4 reflected, *"Makabug-at usahay sa pagbati ang makita ang mga struggles sa community."* (Seeing the struggles of the community can be emotionally overwhelming.) This statement demonstrates that authentic community engagement involves not only intellectual learning but also emotional investment. Encountering poverty, limited resources, and other social realities prompted participants to experience empathy, concern, and emotional discomfort. Likewise, ST5 explained: *"Napa-realize ko ani nga dili gyud sayon ang kinabuhi sa uban."* (It made me realize how difficult life can be for others.) This reflection indicates that community immersion challenged participants' assumptions about everyday life and encouraged greater awareness of social inequality. Exposure to different living conditions broadened students' perspectives and deepened their appreciation of the diverse circumstance's others experience. Such realizations contributed to the development of social consciousness while simultaneously creating emotional challenges that required reflection and personal adjustment. Despite these emotional demands, participants consistently described them as motivating rather than discouraging. As ST7 stated, *"Bisan lisod emotionally, mas na-motivate hinuon ko nga mutabang pa."* (Despite this, it motivated me to help more.) Experiencing the realities faced by community members strengthened students' determination to continue serving others and reinforced the purpose of community extension activities. This finding suggests that emotional discomfort, when accompanied by appropriate reflection and institutional support, may contribute to students' personal resilience and long-term commitment to social responsibility.

The present findings are supported by contemporary literature. Salam et al. (2019) reported that although service-learning promotes substantial academic and personal development, students frequently identify time constraints, competing academic responsibilities, and logistical concerns as barriers to sustained participation. Similarly, Resch and Schrittmesser (2023) found that balancing university coursework with community engagement remains one of the most commonly reported challenges in higher-education service-learning programs, underscoring the importance of institutional support and flexible program design. In addition, Bringle and Clayton (2021) argued that meaningful civic learning often involves navigating ambiguity, emotional complexity, and competing responsibilities, all of which contribute to students' development as reflective and socially responsible professionals. Furthermore, Ross et al. (2024) highlighted that structured reflection enables students to make sense of complex and demanding learning experiences, thereby fostering deeper personal growth and professional development.

Developing Readiness for Community Engagement

The second theme identified in participants' narratives is the development of readiness for community engagement. While students expressed willingness to participate in community extension activities, they initially reported uncertainty about their ability to engage effectively with community members. This perceived inadequacy was primarily attributed to limited experience, unfamiliarity with community settings, and uncertainty regarding communication with diverse groups. These initial apprehensions diminished as participants gained practical experience through active involvement in extension programs. The narratives suggest that readiness for community engagement is a developmental process fostered by structured preparation, authentic participation, and reflective learning, rather than an inherent characteristic.

One participant described experiencing uncertainty during the initial stages of community engagement: *"Sa una, murag dili pa gyud ko prepared makig-interact sa community members."* (At first, I felt unprepared to interact with community members.) (ST2) This statement illustrates the anxiety commonly experienced when entering unfamiliar social environments. Although participants possessed academic knowledge relevant to extension activities, they questioned their ability to establish meaningful relationships with community members. The participant's uncertainty demonstrates that effective community engagement requires interpersonal competence in addition to disciplinary expertise. These findings indicate that students often perceive a gap between classroom preparation and the practical realities of community work. Similarly, another participant reported uncertainty regarding communication during extension activities: *"Dili ko sure unsaon pag-communicate effectively during the activities."* (I was unsure how to communicate effectively during the activities.) (ST4) This reflection highlights communication as a significant challenge encountered during community engagement. Participants recognized that effective communication within community settings requires more than the transmission of information. It involves adapting language, demonstrating empathy, actively listening, and responding appropriately to community members' needs and experiences. This realization emphasizes the importance of communication as a professional competency developed through authentic interaction rather than classroom instruction alone.

Another participant emphasized the necessity of additional preparation before participating in community extension activities: *"Narealize nako nga kinahanglan pa gyud mi og mas daghang training before mo-engage sa community work."* (I realized that we need more training before engaging in community work.) (ST7) This reflection indicates that participants regarded structured preparation as essential for effective community engagement. Rather than perceiving their uncertainty as a personal weakness, students recognized that community work requires specific competencies that should be intentionally developed through orientation programs, communication workshops, simulation activities, and guided mentoring. Such preparation enables students to approach community engagement with greater confidence and enhances the quality of interactions between universities and community partners.

