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FEATURE

**Sense of Civic Responsibility of National
Service Training Program Completers
and Non-Completers in a University
Setting in the Philippines**

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Abstract. *In compliance with Republic Act 9163, Philippine higher education institutions are mandated to include the National Service Training Program (NSTP) program into all the degree program curricula offered. The government aims to develop young people who are civic-conscious towards nation-building. The present study aimed to determine the extent of the sense of civic responsibility of NSTP completers and non-completers of a University as of July 2017. The study used a quantitative, descriptive design in which 204 respondents enrolled in June-July 2017 answered the self-constructed survey questionnaire. Findings show that the respondents had a very high sense of civic responsibility in terms of connection to the community and civic awareness. However, in terms of civic efficacy, they had yielded only a high sense of civic responsibility. This could be attributed to their sense of willingness but, feeling of unpreparedness. A comparison of NSTP completers and non-completers indicated no significant difference in their sense of civic responsibility. It is thus recommended for the administration and concerned department to further look into how the NSTP program can maximize its opportunities to effectively foster a greater sense of civic consciousness and responsibility among the youth.*

Keywords: completers, higher education in the Philippines, national service training program, non-completers, sense of civic responsibility

Introduction

The most critical resource of a country is its people. The way the next generation of citizens acts determines the country's future more than anything else within its borders. The ancient Greeks described a good citizen as a good person who does not only live an honorable and virtuous life but also committed and involved in civic and public life. Thus, citizenship has always been connected to individuals who act for the best interest of the state. According to Aristotle, the state as a community of some kind is made up of many parts, and these are the citizens who compose it. We must not suppose that any one of the citizens belongs to himself or herself, for they all belong to the state (*Collectors Library of Essential Thinkers*, 2009).

Teaching students to be active participants is an important role of education (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2010). No one will argue that the country should set its attention above all to the youth's education, that the neglect of education does harm to the nation. Greater education may increase people's cognitive skills, including their understanding of politics. It may improve their political participation in part because it enhances their sense of civic responsibility and helps them understand matters involved in the political process (Orum & Dale, as cited in Dobratz Walder, & Bruzzell, 2012).

The researchers deemed it crucial for NSTP to raise the sense of civic responsibility of the Filipino youth. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the sense of civic responsibility of NSTP completers and non-completers of a University located in the province of Cavite, Philippines. The purpose of this study was to determine the sense of civic responsibility of NSTP completers and non-completers at a university setting as of July 2017. This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of respondents' sense of civic responsibility in terms of
 - a. Connection to the Community
 - b. Civic Awareness
 - c. Civic Efficacy
2. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' sense of civic responsibility when demographic profiles are considered such as age, gender, college category, religion, and family income?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are operationally defined in this study:

Completers pertain to students who have had successfully finished NSTP 1 and 2 courses in the University within the last 5 years.

National Service Training Program refers to the program offered by the NSTP Department of the College of Arts and Humanities.

Non-Completers pertain to students who had not yet taken NSTP 1 and 2 courses in the University within the last 5 years.

Sense of Civic Responsibility pertains to the responsibilities of a citizen in terms of connection to the community, civic awareness, and civic efficacy.

Significance of the Study

This study determined the sense of civic responsibility of NSTP completers and non-completers of a University setting as of July 2017. The findings of this study may be beneficial to the following groups of people:

Teachers. They may understand how students learn and develop and provide opportunities for their intellectual, social, and personal development. This study may help teachers be more dedicated to their profession as they perform their duty with compassion and understanding. Teachers may realize their role in our nation's progress.

School administrators. The findings of this study may be useful to them in their leadership, teacher hiring, teacher evaluation, teacher training, and implementation of school policies, particularly in integrating civic consciousness in school curricula.

Students. The results of this study could enhance their appreciation as well as an understanding of their role in national building through their well-developed sense of civic responsibility.

Community. This study hopes to promote civic consciousness and responsibility among the youth so this can be translated to their concern and active involvement in community and nation-building.

