Improving Emirati students’ social responsibility competence through global citizenship education

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is twofold: to determine if implementing a global citizenship education curriculum can aid the development of Emirati students’ social responsibility competence and to experiment with different instructional strategies that aim to yield improvement in the social responsibility of students.

Design/methodology/approach – The intervention research study used a mixed-methods quasi-experimental approach to examine Emirati students’ social responsibility gains and overall perceptions of a global citizenship education curriculum. Conceptual frameworks for instructional design of service-learning were used as theoretical underpinnings. The data were collected from student reflections, field notes, questionnaires and interviews.

Findings – Both the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the global citizenship curriculum advanced students’ understanding of social responsibility and civic concepts, specifically civic awareness, social justice and diversity.

Research limitations/implications – For future studies, researchers are encouraged to expand the current study’s five-week timeframe by exploring the implications of a global citizenship education curriculum over a full term or even a whole academic year.

Practical implications – The results of the present study indicate that educators should experiment with curriculum redesign to further facilitate the development of social responsibility in undergraduate students. The results also suggest that educators incorporate specific instructional strategies such as integrated reflections and intergroup dialogue on social issues.

Originality/value – Social responsibility and global citizenship education have broadly been based on Western paradigms. Few studies have explored the impact of global citizenship education on the development of students’ social responsibility in the Gulf region. This study fills the gap in knowledge by lending evidence of the role of global citizenship education in undergraduate university programs in the Gulf.

Keywords Citizenship education, UAE, Action research, Curriculum, Social responsibility, Civic responsibility

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Most tertiary education institutions embrace a mission that includes social responsibility development, such as preparation for citizenship, character development, moral leadership...
and service (Salam, Awang Iskandar, Ibrahim, & Farooq, 2019). While numerous higher education institutions have volunteer opportunities for students, few provide structured learning opportunities to foster students’ civic knowledge, skills and values. Social responsibility has been distantly connected to academic study and only as a by-product of the tertiary curriculum (Colby & Sullivan, 2009). Most community service projects in universities lack a citizenship education focus, causing social responsibility development in students to be implicit in the undergraduate curriculum.

By and large, social responsibility and citizenship education have primarily been based on Western paradigms. Few studies have been conducted on the impact of global citizenship education on students’ social responsibility development in the Gulf region. This knowledge gap limits the utility of the existing body of research for scholar-practitioners who want to effectively design service-learning curricula in the Gulf region. The present study was conducted in a federally funded university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and sought to provide evidence of the role of global citizenship education in developing Emirati students’ social responsibility and to examine pedagogical approaches that would enhance students’ social responsibility competence.

Literature review
According to the 2021 report of the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement in the United States, student development of social responsibility involves four key dimensions: knowledge, skills, values, and action. Knowledge comprises being informed on contemporary social issues. Civic skills involve the ability to solve social problems, obtain and evaluate different sources of information and perspectives, critically analyze arguments, form an unbiased position on social issues and work cooperatively with others (Steinberg, Hatcher, & Bringle, 2011). Values consist of accepting responsibilities for one’s actions and community and exhibiting empathy and tolerance (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Lastly, the key dimension of action involves solving a social issue through service in the community. Programs missing one or more of the dimensions may result in insubstantial learning outcomes (Stokamer & Clayton, 2016).

The curriculum-based structure of the service-learning program distinguishes it from community service, which solely entails volunteer service and fails to explore and address the root causes of community issues (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Partaking in volunteering activities does not automatically create opportunities for students to develop their social responsibility. Service-learning explicitly includes academic and civic pedagogy that combines academic knowledge, practical hands-on experience and civic engagement to corroborate the “real world” learning occurring in the community (Jay, 2008). Research has found that service-learning increases students’ self-efficacy, sense of confidence, a tendency to include service work in their career, a sense of connection with individuals and communities, and a greater understanding of diversity (Caswell, 2018).