Recent empirical literature corroborates these findings. Resch and Schrittmesser (2023) reported that a primary challenge for students in service-learning programs is the perception of insufficient preparation for community engagement. Their systematic review emphasized that comprehensive orientation, faculty mentoring, reflective activities, and continuous guidance significantly improve students' confidence and effectiveness during

community-based learning. Similarly, Salam et al. (2019) identified pre-service preparation and structured reflection as essential components of successful service-learning programs, as these practices help students integrate academic knowledge with practical community engagement. Bringle and Clayton (2021) further argued that meaningful civic learning requires intentional educational design that prepares students with disciplinary, interpersonal, ethical, and reflective competencies. Their work highlights that community engagement should be scaffolded through structured preparation and continuous reflection to maximize learning outcomes. The participants' experiences in the present study reinforce this perspective, demonstrating that confidence and competence develop gradually through guided participation rather than prior expertise alone.

Influence of Service Learning on Students' Development

The thematic analysis revealed that service-learning contributed to students' holistic development through three interconnected dimensions: (1) The Formation of Civic Identity and Social Responsibility, (2) Development of Professional Competence and Personal Transformation, and (3) Enhanced Social Awareness and Career Direction. These findings demonstrate that service-learning serves as a transformative educational approach that extends learning beyond the classroom by fostering students' personal growth, professional readiness, and commitment to community engagement.

Formation of Civic Identity and Social Responsibility.

The most common themes concerning students' developmental outcomes were the Formation of Civic Identity and Social Responsibility. According to the participants, community extension services were transformative for their identities as students and future professionals. Having been in contact with communities for several weeks made students realize that learning is not solely for personal benefit; there is also a corresponding responsibility towards societal progress.

These students' narratives signify progression from a personal concept of learning to an understanding that knowledge serves as a tool for the betterment of the community. Their civic awareness was developed, and their social responsiveness as professionals was reinforced through these experiences. One participant noted, "*Sa pag-participate nako sa program, narealize gyud nako nga bisan estudyante pa lang mi, naa diay mi mahimo para makatabang sa society.*" (Participating in the program shaped my sense of responsibility to society, making me realize that even as a student, I have a role in helping improve the lives of others.) (ST3). This remark revealed a shift from an individual orientation toward their roles as students to a more communitarian perspective. The student is beginning to see himself as more than an agent of learning; he is an individual who can influence his social environment. Being in a community allowed the participant to transcend the belief that only professionals serve society; they realized that, even as students, they have the power to initiate change.

It shows that through service-learning, students are forming a commitment to civic responsibility. Another participant linked their experiences to professional identity: "*Na-realize nako nga as a future professional, dili lang diay dapat ang akong goal kay personal success; kinahanglan pud nga makatabang ko sa community.*" (It made me realize that as a future professional, I am not only expected to succeed for myself but also to contribute meaningfully to the community.) (ST4). Students have moved towards a broader definition of success for the future professional, not only in terms of their individual accomplishments but also in their ability to assist others and their willingness to engage in community service. Another participant echoed the notion of sharing education as a social responsibility, saying, "*Ang experience nakapadasig nako nga mubalik ug mutabang sa future kay ang education dili lang para sa sarili, dapat ma-share pud para makatabang sa uban.*" (The experience inspired me to give back, reminding me that education should not be self-serving but shared for the benefit of others.) (ST5).

According to Bringle & Clayton (2021), community engagement can develop civic learning by making students aware of their relationships with communities and their responsibilities within social systems, and by fostering students' civic dispositions. Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991) can also explain these results. This theory emphasizes that education is not just the transfer of knowledge but also entails shifts in perspective that arise when individuals reflect critically on their beliefs and assumptions. These students, by engaging with

communities and experiencing firsthand the impact of education on others' lives, were able to reinterpret their role as students and as future professionals (Aramburuzabala, & Cerrillo, 2023). These results are consistent with those reported by Celio and McDowell (2011), which showed that service-learning fosters civility and civic engagement and provides students with a greater understanding of social issues. Bringle & Clayton (2021) further highlight that civic learning is one of the more consistent positive outcomes of service-learning, as it is seen as developing commitments to society.

