


ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

 Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 05 No. 01. Jan-March 2026. Page#.1931-1938

 Print ISSN: [3006-2497](https://issn.org/3006-2497) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](https://issn.org/3006-2500)

 Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](https://openjournal.org)
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18936370>

Enhancing Cooperation Skills through Service Learning Among 9th Graders
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Abstract

The action research was conducted to solve the problem of less cooperation by employing the intervention of service-learning on grade IX students. The research included the null hypothesis as H_{01} : There is no effect of service-learning on cooperation skills among 9th graders of Govt Girls School Lahore. It is quantitative research through adherence to the positivist paradigm. The effect of service-learning intervention was measured with the one-group pretest- posttest experimental research design. To determine the cooperation skills of students, a structured observation rating scale was used. Cronbach's alpha value of 0.78 was calculated to confirm the reliability of the instrument, and experts were involved in the content validity process. The study sample was 40 students of the IX grade in a Government Girls' School of Lahore. A five-week program of service-learning intervention based on community-based projects, teamwork, role assignment, and reflective discussions was applied. Descriptive statistics, such as averages and a paired sample t-test, as well as inferential statistics, were the techniques that were used to analyze the collected data to determine the difference between pre-test and post-test outcomes. The findings depicted a clear improvement in students' cooperation skills, as scores in the pre-test were low as 2.29 and drastically improved to 4.0 in the post-test after the incorporation of an intervention based on service learning.

Keywords: Cooperation skills & Service-learning.

Introduction

The modern education system no longer requires academic knowledge only so that students can be ready to live in the complex social and professional world. In addition to cognitive skills, the students should also acquire social, emotional, and cooperation skills (such as teamwork, communication, empathy, conflict resolution, and shared responsibility) (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). These are not just competencies that ensure academic achievement but also positive relationships, civic participation and personal growth (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

Service-learning has become one of the most successful pedagogical model that facilitate the connection between classroom training and fieldwork, enabling students to put their academic knowledge into practical social situations. It is an academic practice that involves students in community-

based projects as well as making them undergo systematic reflections to improve their comprehension of the academic material and also acquire critical social skills (Eyler & Giles, 1999). In, contrast to the traditional classroom education, service-learning focuses on the aspect of experiential learning, and students are encouraged to work together as a group and support the needs of the community, which helps in developing not only the practical skills but also cognitive development.

Service-learning has been incorporated in educational programs and has been demonstrated to enhance many competencies. Past studies have found that students who undergo service-learning show better collaboration, communication, and conflict management than their counterparts in conventional learning institutions (Billig, 2000; Celio et al., 2011). Moreover, the reflective aspect of service-learning also helps the students to be critical of their behavior and learn the behavior of cooperation, which is essential in the lives of individuals and their professional growth (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

Studies have also shown that service-learning is effective in fostering cooperative actions and social responsibility. The research carried out in different educational settings (the United States, Europe, South Asia) shows that service-learning can reinforce students' capacity to collaborate and, at the same time, improve their empathy and responsibility (Khalid & Ahmad, 2017; Celio et al., 2011). Although these are encouraging results, a lot of institutions still cling to the traditional methods of teaching, where individual success is favoured over group skills-based acquisition. As a result, students might only have good academic records and few skills in working in groups (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). It is against this background that the current research aims to investigate the service-learning impact on cooperation abilities, how structured, community-based, and reflective activities affect cooperation skills in students (Khalid & Ahmad, 2017). This study was built upon quantitative research to deliver a thorough insight into the gains of service-learning and present some insights to educators and policymakers.

Research Objective

The single objective of the study was as follows:

To develop cooperation skills through service-learning among 9th graders of the Govt Girls School, Lahore.

Null Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no effect of service-learning on cooperation skills among 9th graders of Govt Girls School Lahore.

Review of Related Literature

Amidst the fast-changing nature of the modern-day education sector, the conventional classroom learning method that has been based on the notions of personal performance and memorization of information and knowledge is often incapacitated to impart the interpersonal dynamics of success in both the professional and civic realms. Among them, cooperation skills, including teamwork, effective communication, conflict management, and empathy, are required to work in an environment which requires team problem-solving and shared responsibility (Li & Zhang, 2022; Niemi, 2021).

Service-learning has developed to provide a pedagogical strategy to fulfil the requirements of holistic education, combining sustainable community service with well-organised academic goals and practices of reflection. The approach allows natural chances of applying classroom theories to real-life problems in participating in different interactions with various stakeholders. The active coordination and sustained interaction in service-learning is not a feature of artificial simulation, but one that intrinsically leads to the growth of cooperation skills due to the real-situation interaction.