Service-learning and global citizenship education
Previous research has found strong associations between curricular approaches and social responsibility development (Stokamer & Clayton, 2016; Richard, Keen, Hatcher, & Pease, 2016; Garvin et al., 2019). While service-learning points to learning outcomes of civic, moral and intellectual development, there is a deficit in studies investigating the learning content and processes contributing to these reported outcomes (Stokamer & Clayton, 2016). To clarify specific instructional strategies that promote social responsibility development, Stokamer and Clayton (2016) composed a conceptual framework for the instructional design of service-learning programs comprising three design domains: service, critical reflection,
and academic activities. The reflection process is an essential part of what makes service-learning different from community service (Schneider-Cline, 2018) and critical reflection takes into account one’s views, beliefs and values constantly (Jacoby, 2015). In addition, reflection has been associated with students experiencing greater civic knowledge and social responsibility (Billig, 2017).

Furthermore, academic activities consist of dialogue and reflection of societal issues. Designating classroom content to community problems in service-learning programs gives students a connection with social contexts and real-world community issues (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). The service-learning curriculum must offer a global context to societal issues and comprise critical pedagogy that challenges inequalities (Battistoni, Longo, & Jayanandhan, 2009). Linking community service with a global citizenship education curriculum fosters social responsibility, character development, and academic skills needed in service-learning. The global consciousness approach to global citizenship education comprises the promotion of students’ global orientation, empathy and cultural sensitivity (Dill, 2013). It empowers students to solve social challenges to create a more inclusive, tolerant and sustainable world (UNESCO, 2017).

A service-learning curriculum that allows for the critical analysis of social issues consists of observation exercises, role-playing, structured debate, and collaborative problem-solving activities (Stokamer & Clayton, 2016; Richard et al., 2016). If one component is missing from the service-learning framework, activities in one specific domain can be designed to compensate for another (Stokamer & Clayton, 2016). Incorporating effective listening, respectful deliberation and critical analysis of information into classroom dialogues have been found to influence students’ self-reported commitment to civic action (Hussain & Wattles, 2017). Hurtado, Ruiz, and Whang (2012) found that students became more confident with their skills in becoming effective citizens in a diverse society through dialogue between students from different backgrounds and beliefs.

**Service-learning in the UAE**

Service-learning is conceptualized differently across various higher education institutions and countries. While volunteering may have a high social value in Western countries such as the United States and Canada, its social value differs in other countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Ziemek (2006) observed that individuals in countries characterized by high government expenditure, rather than volunteering for altruistic reasons, were more likely to volunteer to invest in their self-development. Moreover, volunteering for altruistic reasons was tied to the government’s lack of social services (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2001). Considering the UAE government provides social services comprehensibly to UAE citizens and its economy is characterized by high public spending (UAE Government, 2021), citizens may be less likely to volunteer for altruistic motives alone. Even so, in the UAE, volunteering is often associated with religious faith and the concept of charity, which may be due to volunteerism in Islam being “…a very broad concept that encompasses whatever one does for the benefit of others for the sake of Allah” (Awofeso et al., 2017).

The UAE’s Ministry of Community Development has continuously reinforced community service and engaged citizenry by launching multiple volunteer programs. In 2017, the Ministry of Community Development created various initiatives such as the National Volunteering Strategy 2021 for the Year of Giving to organize and license teams and individuals for volunteer work (Ministry of Community Development, Alhashmi, Bakali, and Baroud, 2020). Then, in 2019 for the Year of Tolerance, the UAE’s Ministry of Education implemented the concept of tolerance in the curricula to contribute to teaching culture openness and civilized dialogue (Alhashmi et al., 2020). In other words, education
serves as a strategy to instill values of citizenship in the UAE. In the 2017–2018 academic year, a Moral Education curriculum comprising lessons on character and morality, individual and community, civic studies, and cultural studies commenced across public and private schools in Grades 1–12 (Pring, 2019).