Development of Professional Competence and Personal Transformation

The second theme that emerged in this study concerning student development was the development of Professional Competence and Personal Transformation. Participants reported that community extension services provided significant opportunities to develop practical skills, build confidence, and realize their latent capacities, which were not necessarily evident in conventional classroom environments. By interacting directly with community members, students cultivated crucial skills including communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and problem-solving. Beyond the skills they acquired, participants underwent a personal transformation as they learned to manage challenging new experiences, accept responsibility, and gain confidence in themselves. These narratives demonstrate that community extension serves as a potent educational platform for the parallel development of learners and individuals to become future professionals. *"Tungod sa among pag-interact sa community members, mas na-improve gyud akong communication skills, labi na sa pag-explain sa ideas nga mas simple ug mas masabtan nila."* (Through interacting with community members, I significantly improved my communication skills, especially in explaining ideas in simple and understandable ways.) (ST2) This response illustrates that community engagement provided a real-world space for practicing communication skills in an arena far removed from classroom discourse. In community-based interactions, the students had to adapt their communication to match the knowledge base, experience, and learning styles of individuals quite different from themselves, unlike when communicating with other students who share similar educational backgrounds. This fostered the ability to transform complex knowledge into comprehensible ideas, a crucial competence for the working professional.

Moreover, ST4 stated that *"Ang activities nakatabang gyud nako sa pag-develop sa teamwork ug leadership skills kay nakat-on ko unsaon pag-collaborate, pag-take initiative, ug pag-support sa uban during the program."* (The activities helped me develop teamwork and leadership skills, as I learned how to collaborate, take initiative, and support others during the program.). This is indicative of the real-world context of the extension activities, which encouraged teamwork and leadership skills and were developed in practice rather than through purely didactic means. Taking part in extension activities required students to collaborate and problem-solve, and to learn the dynamics of working effectively with others in group projects that addressed real needs, thereby providing ample opportunities for leadership development. One of the participants also posited that *"Mas nahimo kong confident sa pag-express sa akong kaugalingon ug pakig-engage sa lain-laing klase sa mga tawo, nga para nako makatabang gyud sa akong future career."* (I became more confident in expressing myself and engaging with different kinds of people, which will help me in my future career.) (ST3). The ability to feel confident and interact with a diverse group of people is seen as an integral skill that will contribute positively to the participant's future career. This development of self-efficacy through community engagement means the student feels prepared to engage in and tackle a broader spectrum of interactions than is typically experienced in a university setting.

Participants shared their experience on how service learning influences their skills to handle responsibilities. ST5 stated, *"Nakat-on ko nga naa diay koy mga strengths nga wala nako nahibaloan sauna, labi na sa pag-handle ug responsibilities ug pakig-interact sa uban."* (The experience allowed me to discover strengths I never knew I had, particularly in handling responsibilities and interacting with others.) This participant has been able to tap into new potential and discover aspects of her personality and aptitude that had previously lain dormant, thereby bolstering her sense of personal competence. Community engagement provided the context for this self-discovery. *"Nakahimo ko nga mas independent kay nakat-on ko mo-adjust sa bag-ong environment ug mga sitwasyon gawas sa classroom."* (I became more independent as I learned to adapt to new environments and situations outside the classroom.) (ST2). This quote demonstrates the development of the participants' personal independence. Through experience dealing with novel situations and a range of circumstances, the students

learned to adapt to them, thereby increasing their self-reliance. *“Na-push gyud ko nga mogawas sa akong comfort zone. Dili siya sayon, pero nakatabang gyud siya nga motubo ko dili lang academically kundi personally pud.”* (It pushed me to grow not only academically but also personally, as I stepped out of my comfort zone and faced real-life challenges.) (ST3). This participant’s experience reflects a personal transformation as the student willingly confronted uncomfortable situations in the interest of personal growth. The development evident in the participant’s words stems from facing the challenges and demands of stepping beyond their previously held perceived limits. These experiences suggest that community extension services act as effective mechanisms for developing students’ professional and personal competencies simultaneously. Through interaction with their communities, students gained critical interpersonal skills, enhanced their confidence, and cultivated greater self-awareness. Crucially, this learning occurred through active participation, reflection, and genuine engagement with others, highlighting community extension as a high-impact learning experience for professional preparedness and personal maturity.

