Exploring the narratives of Malaysian undergraduate students on service-learning experience in eco-tourism industries

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Abstract*: *As one of the teaching strategies that promote students with hands-on experiences linked with the community engagement, service-learning (SL) has been uniquely positioned favourable in higher education institutions. Precisely, SL is closely related to work integrated learning (WIL) in regards to blending theories with practicality. This study was primarily aimed to explore what Malaysian undergraduate students learned based on their experience in SL project. Eco-tourism industries in Malacca are represented as the community partners that also involved in the project. Twenty informants were selected among 80 students and interviewed through focus group discussions using semi-structured questions. Based on the analysis using constant comparative method, the findings revealed and discussed three emerging themes namely self-value, knowledge-sharing and managing conflicts. The application of SL components involving real situations with the community partners had stimulated broad experience in terms of students' knowledge and values development.

Keywords: Service-learning; Students' Experience; Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the last few decades, with the change in education system, Service-Learning (SL) has moved towards one of the leading practices in higher education institutions that highlights experience as the main component. Previously, the practice of SL was only focused on community service, which then gradually shifted to students learning development [1]. Currently, SL has uniquely positioned favourable to lecturers in their teaching and learning strategy to prosper students' learning experience compared to typical classroom settings. Furthermore, SL experience has a high impact on students' learning and engagement as well as potential in providing students with meaningful learning [2].

Additionally, SL is one of the approaches in experiential learning that promotes students with broad experiences in community engagement, fulfilling the employment traits required by employers. According to [3], SL is defined as a teaching strategy connected to curricular objectives where students perform active participation in service experience to develop knowledge and skills in meeting the community needs. Besides, through active participation and reflection on the SL experience, students are able to apply what they have learned in the classroom and exposed to real-world situations [4] . It is argued that compared to traditional teaching strategy in a classroom setting, SL offers paradigm grounded with experience involving students doing activities in the new learning environment alongside the community.

In Malaysia, the practice of SL among lecturers in HEIs is still not well established compared to community service where the studies are increasingly prevalent in HEIs [5-9]. Although several scholars have conducted the studies related to SL in Malaysia setting [10-12], more empirical evidence on SL experience among Malaysian students are needed to promote and legitimate this teaching strategy in Malaysia. To address these limitations, this study conducted the SL project according to the needs of the communities parallel with students' course content through the semester and explored what Malaysian students learned through their SL experience.

2. SL EXPERIENCE

Myriad definitions regarding SL have been discovered by previous researchers [13]. Indirectly, this shows that the studies related to SL are getting more attention from various parties. [14] argued that the variety of definitions of SL have created confusion to researchers. This confusion depends on the context of study such as the focus of study, population and the methodology used. Nevertheless, the majority of researchers agreed that SL can enhance projects where the service and learning are operated in balance and explicitly integrated [15] despite its various definitions. As a form of experiential learning, SL offers students to participate in activities that address human and community needs together with structured design to promote students' learning and development [14]. In addition, this process of learning with regards to the knowledge is developed through a transformation of experience [16]. While the SL project takes place out of the students' comfort zone, the experience gained through this setting can be implemented when they enter the real working world. Consequently, the learning process primarily by students does not only depends on positive experiences, but may also come from negative ones [17].

Additionally, positive SL experiences among students have been repeatedly documented. For instance, SL has been seen to foster academic achievements [4, 18, 19], personal growth [18], civic and ethics [20, 21], as well as career and skills [4, 19, 22, 23]. Meanwhile, based on a meta-analysis of 11 empirical studies involving 2129 students by [21], it was found that SL experience has shown positive understanding on social responsibility, cultural awareness and cognitive development. Through the SL platform, students understand their social responsibility to serve with respect to the needs of the community. Indirectly, they polish their personal qualities in terms of self-values development [24] to help the community and have the desire to involve in SL projects in the future [25].

On the other hand, lecturers assign students in SL project according to the course content to encourage their knowledge and skills. It was found that students who participated in the project were able to learn the course content effectively as they need to make early preparation before collaborating with the community [4, 19]. Furthermore, a partnership with experienced communities brought more knowledge-sharing opportunity to the students when performing the project [26, 27]. Students also used their prior knowledge in the course to establish a connection and transfer it to real-life situations [28, 29].