Theoretical framework
The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) formed a civic engagement working group to investigate civic learning pathways from K-12 through college, aiming to develop a scaffold of learning that was cumulative over time (Leskes & Miller, 2006). Through this working group, the AAC&U Civic Learning Spiral was developed. This civic learning model is a fluid and continuous framework for civic learning that emphasizes interdependence and connection. It is used to study curricular and cocurricular impact on fostering social responsibility in higher education (Musil, 2009). The spiral has six interwoven elements representing core learning outcomes of civic learning that should be embedded in pedagogical content: self, communities and cultures, knowledge, skills, values, and public action. These six elements coexist simultaneously, indicating the connections between and among them. In the present study, this framework was used as an underpinning for a global citizenship curriculum in an undergraduate program in the UAE to ensure that the existing Life Skills course would use collaborative inquiry with collective action in the community service project. The research questions that guided this study are:

- **RQ1.** To what extent Emirati students experience an increased sense of social responsibility during their participation in a global citizenship education curriculum?
- **RQ2.** What are the Emirati students’ attitudes toward the components of a citizenship education curriculum in their course?

The study

**Context**
The study was conducted in an undergraduate Life Skills course that is part of the general education program at a government tertiary institution in the UAE and mandatory for all first-year Emirati students. With a population of approximately of 5,300 female and 1,200 male Emirati nationals, the university has a global awareness learning outcome aiming to increase students’ socially responsible perspective. To this end, part of the Life Skills course curriculum is a group community service project, where students research and volunteer for a UAE-based community issue. As part of the course, most students would participate in community service that was informal and more informational rather than based on social action. The current study hypothesized that the Life Skills course would benefit from a global citizenship education component to better facilitate the development of students’ social responsibility. To this end, an intervention study was designed adopting a mixed-methods approach to determine if adding a global citizenship education component to a life skills general education course would develop undergraduate students’ social responsibility competence. Specifically, the study examined two areas: students’ social responsibility gains and students’ overall perceptions of a global citizenship education curriculum.

**Participants**
The target population consisted of first-year female Emirati students (ages 18–21) at a government higher education institution in the UAE. The total sample size was 50 students: 25 participants in the intervention group and 25 participants in the control group. In the
following sections, whenever reference is made to individual student comments, students numbered 1–25 belong to the intervention group.

**Intervention**

The global citizenship curriculum sessions were incorporated into the study to measure the growth of students’ perspectives toward civic engagement and social responsibility. The six interwoven elements of the Civic Learning Spiral, i.e. self, communities and cultures, knowledge, skills, values and public action, were embedded throughout the pedagogical content to support students’ development of civic attitude and skills based on the social responsibility competencies subscales of the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ). The curriculum used a global consciousness approach by focusing on students’ global orientation, empathy and cultural sensitivity (Dill, 2013). The intervention was delivered over five weekly sessions. The outline of the individual sessions and the social responsibility competencies that each session addressed are described below in Table 1.

**Data collection instruments**

Data were collected from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and student reflections. A mixed-methods triangulation design provided corroboration between quantitative and qualitative data to cross-validate multiple data sources to evaluate the extent to which the evidence converged.

*Questionnaire.* An adapted version of the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ) was used in this study to assess students’ social responsibility competency.

| Sessions | Activity                                                                                      | CASQ social responsibility competency subscale                        |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Session 1| **Defining Community and Service**<br>Students explored and developed an understanding of the concept of citizenship.<br>Students identified the benefits and responsibilities of being an effective global citizen. | Civic Awareness                                                       |
| Session 2| **Awareness of Current Events**<br>Students identified social issues occurring in the world and the UAE to find out why they happen.<br>Also, discussed what students count as service and the origins of their perceptions | Civic Awareness<br>Social Justice Attitudes<br>Diversity Attitudes     |
| Session 3| **Impacting Community Through Your Career**<br>Students thought of ways to give back to their community and other countries through their careers | Civic Action<br>Interpersonal Skills<br>Leadership Skills<br>Social Justice Attitudes<br>Diversity Attitudes |
| Session 4| **Social identity**<br>Students formed a strong sense of personal identity and learned how to be tolerant of others who carry different social identities |                                                         |
| Session 5| **Dialogue and Debate**<br>The purpose of this session was for students to understand that there are different perspectives to different issues and each person has a valuable role and voice | Problem Solving Skills<br>Interpersonal Skills<br>Diversity Attitudes |

