



Perceived Effectiveness of University Student Volunteer Educational Programs for Primary School Children Among Adult Residents in Seremban

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Abstract

University student volunteer educational programs for primary school children have become increasingly prominent as a means of supporting children's learning and strengthening community engagement. This study aims to examine perceived effectiveness of university student volunteer educational programs for primary school children among adult residents in Seremban. A quantitative research approach was employed, involving 150 respondents selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through an online survey platform. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with descriptive statistics employed to examine respondents' perceptions of program effectiveness. Reliability analysis indicated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.977. The findings revealed that respondents generally perceived the programs positively, as reflected by a high overall mean score of 4.239 (SD = 0.772). The results suggest that adult residents believe university student volunteer educational programs contribute positively to children's educational development by providing additional academic support, enhancing learning motivation, and complementing formal classroom instruction. Furthermore, respondents acknowledged the role of university student volunteers in addressing educational needs within the community and supporting children's overall learning experiences. The study concludes that university student volunteer educational programs are perceived as effective educational support initiatives and highlights the importance of sustaining such programs to promote continuous educational development and stronger university-community collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

An individual can volunteer to help others through donating their time, energy, knowledge, and/or skills in a way that helps another person or group without expecting any kind of reward or compensation (You et al., 2025). As

a result of this relationship between the university and the surrounding community as well as experiential education are interrelated entities, student volunteering is an important way for both communities to have a positive impact on each other through student volunteering (Bakri et al., 2021). Community based content and programs to create a well-rounded college graduate with both strong academic, social and leadership skills have continued to evolve at Malaysian universities because of this synergy (You et al., 2025). Volunteerism is now at the forefront of the mission of university student through volunteerism by providing additional student volunteer opportunities through student-motivated, focused, purposeful, and beneficial to both the organizations and to the individual's career enhancement.

However, the effectiveness of these volunteer programs must be evaluated through the lens of their impact on the primary school students they serve. The classical model for determining academic success in Primary level was an exclusive model based on how well the children learned through traditional instructional methods, but now academic success is being linked to the emotional and psychological capabilities possessed by the children as well (Pozo-Rico & Sandoval, 2020). Also indicated through research is that many students at the Primary level face barriers to performing at an optimal level and one that is of greater consequence than other barriers is the anxiety students experience when taking assessments that have exhibited a strong negative correlation to their performance in areas such as Math and Language. Furthermore, achieving "sustainable education" requires the coordination of various educational forces, including informal social support that can help mitigate these psychological stressors (Albulescu et al., 2023).

Research supports that university students' involvement in volunteer activities is associated with increased critical thinking skills and improved academic performance of student volunteers (You et al., 2025). However, little is known about the specific impact of university students' engagement in volunteering on the academic trajectory of elementary learners in specific localities like Seremban (Bakri et al., 2021). University student volunteers may help primary school children succeed by providing a supportive environment. University student volunteer mentors can assist in building knowledge and possibly emotional intelligence, components that can lead to better academic performance for primary school children. The purpose of this study will be to evaluate if university student volunteer engagement with primary school children in the Seremban area improves the ability of primary school children to overcome their academic challenges and improve their academic performance and ultimately contribute to a revitalized and sustainable local education system (Albulescu et al., 2023).

Parents consider their families to be the leading educational stakeholder and influencer in a child's life. The actions of parents' involvement and expectations guide children toward higher levels of academic performance (Okello, 2023). When parents are living in difficult urban neighbourhoods, they often have dramatic challenges such as economic stressors and difficult living conditions that prevent them from providing the resources needed to develop strong social, academic, and life skills for their children (Burns et al., 2025; Okello, 2023). Schools or educational institutions have recognized that by creating volunteer programs, they can provide the one-on-one support parents seek to fill the "gaps" that exist for children, specifically in core subject areas of Math and English, in the home learning environment with the added benefit of providing them access outside of the regular school day (Burns et al., 2025). The creation of the partnership between the school, the university volunteer, and the family allows for consistency in providing the student an "everyday routine of learning" and provides psychological security for the student (Okello, 2023). Many parents have reported that their students demonstrated improved behaviour and greater academic success following the mentorship of volunteers through these university-sponsored programs. In this way, the university-sponsored mentorship programs, through the partnership of the family, are viewed as important links to fulfil the family's desire to help their children develop into independent, successful adults (Burns et al., 2025; Okello, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational programs that incorporate university student volunteers are a promising developing practice within higher education. They allow students to gain valuable insights and skills by combining classroom knowledge and community service. A large proportion of these programs consist of university students providing support in education and mentoring or tutoring primary school children in learning activities, and these programs are designed to further develop children's learning and support the holistic development of children's learning. Volunteer educational programs do not only support school children. They are an expression of the engagement and accountability of universities to the community through such programs as Service-Learning Malaysia (SULAM). By providing structured academic help to primary school students, these programs improve partnerships between universities and local communities. In Malaysia, Service-Learning Malaysia (SULAM) integrates community involvement and educational initiatives, allowing universities to focus on community-