Formal reflection continues this expansion by helping students critically reflect on their roles in group dynamics and internalizing lessons about ethical responsibility and social contribution. Recent

studies indicate that such experiences play an important role in improving prosocial competencies because students must negotiate their roles and manage diverse viewpoints (Montero et al., 2021; OlagokeOladokun et al., 2018). Finally, well-designed service-learning models require a high level of interpersonal development and social awareness that are achieved due to their interactive nature and eliminate the divide between academic theory and real-life practice of social cognition.

The main aim of the study was to report a strict description of the procedures that will be applied to measure the change of collaborative competency. In this context, service-learning is defined in such a way that it represents a pedagogical approach in which community service and academic learning are combined with systematic reflection (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Group collaboration encompasses the multidimensional capacity to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and share responsibility, which is defined as cooperation skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Khalid & Ahmad, 2017).

Methodology of the Study

Research methodology is the logical organization according to which a study is designed, implemented, and interpreted, which offers a blueprint that makes scientific validity and reliability possible (Cohen et al., 2018). The present study used a quantitative experimental research design; a one-group pretest-posttest design was employed. The inclination for a quantitative approach in this research is grounded in the need for a detailed comprehension of the multifaceted dynamics involved in cooperation within the classroom setting. (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Pre-test post-test single group experimental design serves as a strong method to scientifically investigate and quantify the results (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were forty 9th-grade girls of a Govt school in Lahore. The problem of less cooperation was identified among these girls of Section B and resolved through service learning. The action research was purposively employed on this section of grade 9th.

Research Instrument

The research instrument was developed as an observation rating scale. Two experts were consulted to determine the content validity of the tool. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, a widely utilized statistic for measuring internal consistency (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Cronbach's alpha computes the average correlation, and its value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating larger internal consistency. In this study, the value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.78, which is a good level of internal consistency for the rating scale (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Service-learning Intervention Plan

The experimental group is involved in a 5-week structured service-learning program. The intervention is aimed at strengthening the ability to cooperate with the help of guided projects, which were community-based.

The activities involve community service projects, working in small group work, role assignments, and reflection. Students are guided by teachers and mentors and offered feedback on the skills of cooperation, communication, and problem-solving.

Table 1
5-Week Service-Learning Intervention Schedule

Week	Phase	Activity Description	Cooperation Focus
1	Orientation	Introduction to Service-learning; formation of teams; assigned roles (Leader, Secretary, Liaison).	Role identification & Group bonding
2	Project Identification	Needs in the local school/community are brainstormed in groups (e.g., Cleanliness, Peer Tutoring, Resource Library).	Decision-making & Negotiation
3	Action Planning	Writing a Service Action Plan; determining resources needed, timeframes of work.	Task division & Responsibility
4	Implementation	Service tasks implementation; students will collaborate in the field/school to solve the issue adopted.	Active peer interaction
5	Reflection & Presentation	Groups share their results and discuss the way they worked as a group.	Shared achievement & Appraisal

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine how service-learning effects upon the cooperation skills of 9th graders in Govt. Girls Model High School, Model Town, Lahore. The data was collected with the help of a structured observation rating scale that comprised of 15 indicators that were assessed prior to (pre-test) and after (post-test) the five-week intervention.

Descriptive Analysis

The observational rating scale involved a 5-point Likert scale (1: Never 5: Always) to measure change in behavior. The data below represents the number of students (N=40) that fall into each category of the key indicators of cooperation.

Table 2*Comparative Analysis of Pre-test and Post-test Observations*

Sr. Indicator of Cooperation	Pre-test (Mean)	Post-test (Mean)	Difference
1 Listens to the team objectives	1.80	3.90	2.10
2 Interacts with other children	1.70	3.80	2.10
3 Attempts perform comprehensively in teams	2.20	3.70	1.50
4 Takes action/ stays on track	2.10	3.60	1.50
5 Plays an active role in discussions	2.30	3.80	1.50
6 Works in teams to accomplish given tasks	1.90	3.90	2.00
7 Does not frustrate colleagues at work	2.00	3.70	1.70
8 Persistent when dealing with troubles	2.40	3.50	1.10
9 Is aware of what is occurring in the group	2.60	3.60	1.00
10 Effective interpersonal skills	2.10	3.70	1.60
11 Tackles new assignments industriously	2.50	3.40	0.90
12 Questions in search of information	2.20	3.30	1.10
13 Makes personal decisions	2.70	3.40	0.70
14 Attempts to complete challenging tasks	2.80	3.50	0.70
15 Information of volunteers to the group	3.00	3.20	0.20