*Table 1.* Global citizenship curriculum – intervention outline
The CASQ includes seven subscales and 35 items which previously had been tested for reliability and validity (Moely et al., 2002). The subscales included in the questionnaire were:

- civic action (plans for future involvement in the community);
- interpersonal skills (ability to communicate and work effectively with others);
- problem-solving skills;
- political awareness (knowledge of current local and national politics);
- leadership skills (ability to guide others);
- social justice attitudes (awareness of the importance of social institutions in determining the fate of the individual); and
- diversity attitudes (appreciation and valuing of relationships with persons of diverse backgrounds and characteristics).

The subscale on political awareness was replaced with a new adapted subscale on civic awareness (knowledge of current and local events and community issues). Since the participants were Arabic speakers learning in an English-Medium Instruction (EMI) institution, the wording of the questions was simplified to aid student comprehension and the questionnaire was also translated into Arabic for students who preferred the Arabic version. The questionnaire asked students to evaluate statements about their attitudes and beliefs on civic engagement and service-learning using a 4-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The questionnaire was administered to all participants (control group and intervention group) before and after the intervention to assess their knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs.

**In-class daily reflections.** Students in the intervention group responded anonymously to reflection prompts based on the lessons taught in class on sheets of paper called “exit-slips” at the end of each of the five global citizenship education sessions. Therefore, students in the intervention group had daily opportunities through guiding prompts to write about what they learned and how they felt.

**End of course self-reflections.** Students in both the control and intervention groups were asked to complete a reflection at the end of the course. Specific questions guided students to debrief the community service project and reflect on their experience, including the process, the choices and discoveries they made, and what did not go as expected. Fifty reflections were collected and evaluated (25 reflections from the students in the control group and 25 reflections from the students in the intervention group).

**Observations/field notes.** Students in the intervention group were observed during the intervention sessions. To add further support for the observational data, field notes were taken by the instructor during and after each session. The instructor recorded the kinds of questions asked by students, students’ responses to questions, and off-task behaviors that may have exhibited boredom, disinterest or distraction.

**Interviews.** Single and group semi-structured 15- to 30-min interviews were led by the course instructor and conducted at the university with 25 students (14 students from the control group and 11 students from the intervention group). Sample questions included What did you like/not like about the curriculum? What have you learned through the curriculum that you found most useful?

**Data collection procedures**

After the consent forms were filled out, both groups completed a social responsibility questionnaire administered in the classroom at the beginning of the semester to measure
students’ social responsibility competency before the intervention (pre-intervention questionnaire). The questionnaires were completed on paper and they were later de-identified by a research assistant to ensure students’ anonymity from the instructor.

Starting from the second week of the semester, global citizenship lessons were introduced to students in the intervention group. Students were exposed to five sessions of social responsibility curriculum over five weeks. The duration of each session was one hour and fifteen minutes and each session built on the skills acquired in previous sessions (see Table 1 above). Students learned about social issues and civic engagement through global citizenship lessons and follow-up reflective writing activities. The control group participated in the standard course curriculum as this was specified in the course handbook.

At the end of the five-week intervention period, the post-intervention social responsibility questionnaire was administered to both the control and intervention groups. Out of the 50 students enrolled in the course, 15 students in the control group and 15 in the intervention group completed both the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires. Lastly, students in both the control and intervention groups were invited to participate in a 15–30-min on-campus interview individually or with a classmate. Twenty-five students (14 from the control group and 11 from the intervention group) volunteered to participate in the interviews.

**Data analysis**

*Analysis of qualitative data*

The qualitative data analysis software NVivo v.10 was used to analyze the interview data. NVivo aided in recognizing and classifying themes based on the students’ responses to the interview questions. The qualitative data analysis was conducted in two different ways: deductive and inductive. For the deductive analysis, students’ responses pertaining to each subscale on the CASQ were analyzed to categorize students’ development for each social responsibility competency subscale (Civic Action, Interpersonal Skills, Problem Solving Skills, Leadership Skills, Civic Awareness, Social Justice Attitudes and Diversity Attitudes). For the inductive analysis, the transcribed interviews were analyzed to find patterns that emerged from the data. After documenting the patterns and repetition within the interview data, the students’ statements were grouped according to the identified themes.