directed solutions to learning issues facing school children and developing sustainable partnerships between universities and communities (Wahab, 2024).

Previous studies have shown that educational volunteering programs for university students benefit both students and the respective communities. Service-learning and volunteering programs give university students the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills previously learned in the classroom to develop their leadership, interpersonal, teamwork, and critical thinking skills in the real world. In addition, the programs help develop students' social responsibilities and community engagement from the numerous quality contacts made with community members. In Malaysia, volunteer activities in education and community service are the most popular options for student engagement, demonstrating university commitment to a socially responsible graduate (Awang Noh et al., 2023).

A recent studies have reported that educational volunteer programmes implemented by university students can positively influence the academic development of primary school students through structured mentoring and tutoring activities. Such programmes provide personalised academic support that enhances students' understanding of learning materials, encourages engagement in learning activities and creates meaningful educational experiences for children. Cramer et al. (2024) demonstrated that tutoring provided by university students contributed to improving primary school students' learning experiences and interest in STEM-related subjects. Moreover, recent studies on tutoring interventions among young learners indicates that structured tutoring support can contribute to improvements in academic achievement and literacy outcomes by providing students with additional guidance beyond regular classroom instruction (Robinson et al., 2025). These findings highlight the potential of university student volunteer programmes as an effective primary school students' academic development.

There is a large body of research that demonstrates that volunteer-led education interventions are effective for supporting children's learning. Ritter et al. (2009) performed a meta-analysis of 21 studies of volunteer tutoring programs for elementary and middle school students and determined that volunteer tutoring programs had a positive effect on the academic achievement of students. The study showed that improvements were made in literacy related skills such as reading fluency, writing and word recognition. This study indicates that the educational programs conducted by volunteers are useful to be used as supplements to school education, especially in improving student learning outcomes and academic performance in primary school.

Increasingly, students at universities have participated in a range of community-based educational programs as tutors and mentors to school children. Ohlson (2022) explored the Collegiate Achievement Mentoring Program (CAMP) that matched university student mentors with school aged children for academic and leadership support. The study found that mentors and mentees had positive results in their leadership development, educational goals, and academic engagement. The results showed that University students can be effective in supporting children's educational development and at the same time build better partnerships between the university and the community.

Mentoring programs for volunteers also have been found to have a positive impact on children's educational outcomes. Miller et al. (2011) assessed the Time to Read mentoring programme with 512 primary school children and concluded that there was a significant increase in reading fluency, reading rate and decoding skills among the children who participated in the programme. Also, the program helped to build children's aspirations for the future. These results help to prove that volunteer-supported educational programs can have a positive effect on the academic performance and development of primary school children. It is therefore important to understand the perceptions of the public on the effectiveness of the university student volunteer educational programs to evaluate their impact on the local community.

Perception held by the community is vital in assessing the sustainability of such programmes involving volunteer students from universities. Various research works carried out previously show that good perceptions held by the members of the community and stakeholders lead to better support of the programmes, hence their success. According to Awang Noh et al. (2023), community services and education-based activities were the top types of volunteerism carried out by university students in Malaysia. The research shows that communities usually embrace this type of programmes due to its tangible benefits especially to educational activities. The reason behind it is that community acceptance is a key component that ensures sustained involvement of both parties.

In the same way, Lau et al. (2021) stressed the need to consider the perceptions of community stakeholders when assessing the influence of service-learning programs initiated by universities. Based on the results of the interview conducted with community organizations, it was shown that the perceptions of the community about the participation of university students as volunteers are generally positive since such activity contributes to improving organizational capacities, delivering services more effectively, and acquiring resources and knowledge.