Practically, SL incorporates students, faculty and community partners to work together under one roof and share the same mission towards an effective SL project. While collaborating in this project may enhance strong connections between students and community partners [30], some students may face conflicts and challenges during the tasks in SL [31]. Meanwhile, as the students concentrate on applying course content to serve the partners, conflicts that coincidently happened because of arguments among members and community [4] would be an essential experience for them to enter the working world.

Apart from that, few scholars' mentioned that the ability of SL in providing positive experiences because of students may have been self-selected into SL project [28, 32]. SL

may encounter negative experience among students as they are not able to go beyond their comfort zone. Additionally, some students who were forced to complete the SL project may respond with resentment [33] and discomfort [29, 34]. Suitable learning environments in conducting the project may affect SL experience by the students. For instance, negative SL experience perceived by the students may come from unresponsive environments with the community [35].

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Experiential learning theory is tied with its intellectual origin works by Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. Then, [16] proposed the experiential learning theory based on these educational philosophies. Generally, the theory offers a fundamentally different perspective of the learning process from other learning theories where it incorporates different prescriptions for the conduct of education, the proper relationship between learning, work and other life activities, as well as the creation of knowledge itself. [16] proposed the theory due to one reason, which is to emphasise the central role of experience plays in the learning process. Particularly, experiential learning theory is a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour. The theory describes that the process of learning happens when knowledge is developing through the transformation of experience [16]. As experience plays the central role in learning process, it also emphasises students' direct reflection on what they are doing, which will significantly increase their knowledge and skills over experience obtained. Additionally, the characteristics of experiential learning proposed by [16] and closely related to SL are as follow:

  i.   Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.
 ii.   Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience.
iii.   Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.
 iv.   Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.
  v.   Learning involves transactions between a person and environment.
 vi.   Learning is the process of creating knowledge.

At the same time, experiential learning theory proposed by [16] comprises four elements namely concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. These four elements are characterised in two dialectically related modes, which are grasping experience (concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation) and transforming experience (reflective observation and active experimentation). Then, a learning cycle is formed incorporating these elements as illustrated in Figure 1. In detailed, a person can enter it at any point of these stages while learning occurs as the person repeats the cycle. However, [14] mentioned that most forms of experiential educations including SL are effectively designed, to begin with, concrete experience.

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                    │  experience  │
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        ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
        │    Active    │      │  Reflective  │
        │experimentation│      │ observation  │
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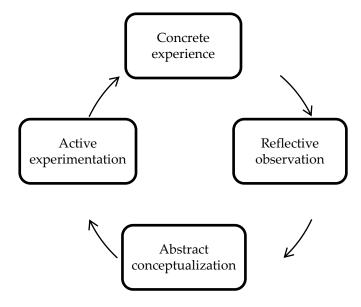
Figure 1. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

In addition, researchers have associated the experiential learning theory with SL due to the central role of experience in students' learning process [36]. Through SL, the students can enter concrete experience stage when they started to participate and acquire the experience in the project. Next, in a reflective observation stage, students reflect based on their experience in the previous stage. This reflection may come in two ways, whether students may reflect personally on their own or informal reflection session with the educators and group members [37]. In the third stage of abstract conceptualisation, students incorporate the concrete experience with the concepts and theories of the course based on reflection. Finally, the students utilise these generalisations as a guide and actively apply them to engage in further SL project in the active experimentation stage.

4. METHOD

This study employed the application of qualitative research using a case study approach. Informants were among the TVET students involved in the SL project throughout the semester. Additionally, they were purposefully selected through the criterion-based selection to voluntarily share their experiences. According to [38], the criteria chosen for purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases. Besides, two types of data collection were used in this study, which are focus group discussions and document analysis. A total of four focus groups were conducted using semi-structured questions. This focused interview can guide the journey along with the sessions and the informants to keep a focus on a specified topic [39]. In the analysis process, the interviews were transcribed and analysed using a constant comparative method to develop the codes, categories and themes. A few strategies like members check, peer review and data triangulation were employed to ensure the validation and reliability of the findings. Apart from that, all research materials in this study were approved by the ethics committee for research involving human subjects from Universiti Putra Malaysia with the reference number JKE-UPM-2018-225.