*Analysis of quantitative data*

The one-way MANCOVA is used for testing significant differences between two or more groups on two or more dependent variables that share conceptual overlap while controlling for covariates. In this study, the effects of one covariate (students’ pre-intervention questionnaire scores) were removed to see the true effect of the independent variable (global citizenship curriculum) on the dependent variable (social responsibility post-intervention questionnaire scores) without interference. The MANCOVA helped identify any significant differences between the intervention and control group on the social responsibility factors of civic awareness, leadership skills, social justice attitudes, diversity attitudes, interpersonal skills, problem solving skills and civic action while controlling for students’ beginning social responsibility levels (pre-intervention questionnaire scores).

The best way to address systematic bias is to use random sampling techniques; however, the present research study used intact groups. Since the random assignment of subjects in each condition (control and intervention) was not possible, the covariate adjustment of the means helped reduce systemic bias in intact groups that may differ systemically on several variables. Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement of the covariate.
**Results and discussion**

**RQ1.** To what extent Emirati students experience an increased sense of social responsibility during their participation in the global citizenship education curriculum?

**Quantitative data**

After adjusting for pre-intervention scores, results from the social responsibility questionnaires (Intervention Group $N = 15$, Control Group $N = 15$) indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the two intervention groups on post-intervention scores on the social responsibility questionnaire, ($F(1, 29) = 2.54$, $p = 0.12 > 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$) (Tables 2 and 3). Partial eta square identifies the proportion of the variance of the dependent variable explained by the independent variable. In this study, the value of partial eta square was 0.07, which means that only 7% of the intervention and control group differences can be considered an effect of the intervention.

| Group                  | Mean   | SD    |
|------------------------|--------|-------|
| Post-Intervention total| Intervention 112.93 | 13.27 |
|                        | Control 105.57  | 9.35  |
| Civic Action           | Intervention 17.79 | 2.22  |
|                        | Control 17.33   | 2.39  |
| Interpersonal Skills   | Intervention 15.93 | 2.59  |
|                        | Control 15.64   | 3.13  |
| Problem Solving Skills | Intervention 16.05 | 2.22  |
|                        | Control 15.64   | 3.13  |
| Leadership Skills      | Intervention 14.43 | 2.71  |
|                        | Control 14.71   | 2.33  |
| Civic Awareness        | Intervention 13.90 | 3.05  |
|                        | Control 16.64   | 3.56  |
| Social Justice Attitudes| Intervention 14.81 | 2.96  |
|                        | Control 15.43   | 1.87  |
| Diversity Attitudes    | Intervention 16.79 | 2.29  |
|                        | Control 14.19   | 2.66  |

**Table 2.**

Descriptive statistics from the civic attitudes and skills questionnaire

| Dependent variable                  | F     | Df | p    | $\eta^2$ |
|-------------------------------------|-------|----|------|----------|
| Post-test total score               | 2.54  | 1  | 0.121| 0.74     |
| Civic Action                        | 0.17  | 1  | 0.680| 0.005    |
| Interpersonal Skills                | 1.39  | 1  | 0.249| 0.041    |
| Problem Solving Skills              | 0.28  | 1  | 0.599| 0.009    |
| Leadership Skills                   | 0.006 | 1  | 0.937| 0.000    |
| Civic awareness                     | 1.275 | 1  | 0.267| 0.038    |
| Social Justice Attitudes            | 0.30  | 1  | 0.585| 0.009    |
| Diversity Attitudes                 | 6.67  | 1  | 0.015*| 0.172    |

**Table 3.**

One-way MANCOVA: social responsibility subscales, controlling for Pre-Intervention scores

**Note:** *p < 0.05
There was a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.015$) between the intervention and control groups' diversity attitudes subscale scores with the intervention group scoring significantly higher than the control group (Table 3).