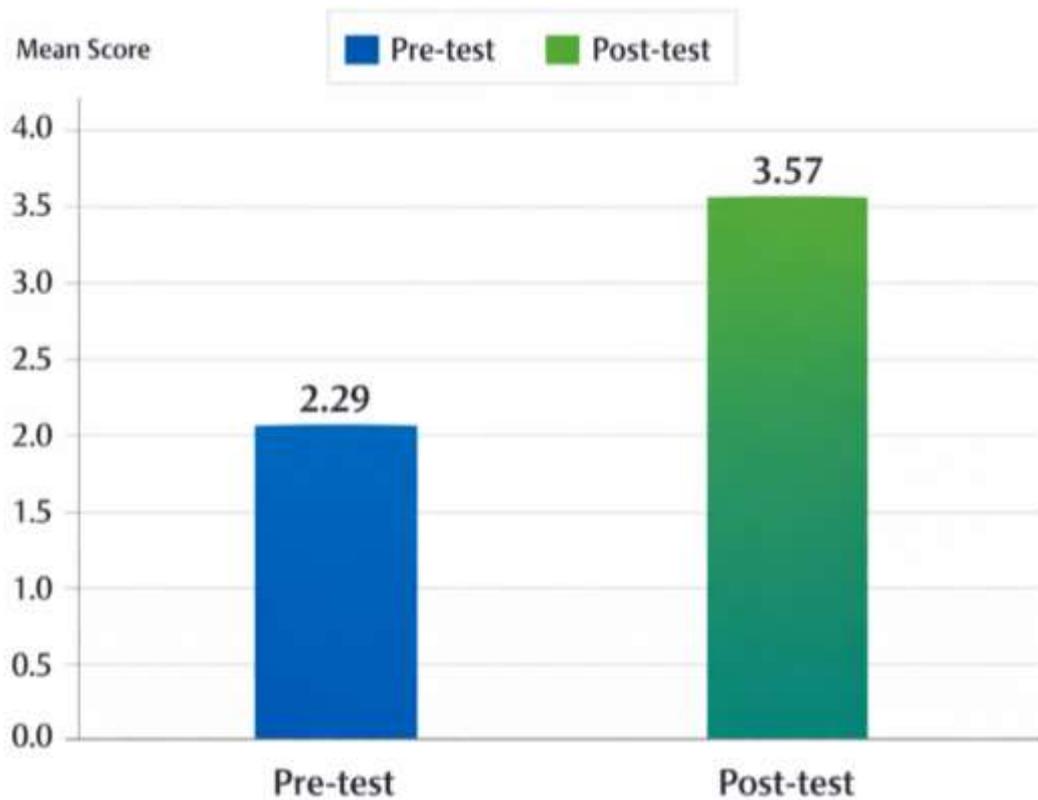
Inferential Statistics**Table 3***Paired Sample t-test*

Pair	Difference	Mean	SD	N
	Pre-test	2.29	0.90	40
	Post-test	4.0	0.90	40

p < .001

The paired sample t-test exposed a significant increase in students' cooperative skills from pre-test (M = 2.29, SD = 0.90) to post-test (M = 3.57, SD = 0.90), $t = 39 = 9.00$, $p < .001$. This specifies that the intervention of service-learning activities effectively improved 9th graders' cooperation skills.

Figure 1
Mean Difference



Findings of the Study

Based on the statistical analysis and behavioral observations conducted during the 5-week intervention at Govt. Girls Model High School, the following findings were established:

The study found a dramatic shift in student cooperation skills by analyzing the data through descriptive and inferential statistics from "Never" to "Frequently/Always" across all 15 indicators of cooperation. There was a substantial increase in the mean cooperation scores of the 40 participants. The pre-test mean score was 2.29, which rose to 4.00 in the post-test, showing a massive gain.

Conclusion

According to the empirical results, it can be concluded that service learning has a significant and statistically significant positive influence on cooperation skills of 9th -grade students. The shift of traditional and individualistic teaching to a social interdependence model enabled the students to shift from passivity to active cooperation.

The research demonstrates that service-learning activities, like community cleanliness drives or peer-support circles, pose a positive interdependence in which students feel that they can only achieve success when their classmates do. This develops the necessary skills in life such as active listening, negotiation and conflict management. In the end, the study concludes that the academic objectives can be successfully linked with the valuable community service, and the measures of the cooperation and socialization of students are achieved spontaneously.

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