4.1   SL Project with Eco-Tourism Industries

This project was the initiative from the Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia to answer the call from the government to create graduates that are balanced and holistic from various aspects while at the same time providing the most possible services to

the local community. The Department of Science and Technical Education gave full permission for researchers to appoint the population of the study to ensure the success of the SL project. In addition, this project has received full support and cooperation from the eco-tourism industries in Malacca. Specifically, there were 136 registered entrepreneurs under the Malacca Bumiputera Chalet, Resort, and Homestay Association with 80 students who enrolled in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) based stream and in their second and third year program involved in this project.

Initially, the problem encountered by the community was identified by the educators after detailed meetings. Then, the students were given a briefing by their respective lecturers on the SL project including its process, logistic details, community background and identified problems. The lecturers were given the tasks and role as facilitators in the project. All the students were divided into 16 small groups consisting 5 students to run one out of two main activities, which were (a) Educational-based program: in-group activities, shared-expertise, entrepreneur's induction program and (b) Technical based-course: safety and accident prevention hands-on practices and demonstration.

They had proceeded to organise brainstorming and role play session with their group members as a preparation for their presentation to the community on the 10th week of the semester. Furthermore, a proper organisation was established among the students to decide the project manager, secretary, treasurer and all the other designated roles to ensure that the project will proceed smoothly. Notably, students were able to apply their knowledge and skills they obtained to form a proper collaboration and team spirit among their group members. At the end of the semester and after completing the project, the students were able to complete a module on 'Safety and Accidence Prevention'

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Since this study employed a qualitative approach, the emerging themes were identified according to the data from the transcriptions and document analysis. To be summarized, three themes were presented and followed by the connected categories in Table 1. Then, rich descriptions and excerpt from the transcriptions were included to explain each of the emerging themes.

Table 1: Summary of the Findings Based on Themes and Categories

Themes	Categories
Self-values	Interpersonal
	Intrapersonal
Knowledge-sharing	Theoretical knowledge
	Practical Knowledge
Managing conflicts	Conflicts with their own selves
	Conflicts between students
	Conflicts between communities

5.1   Theme 1: Self-values

This theme revealed how students' experiences had developed their values and ethics by doing SL activity with the communities. In fact, these values cannot be learned and taught easily through typical classroom approach. Interestingly, by doing the SL project, students indirectly showed their self-values were developed. For this theme, there are two categories, namely interpersonal and intrapersonal.

5.1.1   Intrapersonal

This category mainly reflects on how students gained and developed the values from their own selves. Specifically, intrapersonal can best be defined as relating and within self-minds.

Some students feel that they need to be responsible for their tasks given and give commitment towards that. Informant 2D told that "since we worked as a group, we would feel bad for our friends if we do not join them and didn't give the right commitment to the task. It felt unfair".

Apart from that, informant 2B added, "It didn't feel nice since it was our responsibility". Meanwhile, when they were asked regarding SL project improves their responsibility, informant 2B answered, "Yes, we felt a bit more responsible." It is supported by informant 2D, "Well since everyone shared some portion of responsibility to the job." Some students also reflect on their responsibility to represent the university's name to the world outside. Informant 3E told that "In addition to that, we are also representing, we're representing UPM, our lecturers, so we couldn't just do a half-baked job. Maybe if this involves only our individual self then we might be able to take it easy but we just can't help it that we're representing so many parties in this."

Meanwhile, most of the students developed and increased their self-confidence by doing this project. Informant 2D commented, "That's the thing, I felt that way too because I was a shy person and normally I have a problem just confronting people, then when it gets bad I will be stunned and confused on what should be said. It seems like there is a better improvement after this experience I had." Another student added that they felt much confidence after doing the presentation in front of the communities. Additionally, informant 3E stated, "So, I was like trying really hard and then I finally realized that they actually understood what I was saying but it was just my lack of confidence that clouded me. When I realized the truth that it was just their way of reacting to me, I was assured that they understood me. Actually, my presentation was pretty interesting and it made me feel a bit more confident an less fearful. Just saying." Moreover, this statement has also been supported by written reflection by informant 2 which stated that this SL project brings them the opportunity to promote and grow their self-confidence.