Qualitative data
All students in both the intervention and control groups completed the end of semester reflection. Students' self-reflection data (Table 4) and interview data (Table 5) were analyzed and comparisons were made between the intervention and control groups.

Based on the analysis of the qualitative data, there was an increase in all subscales of social responsibility in the intervention group compared to the control group. The starkest differences between the two groups were civic awareness, social justice attitudes, and diversity attitudes. Moreover, the intervention group exhibited one new theme, empathy. The following synthesis and interpretation are based on the student interviews, student exit-slip, and student end-of-semester reflections from the intervention group to identify the factors leading to the increased development of these subscales.

Civic awareness
The reoccurring mention of civic awareness by participants demonstrates a better understanding of the issues in their local communities. Patterns within this theme included basic knowledge of the issue and concern about informing others of the issue. Students in the intervention group also reported having a heightened sense that good citizenship includes responsibilities. Through their participation, they realized that they could be agents of positive social change. Student 3 disclosed:

| Social responsibility subscale | Intervention ($N = 25$) | Control ($N = 25$) |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
|                              | Frequency of mentions  | % of mentions     | Frequency of mentions | % of mentions |
| Civic Action                  | 21                     | 84                | 19                 | 76           |
| Interpersonal Skills          | 11                     | 44                | 5                  | 2            |
| Problem Solving Skills        | 2                      | 8                 | 0                  | 0            |
| Leadership Skills             | 6                      | 24                | 2                  | 8            |
| Civic Awareness               | 18                     | 72                | 14                 | 56           |
| Social Justice Attitudes      | 11                     | 44                | 6                  | 24           |
| Diversity Attitudes           | 4                      | 16                | 0                  | 0            |

Table 4. Analysis of end of semester student reflections

| Social responsibility subscale | Intervention ($N = 11$) | Control ($N = 14$) |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
|                              | Frequency of mentions  | % of mentions     | Frequency of mentions | % of mentions |
| Civic Action                  | 11                     | 100               | 6                  | 42           |
| Interpersonal Skills          | 8                      | 72                | 4                  | 29           |
| Problem Solving Skills        | 1                      | 9                 | 1                  | 7            |
| Leadership Skills             | 3                      | 27                | 1                  | 7            |
| Civic Awareness               | 13                     | 118               | 6                  | 42           |
| Social Justice Attitudes      | 23                     | 209               | 2                  | 14           |
| Diversity Attitudes           | 9                      | 81                | 0                  | 0            |

Table 5. Analysis of student interviews
Personally, I learned that there should be awareness raised to reduce the negative effects occurring from [mental health] and I certainly developed a greater awareness and improved knowledge of all things to do with nutrition to help community.

Students’ volunteer experience also turned into a passion. Student 14 revealed in her reflection, “I gained not only patience but passion in doing volunteer work in an aspect that the UAE community may offer”.

Moreover, students felt tied to the community and an obligation to see it developed. Student 8 admitted, “I think community is a big deal to– to have a better future is by building the community”. Student 21 also stated in their reflection, “[I learned that] volunteer work actually proves that I’m a part of this community and that I owe this community something, and I have to do something for it”. Student 23 added in her reflection, “[I learned what] the community goes through and [how to] develop it more”.

Social justice attitudes
One of the central themes that participants in the intervention group highlighted was the growth of their social justice skills. This theme encapsulates wanting to continue to help the community and developing moral values. Students in the intervention group reported in their interview that they chose their topics based on what would make the most impact. Student 9 stated in the interview:

We choose this topic [domestic workers] so we can know how the domestic workers feel because there are some of them in our house and there are some people who didn’t respect them. So we want to put our self in their place.

Releasing prejudice was a subtheme that students expressed in their exit-slip reflections. One student’s statement substantiates this theme comprehensively. Student 5 wrote:

I actually learned to not to think about a person because of its race or because of its first language in a bad way, because of other people in the same race. And to actually communicate with the person to know him better without thinking about him before knowing him that way.

