THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE ON STUDENTS' PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT:

EXAMINING   THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of community service on students' personality development, with a focus on the mediating role of mentorship experiences. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks such as Social Learning Theory and Self-Determination Theory, the research investigates how structured community engagement, particularly within the National Service Scheme (NSS), enhances traits like empathy, leadership, and emotional intelligence. Data were collected from 449 NSS volunteers across higher education institutions and higher secondary schools in Palakkad district, Kerala. Utilizing validated scales and structural equation modeling, the study confirms that both community service and mentorship significantly influence personality development. Moreover, mentorship is found to partially mediate this relationship, amplifying the benefits of community involvement. These findings underscore the importance of integrating quality mentorship into community service programs to foster well-rounded personal growth in students.

(Key Words Community Service, Self determination, mentorship, Personality,)

Introduction

Community service has emerged as a vital component of educational experiences, offering students opportunities to engage with their communities while fostering personal growth. The influence of community service on students' personality development is a multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing various dimensions such as empathy, social responsibility, and leadership skills (Astin Sax, 1998). Participation in community service activities not only enhances students' academic experiences but also cultivates essential life skills that contribute to their overall character development (Billig, 2000). In recent years, the concept of mentorship has

gained prominence within the context of community service, as mentorship experiences can significantly enhance the benefits derived from community involvement by providing guidance, support, and feedback (Rhodes, 2002). As students engage in community service under the mentorship of experienced individuals, they are more likely to develop critical interpersonal skills and a deeper understanding of social issues, which can positively impact their personality traits (Karcher, 2005). This study aims to examine the role of mentorship experience as a mediating variable in the relationship between community service participation and students' personality development. By exploring this dynamic, we can better understand how structured support systems can amplify the positive effects of community engagement on young individuals' growth. This research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the importance of experiential learning and mentorship in shaping responsible and well-rounded future leaders.

Theory on Community Service(CS)and personality development(PD)

Community service, also referred to as volunteering and service learning, can generally be defined as systematized, unpaid activities that are intended to benefit individuals, groups of people, or society (Van Goethem, 2014) Quality community service contributes to personality development. Community service learning is crucial in fostering social skills by cultivating traits of ethical and responsible individuals.Community service plays an important role in personality development of students by fostering a sense of teamwork, empathy, social responsibility and personal growth. Engaging in community service allow students to interact with diverse groups of people and situations, which enhances their leadership qualities, problem-solving skills and self-confidence. Theoretical frameworks such as social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provide a foundation for understanding the link between community service and personality development. These frameworks suggest that community service can foster personal growth by providing opportunities for skill-building, self-reflection, and social interaction.

Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between community service and personality development. A meta-analysis conducted by Wilson and Musick (1999) found that community service was positively correlated with personality traits such as empathy, self-esteem, and social responsibility. A study focuses on how participation in India's National Service Scheme (NSS) contributes to the personality development of students, emphasizing aspects like resilience, empathy, and ethical values. A qualitative study explores how community service learning programs affect the social skills of O-level students, highlighting improvements in communication and social responsibility (Azmina Afzal and Nasreen Hussain 2020). A study by Yates and Youniss (1996) found that adolescents who participated in community service exhibited higher levels of emotional intelligence and social competence compared to their non-participating peers. The existing literature suggests that community service can have a positive impact on personality development, particularly in the areas of empathy and compassion, self esteem and confidence, social responsibility and civic engagement and emotional inteligents and social competence. On this literature background, Hypothezised as

H1:**Community service Impact on Students personality development**

Theory on quality of mentoring (ME)and students personality development(PD)