Other than that, students who participated in this project had shown growth from their intrapersonal in terms of self-gratification. In the process of teaching, the students would be very satisfied when the audience actually understood the knowledge that they are trying to impart to them. Besides, informant 3E shared, "I gained satisfaction from working. How do I put this into words… When I taught them something and I could see that they understood what I was saying, it just made me very happy." Also, most students felt affected by the response and cooperation from the communities. Informant 4C shared that, "When we first presented and then we get to see their response to what we said, we were very touched by it. In the morning, there weren't that many people. Later in the evening, the admins of the chalet came. We learned later that through our lecturer that it was the most visit by the chalet admins ever. At first, we were really frightened by the possibility that they didn't like our presentation and when they slowly come in one after another, we were very excited."

5.1.2   Interpersonal

This category described how the students evolved their self-values in terms of collaborating and working with other members. Interestingly, students show positive development of cooperation among members, respecting the communities, open-minded towards giving and accepting opinions and empathy. To fulfill the tasks and run project successful, students need to cooperate among them.

Most of them told that cooperation is the key factor in completing the tasks when they were asked about things to consider towards running the project smoothly. Informant 4A reflects that,"For me, teamwork. At first, because we are the one that is leading the program, we wanted the thing to be perfect. On paper, we really have to understand the planning and find the right friends." Informant 4C added, "Teamwork between members". Additionally, this

coding was supported by reflection notes by students. Informant 2 stated, "In addition, I realized that the teamwork spirit that we have with each other is very important throughout our project and we really needed to have a proper understanding with each other."

On the other hand, students felt that they need to be careful and respect the communities when giving the presentation and communicate with them. Informant 4A shared that, "Sometimes we are like his children, so we don't create that gap with him. We should treat him like our old man". Another situation added by informant 4D, "Then, one of the people there really loves their makeup. The group next to me, she was teaching my friends. It seemed like it is hard to accept the person because there are a lot of ways to apply makeup. Maybe that is just her ways of doing it, maybe others couldn't accept our ways of doing it too. So we just play along with it. This is exactly the kind of time that we have to learn to handle a situation."

Meanwhile, students became more open in giving and taking opinion from others in order to achieve their objective. Informant 3E commented, "We cannot judge their opinion first, we can't just simply say that something is wrong, we need to praise them for their opinion first. Usually, a leader will give their opinion too right, so maybe instead we can say that 'it'll be better to ask our president first' and then we will discuss the next course of action. They would find it easier to accept the suggestion if we actually took the time to appreciate their idea first. If we are one of the inferiors, then we can just listen and then listen up to the majority's decision."

Other than that, most of the students had a sense of empathy with respect to uncomfortable situations between the communities. For instance, informant 1E shared that, "A good example on how to tell someone off, it is usually good to meet them face to face rather than you reprimand them in public. Sometimes people do point their fingers to someone and call them out. Sure, some people might take it as a joke but some people would really find that as insensitive. Of course, they would act like it didn't matter, however you could tell that they are hurting. We're calling them out for something that is bad after all, not for something that is cool or amazing." In addition, informant 3A mentioned, "As you know during the first aid, I feel like what was said was really blunt. They were too direct that way and we still have to remember about manners too. During the emergency… I mean the fire drill, I was really embarrassed. I was with X and Y and they asked about the emergency plan. We said that we don't have it. We later looked at Z and saw that his face totally changed.".

5.2   Theme 2: Knowledge-sharing

In particular, this theme highlights the key areas of learning by exchanging information between students and the communities in a different setting. Although students prepared the presentation with their knowledge based on the discussion with group members and facilitate by the lecturers in the classroom, but interestingly when in real setting communities also top up the information based on their experiences. In this theme, two categories were particularly focused: 1) theoretical knowledge and 2) practical knowledge.