Researchers. This study may inspire them to conduct further research on civic responsibility. Other variables may be included. Specifically, a quasi-experimental study may be conducted to determine the impact or effectiveness of NSTP courses in fostering civic responsibility.

Scope and Limitations

This study aimed to determine the sense of civic responsibility of NSTP completers and non-completers as of July 2017. Respondents were comprised of randomly selected students in the dormitories, enrolled in the period of the inter semester 2017. Sense of civic responsibility covered areas in the following: connection to the community, civic awareness, and civic efficacy.

Limitations in the conduct of this study include the following: respondents' perception of their sense of civic responsibility might have come from various reference points. These respondents could have been under different NSTP instructors with varying styles and levels of effectiveness. Therefore, the result of non-significance of the comparison between NSTP completers and non-completers

could not be directly attributed to ascertain the quality of the NSTP program offered. Another limitation was the number of respondents involved in the study. This follows the assumption that the bigger the number of respondents, the more reliable the result would be.

Review of the Literature

Citizenship is one of the core concepts developed in the NSTP program. Citizenship treats individuals as public figures, political beings who act on duties, obligations, and responsibilities for the promotion of public good (De Leon, 2005). While the concept describes good citizens as active participants of the affairs of his political community, in reality, many individuals merely sit it out in the sidelines, from the comfort of their living room as spectators than participants (Geer, 2005).

Flanagan and Levine (2010) state that youth today, when compared to the previous generations, are less likely to exhibit many important characteristics of citizenship even though policymakers across the United States are working to provide young citizens the positive opportunities for civic participation.

In his paper on “Democracy Without Participation: A New Politics for a Disengaged Era,” Parvin (2018) presented the reality of young people who seem to not understand the principles of citizenship, were disengaged in the political process, lacked the knowledge necessary for effective government, and had limited appreciation of democracy. This problem is not different from the Philippine experience, as to other democracies. According to Philippine Education for All 2015 Review Report (2015), although young Filipinos, in general, felt they are adequately involved in decisions that affect their life at home and school, they severely lacked involvement and influence in the community and local affairs. Caoli-Rodriguez (2007) in the Philippine country case report shared that insufficient funds for youth activities, lack of interest among young people, and lack of education and understanding of their civic responsibilities are factors hindering youth participation in the Philippines.

Republic Act (RA) 9163, also known as the *National Service Training Program* (NSTP) Act of 2001, was enacted in January 2002. Its guiding principles stipulated in Section 2 of RA 9163 “affirmed that it is the prime duty of the government to serve and protect its citizens.” In recognizing the vital role of the youth in national building, the state shall promote their civic-consciousness and develop their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. It shall inculcate in the youth patriotism and advance their involvement in public and civic affairs. Moreover, it shall develop patriotism as an expression of love of people and country, which are integrated into the learning domains of the curriculum. NSTP is required for male and female students to be taken as a one-year or two-semester program with a total of six-unit credits. Oracion (2017) emphasized that although the NSTP program is comprised of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), Literacy Training Service (LTS) and Civic Welfare Training Service (CWTS) with a

component of service-learning as a pedagogical framework which is not explicit, the structure is replete with community service opportunities. Therefore, Oracion (2017) sought to enrich NSTP implementation by deliberately applying the service-learning pedagogy while still within the boundaries of the legal mandate for higher education institutions in the Philippines.

Also described as a form of service learning which integrates community services into instruction to strengthen students' sense of civic and community responsibilities, NSTP has been subjected to evaluation. Balmeo et al. (2015) determined the effectiveness of NSTP for students' self-improvement, performance, community involvement, and demonstration of abilities and skills and difficulties encountered while taking the program. Using a survey, it was found that the NSTP program was effective in developing self-improvement, performance, community involvement, and demonstration of abilities and skills of the students to a certain extent. This satiates the aim to enhance civic consciousness and defense preparedness in the youth by developing the ethic of service and patriotism while undergoing training.