In addition, educational programs implemented by university students prove to be helpful in educating children as they help stimulate their interest in education.

Also, according to Mohd Zahidi et al. (2022), being part of community volunteer programs brought about substantial educational and social gains for the students themselves while, at the same time, building the connection between them and the community. The research indicated that volunteer work improved academic performance, social responsibility, and personal growth among students. Therefore, community members could hold positive attitudes toward university volunteer programs since apart from providing services to local beneficiaries, the programs help produce socially responsible graduates in the future.

Further backing these findings is the research conducted by Cardoso Pinto et al. (2023), which evaluated the Teddy Bear Hospital program between university students acting as volunteers and primary schoolchildren. According to their findings, the teachers, who are the main community members in such scenarios, perceived the program to be highly advantageous for learning among the pupils. In the case of this study, children were observed to be more interactive, motivated, and responsive when taught through educational sessions by university students.

Overall, these findings show that there is a generally favorable view of the university student volunteer educational programs from the community's perspective. This is because when educational benefits are seen in the community, learning experiences improve for the children, and good relations are developed between universities and the communities where these educational programs are implemented (Awang Noh et al., 2023; Lau et al., 2021; Mohd Zahidi et al., 2022; Cardoso Pinto et al., 2023). However, although there are available studies related to the perceptions of the stakeholders and the community about educational programs, there are only very few studies that have studied the perceptions of adult residents regarding the effectiveness of such programs for primary children in Seremban.

Despite several past studies that have looked into volunteering, learning through services, and community participation, there is little research done into the perceptions of adult residents about the effectiveness of such programs designed to educate primary school children via university students. The majority of the existing literature pays more attention to the perspectives and benefits of the student volunteers involved in the process rather than the opinions of community members benefiting from such a program (Awang Noh et al., 2023; Lau et al., 2021; Mohd Zahidi et al., 2022; Cardoso Pinto et al., 2023). Moreover, empirical research done with respect to the perspective of adult residents in Seremban is rather rare.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to examine adult residents' perceptions of the effectiveness of university student volunteer educational programmes for primary school children in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate as it facilitates the systematic collection and statistical analysis of numerical data, enabling objective measurement of respondents' perceptions and enhancing the reliability of the findings. The target population comprised adult residents of Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. A total of 150 respondents participated in the study. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling technique based on their accessibility, willingness to participate, and ability to complete an online questionnaire. Although convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method, it was deemed appropriate due to its practicality in obtaining responses from the target population within the available time and resource constraints. Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A gathered respondents' demographic information, while Section B measured perceptions of the effectiveness of the university student volunteer educational programme using 17 items. Each item was assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These statistical measures were employed to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and evaluate their overall perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the volunteer educational programme.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Respondents

Table 1.0 presents the demographic profile of the 150 respondents involved in the study. In terms of gender, most respondents were female (61.3%), while males accounted for 38.7%. This indicates a higher participation rate among female respondents. Most respondents were aged between 18–29 years old (32.0%), followed closely by those aged 30–39 years old (30.0%). Respondents aged 40–49 years old represented 21.3%, while those aged 50 years old and above formed the smallest age group at 16.7%. This suggests that the sample was largely composed of young and middle-aged adults. In terms of academic qualification respondents holding a Bachelor's Degree formed the largest group (44.0%), followed by Diploma holders (26.7%) and those with Secondary School education (18.7%). Respondents with postgraduate qualifications accounted for 8.7%, while only 2.0% reported having Primary School education as their highest qualification. Regarding employment status, the largest proportion of respondents worked in the Private Sector (30.7%), followed by the Government Sector (25.3%). Unemployed respondents accounted for 20.7%, while Self-Employed individuals represented 14.7%. Retired respondents and those classified under Others accounted for 6.7% and 2.0%, respectively. In terms of residential area, most respondents resided in suburban areas (40.0%), followed by urban areas (31.3%) and rural areas (28.7%). Table 1.0

Table 1.0
PROFILE OF RESPONDENT (N=150)