These findings are well supported by Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, which posits that learning is a process of continuously circulating through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Student interaction with community members constitutes the concrete experience through which students reflect on and build their professional and personal skills and abilities, thereby consolidating learning. Their gains in confidence and interpersonal skills demonstrate how authentic experience translates into professional competence. Similarly, these findings align with Bandura’s (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, specifically the concept of self-efficacy. Participants’ success across a range of new tasks and challenges within the community context enabled them to build greater confidence in their abilities, empowering them to take further initiative in their professional roles in the future. Furthermore, existing literature strongly suggests the benefits of service-learning experiences for students’ development of professional competencies. Salam et al. (2019) argue that service learning promotes the development of transferable skills, including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership. This is because students get to practice applying academic skills to real-world problems and situations. Studies such as that by Celio et al. (2011) also identified service learning’s contribution to improved student academic and personal outcomes, as well as the enhancement of their interpersonal competencies. More recently, research highlights the value of community-engaged learning in developing professional identity by having students practice professional roles in authentic settings and meet real needs.

Social Awareness and Career Direction

The third major theme identified in students’ development is social awareness and career direction. Participants characterized community extension activities as opportunities to deepen their understanding of societal realities and to reconsider their future career trajectories. Through substantive interactions with community members, participants reported heightened empathy, appreciation, and awareness of others’ challenges. These encounters prompted participants to reflect on the purpose of their education and led them to realize that their future careers could serve as avenues for meaningful societal impact.

Participants explained that the service experience enabled them to transcend personal boundaries as ST3 stated: *“Pagpaminaw nako sa ilang mga istorya, mas naging empathetic gyud ko sa ilang situation.* (Listening to the stories of community members made me more empathetic, as I began to understand the struggles they face in their daily lives.) This testimony indicates that service-learning enhanced students’ capacity for empathy. Rather than perceiving social issues as abstract or distant, students engaged directly with the lived realities of community members. This engagement enabled them to more fully appreciate the circumstances, challenges, and aspirations of others. The findings indicate that, beyond fostering cognitive awareness of social issues, service-learning enables students to respond to social concerns with empathy and understanding. Supporting this observation, ST5 described how the experience broadened her perspective: *“Nakatabang siya nga makita nako ang kinabuhi sa laing perspective, dili lang base sa akong kaugalingong experience.* (It helped me see life from a different perspective, allowing me to understand others beyond my own experiences.)

This testimony illustrates a shift in participants’ focus from themselves to the broader community, as they recognized that diverse social and economic conditions affect individuals differently. Consequently, service-

learning experiences broaden students' perspectives. Another participant emphasized increased awareness and appreciation for personal opportunities resulting from community extension: *"Nausab gyud akong panan-aw kay mas na-aware ko sa social realities ug mas na-appreciate nako ang mga opportunities nga naa nako."* (The experience changed my perspective by making me more aware of social realities and more appreciative of the opportunities I have.) (ST8). This demonstrates how the experience prompted students to reflect on social issues, increasing their awareness of the community's socioeconomic realities and fostering appreciation for their own circumstances. Such reflection can inform students' understanding of how to apply their skills and education. In addition to broadening awareness, participants described how community engagement influenced their future career aspirations.

ST4 noted: *"Ang pag-participate nako sa program naka-influence sa akong future goals kay nahuna-hunaan nako ang mga career nga involve sa pagtabang ug pag-serve sa uban.* (Participating in the program influenced my future goals, as it made me consider careers that involve helping and serving others.) These findings suggest that students' interactions with the community broadened their consideration of professions focused on social responsibility and service. The experience encouraged students to reorient their aspirations to include serving community needs in their future careers. Similarly, ST2 reflected on how the service experience clarified the purpose of her education: *"Mas nakita nako akong purpose kay narealize nako nga akong education pwede gamiton para makahimo ug positive impact sa society.* (It helped me see my purpose more clearly, realizing that my education can be used to make a positive impact in society.) This quote demonstrates that, through these experiences, students come to appreciate the value of their education in effecting positive change and serving society. Rather than focusing exclusively on personal career achievements, they recognize the importance of making a positive social impact. *"Ang experience nakaguide sa akong career direction kay nakita nako ang klase sa professional nga gusto nako mahimong socially responsible ug community oriented."* (The experience guided my career direction by showing me the professional I aspire to become, someone who is socially responsible and community oriented.) (ST3). This testimony highlights how community experiences facilitated the formation of students' professional identities. Students articulated a clearer vision of the professionals they aspire to become individuals with strong ethical principles and a commitment to community well-being.