Focusing on the extent of implementation of the features of the NSTP program in terms of program vision and mission, services and activities offered, budget allocation, supplies and materials used, personnel and faculty involved, and seminars and training conducted for facilitators and implementers, Zapata (2015) found that the program demonstrated its capability in meeting the economic, socio-cultural, political, and information components of national security and development, enhancing the welfare of communities in contributing to the overall peace, development and national security. Overall, the implementer respondents evaluated NSTP program as effective, efficient, responsive, adequate, with equity, and appropriate to its intended purpose. Another study by Crisostomo (2018) underscored how university students benefited from the training. Further, results showed that students' leadership and listening skills were enhanced. These studies affirm the important role of effective implementation of NSTP towards developing civic responsibility.

Recognizing the special function of higher education in the Philippines, Trinidad and Leviste (2020) underpinned the four directions for a sociological analysis of Philippine higher education, namely: (a) students' *access* to higher education, (b) its *organization* and whether it promotes or impedes access, (c) institutions' *responses* to social, economic and technological changes, and (d) their active *influence* on society. Aiming to take stakeholders of higher education into sociological consciousness is aligned with one vital educational role, which is a contribution to society and nation-building. This is where the NSTP program plays an important role in.

The nation and the school share the same responsibility; the system of education should lay the foundation of the nation (Totten & Pedersen, 2013). The role of classroom culture should be better recognized as part of efforts to develop a sense of

civic responsibility among college students. As White (1952) suggested, education should “prepare students for the joy of service in this world, and for the joy of greater service in the world to come” (p. 13). Students can experience a glimpse of that joy of service through responding to the needs of others.

Theoretical Framework

Frameworks provide a backbone to the variables of the study. Hence, this study is anchored on the following theories:

Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy. A form of popular education in Latin America, an adult education program evolving from village-based literacy work that assigns priority to guide analysis of how ideology, power, and influence specifically impact upon and disadvantage the immediate lives of illiterate learners. The educator assists them to learn to read in the process of planning and taking an active role in collective social action to effect change. For critical pedagogy, the critical learner, prototypically an illiterate rural peasant, not only comes to recognize justice but, upon his recognition, is expected to actively participate in the specific political or civic action required to change it. The processes and problems involved in making informed, collective, political, and civic action in a functioning democracy are seldom addressed in the literature of critical democracy (Mirra, Morrell, Cain, Scorza, & Ford, 2013). The NSTP program is anchored on this process of collective action through curricular integration and implementation in a higher education to bring about change through students’ sense of civic responsibility manifested through community service and nation building.

Social learning theory by Lev Vygotsky. This theory opines that we learn through our interactions and communications with others. Vygotsky examined how our social environments influence the learning process. He suggested that learning takes place through the interactions students have with their peers, teachers, and other experts. Consequently, teachers can create a learning environment that maximizes the learner’s ability to interact with each other through discussion, collaboration, and feedback. Moreover, Vygotsky as cited in Neff (n.d.) “argues that culture is the primary determining factor for knowledge construction” (para. 1). We learn through this cultural lens by interacting with others and following the rules, skills, and abilities shaped by our culture. Cooperative learning is inherent in the NSTP program where students are to work collaboratively in various class and community endeavors.

Methodology

This quantitative study utilized a descriptive design. According to McCombes (2019), “descriptive research aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation or phenomenon. . . the researcher does not control or manipulate any of the variables, but only observes and measures them” (paras. 1-2).

The respondents of the study were 204 randomly sampled students in the University enrolled in the period of inter semester 2017. Of 204, 167 (82%) indicated to have already taken the NSTP courses as prescribed in the curriculum of every degree program; whereas 37 (18%) indicated they had not yet taken the said courses. As for the demographic profile of the respondents: 119 were male and 82 were female; 178 were Seventh-Day Adventists (SDAs) and 24 were non-SDAs; 4 (2%) were 17 years old and younger, 68 (33%) were 18-19 years old, 65 (32%) were 20-21 years old; 32 (16%) were 22-23 years old; 23 (11%) were 24-25 years old; and 12 (6%) was more than 25 years old.