Students also wanted to help and understood the importance of giving back. Student 9 stated, “To show our domestic worker we are equal, we all do the same job. It’s fine for all people”. Student 8 asserted, “we should help them and not put them under the pressure”. Student 1, stated in their reflection: “This [class] proves to me the importance of community service and the difference that it can make in a community”.

Diversity attitudes
Diversity attitudes was also one of the focal gains for students in the intervention group. This theme captured participants’ willingness to work with diverse people and show tolerance, mutual understanding, and acceptance. In the reflections, the intervention group showed more instances of tolerance. Student 1 mentioned:

Also, I learned how to deal with people from different backgrounds whether they are my team members or the unaware people. And that domestic workers are human just like us, and they don’t deserve the hate that people give them. We should help them and not put them under the pressure.

In addition, Student 11 stated, “[I learned] we should not judge someone because of her, maybe, color or religion”. Students not only learned to be tolerant of others, but also to understand others. Student 6 asserted, “It’s important, to know who is the person and what religion [they are]. To know how to communicate with them”.

Empathy
A new category emerged from the inductive analysis of the data that did not correspond to the CASQ subscales: empathy. Students exhibited not just sympathy but compassion toward others, which caused them to feel compelled to mitigate social problems. The intervention group used statements in their reflections that showed more moral values and compassion. Student 16 stated in reflection, “I also learned more how to communicate with patients and learned from my volunteer experience of many moral values. And Speak up for those who need to be heard”. In addition, Student 4 stated:

I also learned more how to communicate with patience and learned from my volunteer experience many moral values. And speak up for those who need to be heard. I also learned that when you do small act of kindness, it makes the people around you feel happy. Not only the people around you but also you as well.

Empathy for students even extended beyond their local community. Student 6 asserted, “[...] we have to look for a solution. [Not just in] UAE, but we have to help other countries as well”.

RQ2. What were the Emirati students’ attitudes toward the components of the citizenship education curriculum in the course?

Social identity
In the interviews, the majority of the students in the intervention group expressed liking the social justice session the most. They reported that it helped create a sense of self and cultural awareness. Based on their feedback, students learned how important it is not to judge people and how to think deeper about themselves. Students liked thinking about their own identity as it taught them how important it is. Knowing one’s identity and self is vital to building social responsibility, as the Civic Learning Spiral states. Students’ responses provided evidence that they thought differently and gained social awareness through critical reflection of their identity.

For most students, it was their first time learning about social identity. Students filled out a social identity wheel in the social identity session and wrote what identities they thought about most often. Students stated religion, their first language, and age being the identities they thought about the most. The identities they thought about least were race and socioeconomic status. Usually, the identities thought about the least are where a person is more privileged and vice versa. Being a UAE citizen at a federal institution where free tuition is given may play a factor in this selection of identities. The identities they wanted to learn more about were religion and race. Race was a hard concept for students to understand. Some students selected Brown as their race, and others chose White or Arab. Students identified national origin as having the strongest effect on how they perceived themselves. For the identity they believed had the most significant effect on how others perceived them, students widely stated religion because of the prejudice people may have toward Muslims.

Students in their anonymous end of session exit-slip stated how the topics and hearing from other peers helped them reflect. Students stated they learned new things about others and thought more in-depth about themselves. One student anonymously wrote on their exit-slip “[the session] made me think deeper, and it made me think beyond the stereotypes in my mind, it made me think beyond that”. In Student 7’s interview, she reflected on how the social justice session affected her ways of thinking. She stated,
The most thing that affected me in the whole course is the social identity. It made my brain function in a different way. I never thought I was going to think in that way because I was explored new stuff. I didn’t see what’s beyond that. I didn’t ever think that my race is a problem in different countries, or my gender, or other identities. So that made me think in a different way and consider stuff I didn’t think I would be considering.