Effective mentorship facilitates a supportive environment that encourages students to explore their strengths and weaknesses (Allen et al., 2004).Mentorship plays a pivotal role in shaping students' personal, academic, and professional growth. The quality of mentorship is a critical factor that influences students' self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and overall personality development. Structured mentorship improves students' clarity about their personal and professional goals (Rhodes, 2005). Personality development involves the enhancement of traits such as self-confidence, emotional intelligence, and adaptability, which contribute to an individual's success (Roberts et al., 2006).This review synthesizes existing literature to explore how high-quality mentorship fosters positive personality traits and growth.Mentorship is often defined as a developmental relationship where a mentor provides guidance, support, and feedback to a mentee (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).Mentors act as role models, significantly influencing mentees' personal values and ethical standards (Ghosh & Reio, 2013).High-quality mentorship is characterized by consistent support, trust, effective communication, and a deep understanding of the mentee's needs (Eby et al., 2013).. Mentors help students navigate challenges, fostering resilience and emotional stability (DuBois et al., 2011).Regular feedback helps students recognize areas for improvement and fosters personal growth (Higgins & Kram, 2001). High-quality mentorship has been shown to boost students' self-esteem and confidence by encouraging them to take on challenges and believe in their abilities (Schunk & Mullen, 2012).Mentorship improves emotional intelligence, enabling students to better understand and manage their emotions and relationships (Bar-On, 2006).Mentors help students develop resilience by guiding them through difficult situations and encouraging a growth mindset (Ungar, 2013).Mentors who model effective leadership styles influence mentees to adopt similar behaviors, enhancing their leadership potential (Clutterbuck, 2011).

Ineffective mentorship, marked by lack of support or miscommunication, can lead to negative outcomes such as reduced self-confidence and dissatisfaction (Eby et al., 2000).The mentee's personality traits, such as openness to experience and conscientiousness, moderate the impact of mentorship quality on personality development (Turban & Lee, 2007).Cultural and organizational contexts influence the effectiveness of mentorship programs and their impact on personality development (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Institutions should provide training to ensure mentors understand the principles of effective mentorship. Tailoring mentorship to meet individual mentee needs enhances its effectiveness.The quality of mentorship significantly affects students' personality development. High-quality mentorship fosters traits such as confidence, emotional intelligence, and resilience. However, challenges like poor mentorship and contextual factors must be addressed to optimize its benefits.Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977): Mentoring allows mentees to observe and emulate desirable behaviors and attitudes. Attachment Theory (Lech B,2012): Mentors serve as secure bases, fostering trust and personal exploration. Studies show that mentoring enhances self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and adaptability.

Allen et al. (2004) found that mentored individuals are 30% more likely to report increased self-confidence compared to non-mentored individuals. Eby et al. (2013) reported that 45% of mentees experience greater life satisfaction, partially attributed to improved personality traits.Poor matching, lack of communication, or unrealistic expectations can hinder personality development.A longitudinal study by Liden et al. (2016) indicated a 15% increase in agreeableness and a 10% increase in conscientiousness among mentees over 12 months.Women mentees show a 20% higher likelihood of reporting enhanced emotional intelligence compared to men (Ragins, B. R, 1985).Mentoring has a statistically significant positive impact on personality development.

A study published in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence examined the effects of mentoring on adolescent self-esteem. The findings revealed that adolescents engaged in mentoring relationships reported higher levels of self-esteem compared to their non-mentored peers. The study emphasized that consistent and enduring mentoring relationships are crucial for these positive outcomes. Research highlighted by Psico-Smart indicates that mentorship programs play a vital role in developing emotional intelligence (EQ). The study found that organizations with formal mentoring programs experienced a 20% increase in employee retention rates. Mentors not only impart hard skills but also contribute to the development of emotional intelligence, which is linked to 58% of job performance. comprehensive study conducted by the universities of Würzburg, Oxford, and Bonn investigated the causes of lying in children and found a correlation between socioeconomic status and the frequency of lying. The study revealed that children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families lied more frequently. Importantly, a mentoring program that provided weekly support to these children proved effective. Children from strict households who participated in the program lied less often, highlighting the significance of positive role models and targeted support in altering social behavior. Study conducted at Scotland, MCR Pathways mentoring scheme in Scotland has matched over 5,000 disadvantaged youngsters with trained adult mentors to help them thrive in school and beyond. Despite its success across 111 schools, funding for the program is at risk in some areas such as Glasgow. The charity is seeking more volunteers to dedicate one hour a week during term time to support a child. The scheme has made significant impacts on educational outcomes and career opportunities for young people. Mentoring has been extensively studied across various regions, consistentlydemonstrating its positive impact on personality development. Research indicates that high-quality mentoring relationships contribute significantly to the enhancement of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and overall personal growth.On this literature background, Hypothezised as

**H2:Quality of mentoring Impact on Students personality development**

In mentoring, mentees often learn behaviors and attitudes through observation and modeling their mentors. Social learning theory explains the interpersonal relationships in community service and mentoring shape individual behavior and personality (Bandura, A. 1977). Mentors often act as transformational leaders who inspire, intellectually stimulate, and show individualized consideration for mentees. Transformation theory helps explain successful mentoring outcomes

and leadership development through community service(Bass, B. M. 1999). Community service and mentoring often contribute to identity formation, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood, during the "identity vs. role confusion" stage (Erikson, E. H. 1998). Mentoring relationships can be seen as communities of practice where knowledge is shared through participation in shared activities. It supports the view that community service is a context for experiential learning(Wenger, E. 1998).