In terms of the respondents' family income, 90 (44%) had an income of less than the 10,000, 45 (22%) had an income of PhP 10,000-PhP 20,000, 20 (10%) had an income of PhP 20,001-PhP30,000, 13 (6%) had an income of PhP 30,001-PhP 40,000, only 6 (3%) had an income of PhP 40,001-PhP 50,000 and lastly, 19 (9%) had an income of PhP 50,000 and above. As to the distribution of respondents in terms of college category, 14 (7%) were from the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH), 74 (36%) from the College of Business (COB), 5 (3%) from the College of Dentistry (COD), 35 (17%) from the College of Education (COE), 21 (10%) from the College of Health (COH), 10 (5%) from the College of Nursing, 11 (5%) from the College of Theology (COT), 31 (15%) from the College of Science and Technology (CST). These data show that the bulk of the respondents came from COB, COE, and CST. Also, Figure 1 shows the distribution of percentage to the four colleges with the biggest number of respondents who participated in the study.

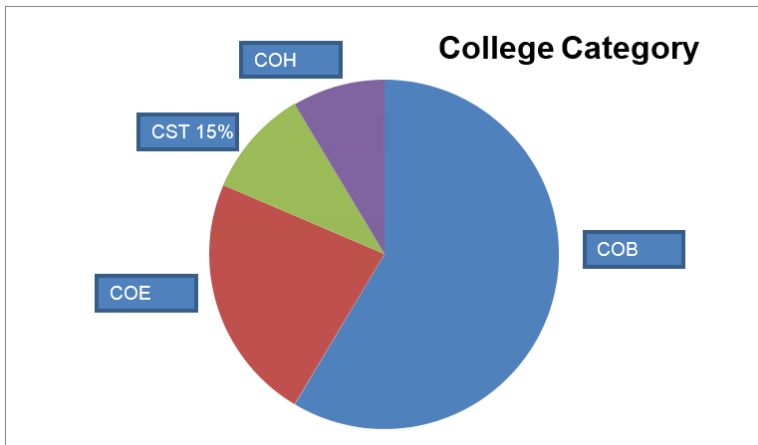


Figure 1. Distribution of percentage of four colleges with the biggest number of respondents.

The study made use of a self-constructed survey questionnaire, with items gleaned from various kinds of literature on social responsibility and civic responsibility. The instrument has two parts: a demographic profile and students' sense of civic responsibility. The sense of civic responsibility has three sub-variables, namely: *connection to the community*, *civic awareness*, and *civic efficacy*. The questionnaire employed four-Likert scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, and 4 = *strongly agree*. With this, the verbal interpretation will be as follows: 3:01-4:00 = *Very High*, 2:01-3:00 = *High*, 1.01- 2:00 = *Low*, 0.00-0.99 = *Very Low*.

The questionnaire was subjected to expert validation. Then with the help of research assistants, the questionnaires were administered in the students' dormitories to random students enrolled in the period of inter semester 2017. The data gathered were encoded and were treated with SPSS. Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, *t-test*, and ANOVA were used as statistical treatments.

Results

This section presents the answers to the research questions for this study. Furthermore, this addresses the purpose of the study which was to determine the sense of civic responsibility of NSTP students in a university setting. The following is a discussion of the findings.

Connection to the Community

The result in Table 1 shows the extent of respondents' sense of civic responsibility in terms of connection to the community. The overall mean of 3.02 indicates that the respondents had a *very high* sense of civic responsibility in terms of connection to the community. The item that garnered the highest mean was item 8, which states, "I want to be connected to my community." However, item 7 had the lowest mean of 2.66, which states, "I have communication with the leaders of my community."