5.2.1   Theoretical knowledge

Generally, this category discussed how students sharing their knowledge in term of subject matter such as grooming and safety in the chalet. Notably, most of the students felt that their knowledge more on theory compared to the experienced communities. For instance, informant 4A commented, "Businessman like him has a different kind of knowledge because he literally runs the business, while we are solely based on theory. So we were able to compare how things are in real life compared to theory. So we saw what are the good things that we have learned and also what's the advantage of their ways of doing things. For

example, there are tons of steps in order to get certain licenses right? They didn't follow these steps thus they couldn't get them."

Then, informant 4C added, "Then, in one of the MS (Manipulative Skills) we had a slot to tell the owners what was missing in the chalet that needed to be improved." Meanwhile, students also gave input to the communities towards safety aspect basically emergency route map. Informant 3D informed that "Then, at that time the chalet has few shortcomings that we could improve. For example, there is no emergency plan there. So we were able to tell the owner what was missing so that he could improvise his properties."

Other than that, students shared their grooming knowledge with the communities particularly to prepare their front line staffs. Additionally, informant 1E shared, "Hah, like me for example. We were about to give some information on hair science to the chalet operators because some of them are males. However, it was pretty tough because there were only 3 of us males there. I mean like, I have done preparation for the other things in order to be able to join the makeup session then out of nowhere I had to join that sharing session. I was confused on what to share anymore with the owners of the chalet. However, I was a bit excited in the session because the owners themselves chipped in and helped me out to get more things to talk about."

Interestingly, students reflect that grooming session brought them new knowledge and information as stated by informant 3 in reflection note, "During the seminar/workshop on maintaining appearance I learned a few new things during the discussion throughout the session."

5.2.2   *Practical knowledge*

This category mainly described how the students learned practical knowledge specifically in safety, grooming and event management aspect. Informant 1C described that, "During the manipulative skills, it was more towards safety. So we explained to them and then we showed them practically. This is to help them visually understand it better. What we explained could be applied in real time. This helped them to understand better. For example, when there is a fire, what are they supposed to do, what is the first thing that needs to be done."

Next, informant 3D added, "During the program, we could put into practice the steps on what to do in case of a fire outbreak." They also made collaboration with Malaysian Civil Defence Department to work on real fire drill situation and doing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in the resort. On the other hand, students expressed that they shared and top up the knowledge when carrying out the grooming and hygiene session with the communities. To note, informant 1C narrated, "Ok, for haircare science it is more towards grooming rather than appearance. We taught them how to apply makeup and how to choose clothing. So, maybe previously they about it a little, it is not like we're preaching to them, rather than that, we are just sharing information. What I mean is, they already know these stuff, we're just adding a bit more on the icing."

At the same occasion, students reported that the community's also taking part by adding new input as they indirectly shared the knowledge. Informant 1B informed, "Then sometimes, like that day when we went there to do the makeup and there was this lady who wanted to open a spa. So ironically we were the one receiving lessons from her. Meanwhile, informant 4D told that "The makeup slow was the one where everyone had to play their own role. We taught the owners of the chalet (the ladies) on how do apply makeup, self-grooming tips. Then one of the owners was really good in her makeup skills and she taught us a thing or two."

Apart from that, the students also learned to share protocol and event management knowledge with the communities. Mostly, the communities that giving out input in this part as they had more experienced in conducting the event. Informant 2B told that "When we went there it

was okay, at the very end during the closing ceremony, we gain experience working with the chalet staff on the event protocols. There was a VIP from there. Mr. R that was in charge of the protocol there and we followed all of his instructions." In addition, this statement been supported by reflection notes by students which expressed that they were delighted to learn on how to conduct the big event with communities and interestingly most of them was the first time to carry out project out of the campus.

5.3   Theme 3: Managing Conflicts

Principally, this theme described how the students learned how to manage and solved certain conflicts occur when they carry out this project. Overall, this project runs successfully and students had positive attitudes towards managing the challenges. These conflicts were classified into three categories which were conflicts with their own selves, conflicts between students and communities.