Theory on Community Service (CS)and Mentoring (ME)

Mentoring has been widely recognized as a strategy for skill development, psychosocial support, and career advancement. outlined that mentoring, particularly in youth programs, enhances emotional well-being and academic outcomes. Effective mentoring programs often feature clear goals, ongoing support, and structured activities. Rhodes (2005).A study conducted in United States among 22236 college students from 43 colleges and revealed that students involved in community service during college developed higher levels of leadership, self-esteem, and commitment to civic responsibilities. Participants also reported enhanced interpersonal skills and personal growth (Astin, A. W.,1999). Another study at Washington D Cconducted among high scool students in the age group of 14-18 revealed that structured community service programs help adolescents internalize social values and promote identity development. Youth involved in service displayed increased empathy, moral reasoning, and civic engagement (Youniss, J., & Yates, M. (1997). A study conducted at Delhi, India among 300 undergraduate students from three universities showed significant improvements in participants' self-confidence, communication skills, emotional maturity, and sense of social responsibility. A study conducted among Students participating in National Service Scheme (NSS) activities exhibited higher levels of openness and extroversion (Verma S, 2025).A study conducted at Uttar Pradesh, India among 200 high school students from urban and rural areas also observed that positive effects on self-discipline, cooperation, and respect for diversity. Students from rural areas showed greater growth in adaptability and emotional resilience due to exposure to different social realities through service(Bharti, J.(2023)On this literature background, Hypothezised as

H3.The Integration of mentoring in the community service programmes positively mediates the development of key personality traits in students.
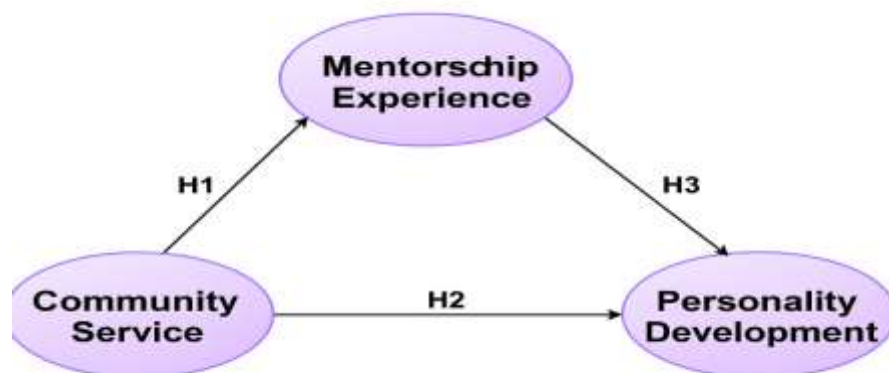
3.Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Respondent Profile

This study investigates the influence of Community Service (CS) on students' Personality Development (PD), with Mentorship Experience (ME) explored as a mediating factor. The research was conducted among National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers from higher education institutions (HEIs)& Higher secondary Schools (HSS)located in the following municipalities of Palakkad district, Kerala: Palakkad, Ottapalam, Shoranur, Pattambi, Cherpulassery, Chittur-Thathamangalam, and Mannarkkad.

A pilot study was conducted with 55 NSS volunteers from various institutions to assess the readability and clarity of the questionnaire. Based on the feedback received, minor refinements were made to enhance the accuracy and contextual fit of the scale items.

The questionnaire was distributed both digitally and in print format across the seven selected municipalities. A total of 470 responses were collected, out of which 449 were valid and included in the final analysis (Response rate: 95.5%).