It can be observed that the items with the highest and lowest means are interrelated. Respondents indicating that they wanted to be connected to their respective communities did not necessarily mean that they were connected. Coincidentally, the lowest mean was on whether or not they had communication with the leaders of their community. If they had communication, it would mean that they had an actual connection to their community. This finding is supported by Flanagan and Levine (2010) stating that the youth in this generation when compared to the previous generations, are less likely to exhibit many important

Table 1

Respondents' Sense of Civic Responsibility in Terms of Connection to the Community

Connection to the Community	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I have a strong and personal attachment to a particular community.	2.97	.646
2. I benefit emotionally from contributing to my community, even if it is hard and challenging work.	3.03	.592
3. I feel a personal obligation to contribute in some way to my community.	3.10	.660
4. I have a lot of personal contact with people in my community.	2.75	.725
5. I have a desire to get involved in my community.	3.19	.652
6. I feel a sense of belongingness in my community.	2.99	.696
7. I have communication with the leaders of my community.	2.66	.715
8. I want to be connected to my community.	3.25	.655
9. I feel I need to have a sense of volunteerism towards my community.	3.14	.636
10. I want to know what I can do for the betterment of my community.	3.20	.583
	3.02	

characteristics of citizenship even though policymakers across the United States are working to provide young citizens the positive opportunities for civic participation. To a certain extent, the NSTP program awakens the students' desire to connect to the community. Zapata (2015) found that the program meets the economic, socio-cultural, political, and information components of national security and development, enhancing welfare of communities.

Civic Awareness

The respondents' sense of civic responsibility in terms of civic awareness presented in Table 2 was *very high* ($M = 3.10$). Item 5, "Helping other people is something that I am personally responsible for," garnered the highest mean of 3.26, which indicates that the respondents felt accountable to help their fellowmen.

Helping may be in various forms. The item with the second highest mean of 3.19 states, "It is my responsibility to help improve my community," which affirms the aforementioned item with the highest mean. Two items share in the lowest spot

with a mean of 2.99. These are “It is easy for me to put aside my self-interest in favor of a greater good” and “Becoming involved in political or social issues is a good way to improve the community.” This finding suggests that the respondents were not very willing to put aside self-interest for the good of the majority.

Moreover, the mean of the item on involvement with political or social issues as a means of improving the sense of community also shows respondents’ seemingly lack of political and social involvement. This may call for the fortification of civic education, which may be explicit or implicit in the school curriculum. Teaching students to be active participants in an important role of education (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2010).

Table 2

Respondents’ Sense of Civic Responsibility in Terms of Civic Awareness

Civic Awareness	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I often discuss and think about how political, social, local, or national issues affect the community.	3.01	.721
2. It is my responsibility to help improve the community.	3.19	.658
3. I am aware of the important needs of the community.	3.16	.650
4. I am aware of what can be done to meet the important needs in the community.	3.10	.639
5. Helping other people is something that I am personally responsible for.	3.26	.674
6. It is easy for me to put aside my self-interest in favor of a greater good.	2.99	
7. Becoming involved in political or social issues is a good way to improve the community.	2.99	.651
8. Being concerned about state and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody.	3.16	.627
9. Being actively involved in community issues is everyone’s responsibility, including mine.	3.11	.623
10. I understand how political and social policies or issues affect members in the community.	3.04	.666
	3.10	

No one will argue that the state should set its attention above all to the education of the youth; that the neglect of education does harm to the nation. Greater education may increase people's cognitive skills, including their understanding of politics. It may improve their political participation in part because it enhances their sense of civic responsibility and helps them understand matters involved in the political process (Orum & Dale, as cited in Dobratz et al., 2012). Moreover, Trinidad and Leviste (2020) highlighted the role of higher education in awakening sociological consciousness among students as part of curricular goals for nation-building.

Civic Efficacy

Table 3 shows the results of respondents' sense of civic responsibility in terms of civic efficacy. The overall mean of 2.92 indicates that the respondents' civic efficacy was *high*. For this particular sub-variable, item 7 garnered the highest mean of 3.07 and it pertains to the respondents' belief in making a difference in the community.