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	58	38.70
	Female	92	61.30
Age	18-29 years old	48	32.00
	30-39 years old	45	30.00
	40-49 years old	32	21.30
	50 years old and above	25	16.70
Academic Qualification	Primary School	3	2.00
	Secondary School	28	18.70
	Diploma	40	26.70
	Bachelor's Degree	66	44.00
	Postgraduate Degree	13	8.70
Employment Status	Government Sector	38	25.30
	Private Sector	46	30.70
	Self-Employed	22	14.70
	Retired	10	6.70
	Unemployed	31	20.70
	Others	3	2.00

According to Pallant (2016), Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical measure used to evaluate the internal consistency and reliability of a set of items within a scale. It determines the extent to which the items are related and measure the same underlying construct. An alpha coefficient of 0.90 and above indicates excellent reliability, 0.80 to 0.89

indicates good reliability, 0.70 to 0.79 indicates acceptable reliability, 0.60 to 0.69 indicates questionable reliability, 0.50 to 0.59 indicates poor reliability, while values below 0.50 are considered unacceptable. Table 2.0 presents the reliability analysis for the variable Perceived Effectiveness of University Student Volunteer Educational Programs for Primary School Children Among Adult Residents in Seremban. The construct comprised 17 items and achieved a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.977. Therefore, the reliability level is considered acceptable, suggesting that the items demonstrate excellent internal consistency and are suitable for use in subsequent analyses.

Table 2
RELIABILITY TEST

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Assumed
Perceived Effectiveness of University Student Volunteer Educational Programs for Primary School Children Among Adult Residents in Seremban.	17	0.977	Acceptable

Table 3.0 presents the interpretation scale used to evaluate the mean scores obtained in this study. Mean values ranging from 1.00 to 2.33 are interpreted as low, values between 2.34 and 3.67 indicate a moderate level, while values from 3.68 to 5.00 are considered high. Table 4.0 displays the mean score and standard deviation for the variable Perceived Effectiveness of University Student Volunteer Educational Programs for Primary School Children Among Adult Residents in Seremban. Based on the responses of 150 participants, the variable recorded a mean score of 4.2392 and a standard deviation of 0.77245. Referring to the interpretation scale in Table 1.2, the mean score falls within the high category. This finding suggests that respondents generally demonstrated a high level of agreement with Effectiveness of University Student Volunteer Educational Programs for Primary School Children.

Table 3.0
LEVEL OF MEAN SCORE RANGE

Mean Score Range	Level
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.67	Medium
3.58 – 5.00	High

Table 4.0
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Perceived Effectiveness of University Student Volunteer Educational Programs for Primary School Children Among Adult Residents in Seremban.	4.24	0.772	150

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived effectiveness of the university student volunteer programmes of education for students in primary schools among the adult residents in the area of Seremban. The respondents for this study were 150 people who were selected using the quantitative research approach and the data was analysed using SPSS. The results of the reliability analysis showed high level of internal consistency

(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.977$), thus, the instrument was reliable in measuring the respondents perception of the effectiveness of the programmes.

Overall, the results indicated that in general the respondents had positive attitudes towards university student volunteer educational programmes because the overall mean score ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.772$) was high. Adult residents felt that these programmes offer children valuable educational assistance and enhancement to their knowledge of school subjects, as well as fostering their interest and motivation to learn, in addition to classroom learning. Respondents further acknowledged that university student volunteers make a contribution to children's self-confidence, communication skills and learning experiences in general. The results indicate that the educational volunteer programmes are seen as useful in meeting the educational needs and in building collaboration between universities and local communities.

However, the results of this research are in line with the previous studies, which indicate that educational volunteering and service-learning programmes have beneficial impacts on the communities and the college volunteers. The results of previous studies have shown that the general public tends to be pro-university educational initiatives as they can help improve children's education, build university/community relationships and foster social responsibility in university students. In the same way, the present study affirms the view of the adult residents of Seremban that the university student volunteer educational programmes are effective programmes that provide educational support to children, as well as to the community in general.

In general, this study was able to add empirical evidence to the previous literature in the field of perceptions that the community have towards the educational programmes of the University student volunteers in the local context of Seremban. The results indicate that the continuation and development of these programmes are essential when there is a mutual partnership between the universities, schools, community organizations and relevant parties involved. This suggests a larger and more diverse sample from a variety of geographical location and involvement of parent and teacher perspectives and of primary school children to generate a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness and impact of educational programmes from university students volunteers in the longer term.

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