**Diverse dialogue**

The reflection data from the exit slips revealed that the instructional strategies that influenced students’ learning the most were their interactions with peers. From field notes and observations, it was noticeable how students enjoyed discussing and hearing from their peers. Students engaged in diverse and competing perspectives. For the debate session, students were surprised there was no right answer. Seven of the 11 students in the interviews stated the debate and discussions taught them to respect differing viewpoints, reconsider their perspective, and explore diverse perspectives, cultures, and worldviews. Student 8 stated, “I like the topics that were discussed in class, and how each one had their own perspective and everything”. Student 11 disclosed, “I learned not to be biased and listen to others’ opinions and ideas and “not one opinion is always right”. Student 2 stated she liked:

How we shared our opinions and discussed. It was fun. The opportunity to talk to others as a group. [I also] liked the way our teacher make discussion and liked how the discussion let us think in all possible ways.

The discussions in the intervention group appeared to raise students’ awareness and allowed them to value other students’ opinions. All students in the intervention group stated that they liked hearing other students’ opinions. Student 10 reported, “This activity today is good, and it's good for new way to learn. I like the to learn and sharing with a group”. Student 3 admitted: “[I] liked [that] many girls had different and opposed opinions about each topic”. Additionally, the concept of respecting others’ opinions and not being biased emerged in the data. Student 7 stated, “I learned to […] respect other’s opinion and to not be biased”. Overall, students liked reflecting on their life and community. Student 6 revealed:

Best part is like when we talk about something, about things we deal at every life because usually, when we study, I just think we hear about something that we don’t deal it in the real life […] When you talk about what we face in life, it’s more helping.

**Summary**

Consistent with previous literature (Stokamer & Clayton, 2016; Richard et al., 2016; Garvin et al., 2019), the current study revealed a strong association between curricular approaches and social responsibility development. Overall, the findings show that the most prominent differences between the two groups in terms of the social responsibility competency subscales were civic awareness, social justice attitudes, and diversity attitudes. The intervention group developed these significant subscales more than the control group. Moreover, the intervention group exhibited one new competency, empathy. By being involved in reflections and diverse dialogue, students learned how to respect differing viewpoints, explore diverse perspectives, cultures, and worldviews, and explore their role in serving their community. This finding coincides with Billing (2017) who found that reflection throughout the course is associated with students experiencing greater civic knowledge and a sense of social responsibility. Students in the intervention group expressed enjoying the social identity session, the debate, and the overall diverse dialogues. The social
identity session gave students a sense of self and lowered their prejudice of others while the structured debate and discussion of social issues throughout the course allowed students to hear and value various perspectives.

**Conclusion**

The intervention study described in this paper aimed to use a global citizenship education curriculum to enhance the development of Emirati students’ social responsibility. The intervention group showed considerable gains in the social responsibility subscales of civic awareness, social justice attitudes, and diversity attitudes, which aligns with the UAE Ministry of Community Development promotion of volunteerism. While moral education has been implemented in UAE schools, Grades 1–12, the findings suggest it is imperative to extend this focus on citizenship and moral values into tertiary education settings. Overall, the data show that the CASQ can be successfully applied in the cultural setting of the UAE. Moreover, findings go beyond the scales in CASQ and provide evidence that empathy can be developed.

Findings from this study should be considered in light of several limitations. The research sample included only a small sample size of female undergraduate students. Future studies should involve a larger sample and a broader demographic. Furthermore, while the present study collected data over five weeks, future studies might explore a longer timeframe for a more in-depth exploration.

Despite these limitations, the study has shown that a global citizenship curriculum is an effective approach for improving students’ social responsibility competence. Results can serve as a framework for higher education administrators, faculty, and staff for structuring community service projects that teach students tolerance. General education course instructors can use this information to help incorporate a global citizenship education curriculum and better adapt their classroom setting to facilitate social development and positive engagement in community service projects. Furthermore, faculty should incorporate social identity conversations into their curricula purposefully since results from the qualitative data show students benefitted from engaging in social identity dialogues. For most students this was the first time to discuss social identity. The activity allowed them to think deeper about themselves and their role in promoting tolerance in their community. Overall, the study provides evidence for a global citizenship curriculum to be integrated into community service in undergraduate programs by explicitly connecting the classroom projects to ongoing social issues and encouraging students to engage in dialogue and reflection.

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