Table 3

Respondents' Sense of Civic Responsibility in Terms of Civic Efficacy

Civic Efficacy	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I participate in political or social causes in order to improve the community.	2.77	.714
2. Providing service to the community is something I prefer to let others do.	2.83	.726
3. I feel I have the power to make a difference in the community.	2.88	.696
4. I often try to act on solutions that address political, social, local, or national problems in the community.	2.77	.666
5. I participate in activities that help to improve the community, even if I am new to them.	2.88	.651
6. I try to encourage others to participate in the community.	2.97	.659
7. I believe that I can make a difference in the community.	3.07	.586
8. I believe that I can have enough influence to impact community decisions.	2.96	.644
9. I am or plan to become actively involved in issues that positively affect the community.	3.02	.617
10. I try to find the time or a way to make a positive difference in the community.	.634	3.08
	2.92	

In this same set, the lowest mean of 2.88 pertained to items 3 and 5: “I feel I have the power to make a difference in the community” and “I participate in activities that help to improve the community, even if I am new to them.” This refers to the seemingly low self-efficacy of the respondents as to what they can do to shape the community they live in. Even their participation was somewhat limited.

This finding is affirmed by De Leon’s (2005) thoughts on the value of one’s citizenship—which treats individuals as public figures, political beings who acts on duties, obligations, and responsibilities for the promotion of public good. While the concept describes good citizens as active participants of the affairs of his political community, in reality, many individuals merely sit it out in the sidelines, from the comfort of their living room as spectators than participants (Geer et al., 2005).

Also, Flanagan and Levine (2010) state that youth today, when compared to the previous generations, are less likely to exhibit many important characteristics of citizenship even though policymakers across the United States are working to provide young citizens the positive opportunities for civic participation. In the evaluation study of Balmeo et al. (2015), NSTP was found to be effective in developing students’ self-improvement, performance, community involvement, and demonstration of abilities and skills and difficulties encountered while taking the program.

Sense of Civic Responsibility Considering the Demographic Variables

There were no significant differences in the respondents’ sense of civic responsibility when demographic profiles were considered age, gender, college category, religion, and family income. However, Galais and Blais (2018) posited that women tend to embrace social and civic norms more than men. Interestingly, this is affirmed by the study of Muddiman et al. (2018), which found that mothers and grandparents played a vital role in young people’s regard for civic participation. This implies the family’s role in instilling a sense of responsibility to the youth in the family.

Sense of Civic Responsibility between NSTP Completers and Non-completers

The comparisons between NSTP completers and non-completers were not significant considering all the sub-variables of the sense of civic responsibility: *connection to the community, civic awareness, and civic efficacy*. This result is somewhat contrary to the study of Balmeo et al. (2015), which found positive effects of NSTP on the lives of students who took it. In addition, Basco and Mamolo (2019) explored the content, values, and skills students learned from NSTP. They highlighted students’ regard of leadership and volunteerism as values learned and that a sense of social responsibility stems from exposure to the realities experienced

from interacting with people in the community. In this study, the non-significance between completers and non-completers could be attributed to the period in which respondents had completed and not yet taken the training program. Completers could still be starting to make sense of the program even after they had completed it.

Conclusion

The data gathered from among the randomly sampled respondents formed the extent of sense of civic responsibility of those who had and had not yet completed the NSTP program as part of every degree program curriculum offered by the University. Findings show that the respondents had a very high sense of civic responsibility in terms of connection to the community and civic awareness. However, in terms of civic efficacy, they had yielded a high sense of civic responsibility. This could be attributed to their sense of preparedness, further implying that they were willing to participate and make a difference in their respective communities, but they could have felt unprepared or unequipped to do such. Furthermore, the finding of no significant difference in the respondents' sense of civic responsibility demographic profiles was considered is a bit surprising. It is assumed that perhaps if the sample size was bigger than the actual, significant differences could have been noted. Another unexpected finding is the non-significance of the comparison between NSTP completers and non-completers. This goes to show that the respondents' sense of civic responsibility was of the same extent, whether or not they had taken NSTP. The value of NSTP could not be downplayed. Again, those who had already taken NSTP did not have similar learning experiences since they were under different instructors throughout the years.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it is recommended that the NSTP department conduct an isolated study, particularly a quasi-experimental determining the impact of an NSTP program under one instructor. A pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaire can be administered. Then compare the results. Another recommendation is for the administration to further look into how the opportunities of the NSTP program can be maximized to foster sense of civic consciousness and responsibility among the youth.

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