The findings indicate that service extension activities helped students develop a more defined and purpose-driven career direction by broadening their understanding of how their future professional roles can contribute to societal improvement. Celio et al. (2011) found that students' civic engagement, interpersonal development, understanding of social issues, social awareness, and knowledge are strengthened through service-learning experiences. More recently, Bringle and Clayton (2021) highlighted that civic learning can result from service-learning experiences, enabling students to recognize their civic responsibilities and commitments to social participation. Salam et al. (2019) reported that service-learning is an effective pedagogical tool for enhancing students' personal and professional development by connecting academic learning with meaningful community action.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study reveals that the essence of students' service-learning experiences lies in the transformation of education from a primarily academic pursuit into a meaningful commitment to community engagement and social responsibility. Through authentic interactions with community members, students developed deeper empathy, civic consciousness, professional competence, and a stronger sense of purpose, recognizing that their knowledge and skills can contribute to the well-being of others. Although they encountered challenges in balancing academic demands, adapting to community settings, and managing the emotional realities of service, these experiences became catalysts for resilience, reflective learning, and personal growth. Ultimately, service-learning emerged as a reciprocal and transformative process in which students not only served communities but were themselves reshaped into more socially responsible, community-oriented, and professionally prepared individuals. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening service-learning through sustained institutional support, structured reflection, and meaningful institution–community partnerships to maximize its transformative educational potential.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers extend their gratitude to the Community Extension Services for leading the service-learning initiative of the institution. To students for sharing their meaningful experiences, challenges, and development stories. To the extension coordinators from each department for facilitating service-learning activities. To the Philippine College Foundation Incorporated, which paved the way for the success of this study.

REFERENCES

1. Albanesi, C., & Compare, C. (2023). Integrating Academic Learning: Promoting Civic Engagement, Responsibility, and Social Justice through Service-Learning. *Form@re - Open Journal Per La Formazione in Rete*, 23(2), 80–92. <https://doi.org/10.36253/form-14684>
2. Aramburuzabala, P., & Cerrillo, R. (2023). Service-Learning as an Approach to Educating for Sustainable Development. *Sustainability*, 15(14), 11231. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151411231>
3. Angco, R. J. N. (2026). Bridging academia and communities through higher education extension programs in the Philippines: a meta-synthesis toward theory generation. *Front. Educ.* 11:1764682. doi: 10.3389/educ.2026.1764682
4. Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W. H. Freeman.
5. Bartolo, Z. J., Catoras, K. T., Jernalim, T. M. S., Lagudgud, J. R. E., & Sta. Ana, P. J. S. (2024). Student satisfaction with the service quality in a private higher education institution [Unpublished bachelor's special paper]. Central Philippine University.
6. Bringle, R. G., & Clayton, P. H. (2021). Civic learning: A sine qua non of service learning. *Frontiers in Education*, 6, Article 606443. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.606443>
7. Bringle, R. G., Reeb, R. N., Naudé, L., Ruiz, A. I., & Ong, F. (2023). Service learning. In J. Zumbach et al. (Eds.), *International Handbook of Psychology Learning and Teaching*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28745-0_61
8. Bringle, R. G., Ruiz, A. I., Brown, M. A., & Reeb, R. N. (2016). Enhancing the psychology curriculum through service learning. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, 15(3), 294–309. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475725716659966>
9. Bringle, R.G., Reeb, R.N., Naudé, L., Ruiz, A.I., Ong, F. (2022). Service Learning. In: Zumbach, J., Bernstein, D., Narciss, S., Marsico, G. (eds) *International Handbook of Psychology Learning and Teaching*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26248-8_61-3
10. Celio, C. I., Durlak, J., & Dymnicki, A. (2011). The impact of service-learning on students: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 34(2), 164–181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105382591103400205>
11. Choi, Y., Han, J., & Kim, H. (2023). Exploring key service-learning experiences that promote students' learning in higher education. *Asia Pacific Education Review*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-023-09833-5>
12. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
13. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2020). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
14. Culcasi, I., & Paz Fontana Venegas, R. (2023). Service-learning and soft skills in higher education: A systematic literature review. *Form@re – Open Journal per la Formazione in Rete*, 23(2), 24–43. <https://doi.org/10.36253/form-14639>
15. Dalagan, J.Q. , Obedencio, M., Labitad, L., Garciano, A., Urduja, A., Adarlo, G., Arcena, L., Sagaral, A., Abo-abo, D., Besenio, M., Ramos, R., Nubla, F.M., Austero, R., y Emmanuel, M. (2021). Extent of implementation of service-learning in five Jesuit Universities in the Philippines. *RIDAS, Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje Servicio*, 12, 71-79. DOI10.1344/RIDAS2021.12.8
16. Delaine, D. A., Redick, S., Radhakrishnan, D., Shermadou, A., Smith, M. M., Kandakatla, R., Wang, L., Freitas, C., Dalton, C. L., Dostilio, L. D., & DeBoer, J. (2024). A systematic literature review of