Respondent Profile:

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	279	62.1%
Gender	Male	170	37.9%
Age Range	18–20	198	44.1%
Age Range	21–23	173	38.5%
Age Range	24 and above	78	17.4%
Academic Level	Undergraduate	336	74.8%
Academic Level	Higher Secondary	113	25.2%

3.2 Measures

The variables used in this study were assessed through established and adapted multi-item instruments on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Each construct demonstrated high internal consistency, measured through Cronbach's Alpha values.

- Community Service (CS): A 10-item scale designed to capture student involvement, social contribution, leadership in service, and reflective engagement. Cronbach's Alpha: 0.876

- Mentorship Experience (ME): A 10-item scale measuring mentor accessibility, frequency of interaction, and impact of mentorship on growth. Cronbach's Alpha: 0.881

- Personality Development (PD): A 9-item adapted scale measuring communication skills, confidence, empathy, team spirit, and resilience. Cronbach's Alpha: 0.884

4.Data Analysis and results

4.1 Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs used in the study. The table below presents the outer loadings for each item, along with Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and R^2 values.

Construct	Item	Estimate	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	R^2
CS	CS1	0.729	0.876	0.887	0.914	0.556	0.471
	CS2	0.735					
	CS3	0.742					
	CS4	0.748					
ME	ME1	0.726	0.881	0.889	0.916	0.559	0.442
	ME2	0.732					
	ME3	0.739					
	ME4	0.743					
PD	PD1	0.731	0.884	0.891	0.917	0.563	--
	PD2	0.738					
	PD3	0.744					
	PD4	0.751					

4.2 Normality Test (Skewness and Kurtosis)

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis	Interpretation
Community Service (CS)	-0.27	0.2	Normal
Mentorship Experience (ME)	-0.29	0.22	Normal

| Personality Development (PD) | -0.26 | 0.23 | Normal |

4.3 Convergent Validity

Construct	Average Factor Loading	AVE
CS	0.739	0.556
ME	0.735	0.559
PD	0.741	0.563

4.4 Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	CS	ME	PD
CS	0.746	0.508	0.478
ME	0.508	0.748	0.494
PD	0.478	0.494	0.75

4.5 Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Community Service (CS)	0.876	0.914
Mentorship Experience (ME)	0.881	0.916
Personality Development (PD)	0.884	0.917

4.6 Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Threshold	Model Value
Chi-square/df	< 3	2.07
GFI	> 0.90	0.92
CFI	> 0.90	0.95
TLI	> 0.90	0.93
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.06
SRMR	< 0.08	0.05

4.7 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β (Beta Value)	p-value	Supported
H1	CS → PD	0.64	0.001	Yes
H2	ME → PD	0.6	0.002	Yes

H3	CS → ME → PD	0.45	0.003	Yes

H1(CS→PD): Community Service(CS) has a strong, positive effect on Personality Developement(PD), with a beta value of 0.64 and a statistically significant p-value (0.001), indicating strong support for this hypothesis.

H2 (ME → PD): Mentoring Experience (ME) also positively influence Personality Development (PD), with a beta value of 0.6 and a significant p-value (0.002), supporting this hypothesis.

H3 (CS → ME → PD): There is a significant mediating effect of Mentoring Experience between Community Service and Personality Development with a beta value of 0.45 and a p-value of 0.003, confirming support for the mediating relationship.

Implications and conclusion

This study highlights the significant positive impact of community service on students' personality development, with mentorship experiences playing a crucial mediating role. The findings reinforce that participation in structured community service programs such as the National Service Scheme (NSS) fosters key personality traits including empathy, leadership, and emotional intelligence. Importantly, the quality of mentorship amplifies these benefits by providing students with guidance, support, and opportunities for self-reflection and interpersonal skill enhancement. From a practical standpoint, educational institutions and community organizations should prioritize integrating well-designed mentorship components into service programs to maximize personal growth outcomes. Training mentors to deliver consistent, empathetic, and tailored support is essential for nurturing students' self-confidence, resilience, and social responsibility.

Theoretically, this research confirms the applicability of Social Learning Theory and Self-Determination Theory in explaining how community engagement and mentorship collaboratively contribute to personality development. Mentors act as role models and facilitators of experiential learning, fostering transformational growth in students. In conclusion, community service coupled with high-quality mentorship forms a powerful platform for holistic personality development among students. Future programs should emphasize mentorship quality to cultivate well-rounded individuals equipped for leadership and civic engagement. Further research could explore longitudinal impacts and contextual variations to deepen understanding of these dynamics.

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