

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A VIRTUAL SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT ON PERCEIVED LONELINESS AMONG SENIOR ADULTS

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BACKGROUND

- Loneliness and social isolation are a “global pandemic” among the world’s elderly population.
- 24% of non-institutionalized adults have experienced social isolation
- Service-learning is an effective pedagogy in enhancing student outcomes.

OBJECTIVE

To assess the effectiveness of an intergenerational virtual service-learning project on loneliness, among older individuals and ageism, among undergraduate college student.

STUDY DESIGN

- Design**
- Pre-post design-fall 2020 survey data
 - Random assignment of undergraduate students enrolled in a course with special focus on cultural competence

- Sample**
- Service-learning students (n= 18)
 - Non-service-learning students (n=24)
 - Senior adults (n=22)

- Service-learning students**
- Students asked to have a virtual conversation with senior partner for at least 30 minutes a week for a total of 6 weeks
 - Students required to write a one-half-page reflection after each virtual meeting
 - Students required to write a one-page reflection after three virtual meetings

- Non-service-learning students**
- Students asked to write a 5-page paper on ageism in different countries

- Pre and post surveys**
- All students asked to fill out pre and post surveys (ONLINE): *Ageing Differential Scale. Ageism, two-item researcher generated Likert rating to measure student confidence interacting with seniors*
 - All seniors asked to fill out pre and post surveys (PAPER-BASED) *Ageing Differential Scale, UCLA Loneliness Scale, researcher-generated 10-point Likert Scale on loneliness.*

PRE and POST STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

	Group ^a	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ASD ^b	1.00	18	109.5556	16.49332	3.88749
	2.00	24	116.4583	17.32798	3.53706
Ageism	1.00	18	46.5000	8.78669	2.07104
	2.00	24	43.5833	10.34583	2.11183
Two-item Competency	1.00	18	16.8333	4.27372	1.00733
	2.00	24	17.5417	3.94505	0.80528
ASDPost*	1.00	18	95.611	18.17930	4.28490
	2.00	24	109.7917	25.12227	5.12806
AgeismPost*	1.00	18	35.1667	12.21980	2.88023
	2.00	24	42.9167	11.52659	2.35286
Two-item CompetencyPost*	1.00	18	20.6667	3.46410	0.81650
	2.00	24	18.2500	3.66238	0.74758

PRE and POST SENIOR SURVEY RESULTS

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ASD	1.00	22	100.65	20.88131	4.66920
ASDPost			90.50	21.35046	4.77411
UCLA Loneliness Scale	1.00	22	73.65	5.59393	1.25084
UCLA Loneliness ScalePost [!]			68.30	9.40940	2.10401
One-item loneliness scale	1.00	22	3.80	2.191	0.490
One-item loneliness scalePost ^{!!}			2.412	1.31389	0.29330

^a Group 1 – SL Group, Group 2-Non-SL Group
^b Ageism Semantic Differential Scaling
* Mean difference of the two groups significant at p≤ .05
[!] Mean difference pre and post of the same group significant at p ≤.05
^{!!} Mean difference pre and post of the same group significant at p≤ . 01

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

- SL students show a significant decrease in ageism bias compared with non-SL students
- SL students show a significant increase in competency interacting with senior individuals compared with non-SL students.
- SL was effective in significantly reducing loneliness levels among seniors.
- SL reduces ageism bias among senior participants, but it was not statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

- The hands-on training from SL pedagogy is a two edged-sword that can both solve a social issue and train students in social engagement.

LIMITATIONS

- COVID-19 pandemic prevented students from having a face-to-face interaction with senior partners.
- Study was done in one semester (fall 2020)
- Study results are not generalizable since sample of students are from Texas State BHA program and seniors are from San Marcos, TX residents.
- However, study design is replicable.

IRB approval

Study was approved by Texas State IRB # 7046