- reciprocity in engineering service-learning/community engagement. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 113(4), 838–871. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jee.20561>
17. Fernández-Martín, F. D., & Ayllón-Salas, P. (2026). Impact of Service-Learning Among Adolescents: A Systematic Review. *Adolescents*, 6(1), 10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/adolescents6010010>
18. Garcia, J. R., & Uy, R. A., Jr. (2025). Successes and Challenges: the Lived Experiences of Extension Implementers in Community Development Programs. *Asian Journal of Community Services*, 4(3), 217–230. <https://doi.org/10.55927/ajcs.v4i3.60>
19. García-Romero, D., Macías-Gómez-Estern, B., Martínez-Lozano, V., & Lalueza Sazatornil, J.L. (2024). Authentic learning in service-learning: Theoretical learning and identity change. *Revista De Educación*, 404, 81–107. <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2024-404-618>
20. Gordon, C. S., Pink, M. A., Rosing, H., & Mizzi, S. (2022). A systematic meta-analysis and meta-synthesis of the impact of service-learning programs on university students' empathy. *Educational Research Review*, 37, 100490. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2022.100490>
21. Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
22. Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
23. Mahmud, S. N. D., & Ismail, N. K. (2024). STEM service learning in higher education: A systematic literature review. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 20(12), em2549. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejmste/15705>
24. Malibiran, A.E. (2023). Program Outputs and Impact of the Community Extension Programs of a Higher Educational Institution in the Philippines. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management and Sustainable Development*, 11(2), 19-29
25. McDougale, L. M., & Li, H. (2022). Service-Learning in higher education and prosocial identity formation. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 52(3), 611–630. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640221108140>
26. Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.
27. Plessas, A., Paisi, M., Ahmed, N., Brookes, Z., & Burns, L. (2024). The impact of community-engaged healthcare education on undergraduate students' empathy and views towards social accountability: A mixed-methods systematic review. *BMC Medical Education*, 24, 1120. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-024-06367-1>
28. Resch, K., & Schrittemser, I. (2023). Service-learning in higher education: A systematic review of challenges and success factors. *Frontiers in Education*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2023.1108024>
29. Rodríguez-Gallego MR, Ordóñez-Sierra R, Domene-Martos S and de-Cecilia-Rodríguez C (2024) Company-university intersections through service-learning (SL): a systematic review. *Front. Educ.* 9:1501899. doi: 10.3389/educ.2024.1501899
30. Ross, M., Bohlmann, J. & Marren, A. (2024) Reflective writing as summative assessment in higher education: a systematic review. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 12(1), pp. 54-67. (doi: 10.56433/jpaap.v12i1.577)
31. Salam, M., Awang Iskandar, D. N., Ibrahim, D. H. A., & Farooq, M. S. (2019). Service learning in higher education: A systematic literature review. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 20(4), 573–593. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-019-09580-6>
32. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.