5.3.1   Conflicts with their own selves

In coordinating this project, indirectly students had some issues regarding their self-belief, lack of knowledge, low self-confidence, and mindset. Almost every student had these feeling before carrying out the project especially when knowing that the communities were experienced in the tourism industry. Informant 2D commented that, "... we were like, yeah right, of course, we are still students, sometimes there are things that we don't know yet." Also, informant 4B expressed, "People with knowledge might probably look down on us. They feel like university students are ill-equipped with knowledge. They'd say things like aren't you teachers? You should know all these. When in actuality we have to cover so many things, well. Unless we just focus on a single discipline then it would be way easier to present. That's the challenge."

Meanwhile, low self-confidence is still the main issue among students particularly when they need to present upfront. Informant 1E told that "My biggest fear was that whether they could understand what I am saying. Do they get it?" In addition, informant 4C shared, "For me, there is one subject that I had to do a solo presentation, that was for grooming. I was very nervous, I learned that the owner was very educated. So during the presentation, I was really scared that they would be bombarding me with questions like what T said just now, we really need to study and read up our stuff."

Apart from that, some students expressed that another challenge that they need to overcome is their own mindset. For instance, informant 4C told that "Challenges comes from oneself because of lack of confidence. The mindset that we had was lacking." Additionally, informant 4A stated, "If it is up to me, it needed to be by the group, since when we want to explain something, we think a lot about its feasibility. So we'd think about how hard it is to do apply something for others. So you'd spend a lot of time thinking about things like this."

5.3.2   Conflicts between students

This category described how the students learned to face conflicts between their peers when conducting the project. Undoubtedly, teamwork between group members are essential elements to ensure this project run according to the plan, yet the conflicts and issue between them still encountered. These conflicts occur in the matter of unclear communication, a difference of opinion, unethical manners and the lack of chemistry between team members Informant 3D commented that "During the presentation, 2nd year and the 3rd year when they don't really communicate properly, they would be a lot of overlap among them. Then, informant 3A added, "We were supposed to meet up but we didn't. Communication problem."

Other than that, informant 1B expressed about disagreement idea with the top management of the project, "Like this, we are all MS2 (Manipulative Skills Course 2, MS2) and MS3 (Manipulative Skills Course 3, MS3) and we are dealing with strangers and people who aren't used to our ways. Then, it made us face a problem when we want to come to term with a decision." Besides that, some of the students had shown the unethical attitude towards communities. Informant 1B told that "During the presentation, they aim to the person straight away. Actually, she should say it generally. Then trying to deal with the other party. Only then that she realized that she thought I am the only one that realized this." Then, informant 3A added, "For me the way you do it to a group, make us all wonder why do you have to do it that way. The way you reprimand the person was definitely not suitable. We pity Z."

Meanwhile, most the student complaint not has chemistry working with other members that not giving a commitment to the tasks. Informant 1A told that, "Just like us, there are those in the class that is sidelined from joining any group. So it is these people that would be facing headache when given this task". On the other occasions, informant 3A shared, "Even for classmates like us we are also lacking communication, I mean like sometimes we go like 'hey I have seen your slides' which seems pretty direct. When we didn't meet the 3rd year it almost seemed like everything is done but when we are actually at the scene, it is actually not done.

5.3.3   *Conflicts between communities*

Generally, this category mainly reflects on how the students learned and face conflicts with respect to the community's attitude and lack of practice. Informant 4A related, "Some owners are great, they had their own topics that they are interested to pick. They can decide what is needed and what is not needed. If it is not needed then he would sit it out, sometimes they aren't even there. Sometimes we do have those who stayed and listened throughout as well."

On the other hand, informant 2C shared, "In my case, I ran a demonstration on how to wash your hands properly, just 7 steps and it was done. I asked for 2 volunteers to wash their hands twice according to the method and I stayed with them to ensure that it was done correctly. It was kind of obvious that the technique used to wash the hands is still imperfect, but we showed them the right method. However, during lunchtime, we saw that when they went to wash their hands, they didn't really use the method we taught them. It was a bit depressing because we poured our hearts out to teach them on the right way to wash their hands but they didn't really do it even after learning about it."

Meanwhile, some students expressed that communities involved in this project were still lack of practicing. Informant 4C added, "For us, we took the fire extinguisher and we realized that they are all already expired and it was ill-maintained. It seemed like they also didn't know how to use it. The emergency plan seems really unsuitable, sometimes non-existent. They have open space, but it is definitely not suitable as a safe space since they had to go through a whole bunch of small stairs before reaching it. So in a state of panic, it is definitely not suitable."

Although communities had experienced in running the resort and chalet, yet students felt that they take it easy on certain things. Informant 4A shared, "As an owner if he wants to increase the income of the chalet, they need to apply all these. It wouldn't be right if they just complain about not getting what he wants. There is a lot of procedure that was skipped. Cleanliness for examples. On a basic level, they need to ensure that all of the kitchen staff are given the right shots according to do cleanliness procedure. They claimed that it is not needed. Honestly speaking, it is important for hygiene. It is compulsory."

6. DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore the students' experiences when they learned through the SL project. From the responses, the learning experiences gained by the students were positively developed although they had gone through several conflicts. Furthermore, the collaboration in this project with the senior community that comprises experience has encouraged students to make their proper preparation in terms of knowledge. This project has also driven the students to make detailed planning in forming a project organisation, managing transportation and time, as well as in dividing task for the team, which was done by only having the lecturer as a facilitator.

In detailed, the experience that the students gone through during the SL project has progressively developed their self-values. As a matter of fact, this particular experience cannot be taught by the lecturers in the typical classroom setting, which means that students only can experience it in natural environments. Precisely, students' self-values were related and divided into two main sources which were intrapersonal and interpersonal. In this context of study, interpersonal is denoted as the social interaction with another person that influences someone's feeling and reactions. Meanwhile, intrapersonal is different as it is only related and exists within the self or one's mind. The students gradually learn to develop inter and intrapersonal connectedness when they communicate and dealing with community partners. This is similar to findings by [24] stating that SL activities can enhance students' capabilities across many areas including self-values development and community engagement.

On the other hand, SL components support students to move outside their comfort zone primarily off the campus to serve, be engaged, share and gain trust from the communities. This project needed frequent interactions with the communities as the students had to present in front of the audiences. The wide experience owned by the community has made the students felt that they were exchanging knowledge among each other, whether it is a theory or practical knowledge. This is quite interesting as the students were just expected to only deliver the knowledge to the communities, which then turned out differently. Indirectly, this sharing of information has added to the knowledge and experience of the students in regards to the course content [4]. Additionally, SL promotes knowledge-sharing between students and communities as they go through the project simultaneously [26, 27].

In this SL project, students were required to cooperate with the group members as well as communities to ensure that this project runs according to the plan. While most of the students enjoyed themselves doing group work, lecturers need to pay attention with regards to the conflicts that occurred. Equal group divisions should be monitored by lecturers to minimise conflicts as each student has differences in terms of their strengths and weaknesses [4]. Since SL components involve the real situations, students had to face and learn to manage conflicts with the communities. Likewise, a study done by [31] found that engineering students face the conflicts within their members and communities during the process of the SL project. Thus, with the support and help from the lecturers as well as faculty, students can manage these conflicts and use them as their meaningful experiences to fit in any circumstances especially in the working world.

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, SL experience by the participated students enhances their knowledge on the course contents and shared with experienced communities, learned to manage conflicts, as well as developed self-values. The key to success of SL not only depends on active participation from students and communities but also involved strong support by the faculty. Therefore, it is significant to encourage and assist lecturers in terms of recognition and funding to implement SL. Although SL was resource demanding and time-consuming [13],

SL would provide a platform for all stakeholders engagement and work together as a team towards achieving more cherished goals. On the other hand, this study has contributed to the SL literature and provides insight with effective teaching strategy and practical implications for implementing the SL project. As this study employed a single case study design, future research is recommended to conduct a comprehensive study and a large quantitative survey of students engaged in SL especially in Malaysia setting. Hence, it would make a greater contribution to the existing literature so that can promote SL as another key strategy to enhance students' knowledge and values development.

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