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Integrating Community Services with Learning:An Approach to Soft Skills Development for Medical Students Universitas Padjadjaran

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Abstract

Background & Objective: Supercamp is a multidiscipline community services activity held by UNPAD since 2012 to allow medical students to do community services and inter-professional education integrated with learning to promote soft skills. Soft skills are essential, which are needful for development in various kinds of teaching-learning experiences. The study aimed to evaluate Supercamp program through the medical student perspective as one of the practices for the development of soft skills in a medical student.

Materials and Methods: This was a descriptive cross-sectional study using an electronic questionnaire given to Supercamp participants before and after the program, including undergraduate and postgraduate medical students. The survey distributed before and after completed the program. Soft skill aspects addressing in this questionnaire were leadership, communication aspect, creativity, autonomy, problem-solving, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Results: All the participants aware that Supercamp was a yearly community services program purposed, improving the soft skill of a medical student. Most participants (68%) agreed on the importance of soft skills and ranked the importance of communication, leadership, collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking, independence, and creativity. Survey result has taken after the program completed showed that 74.4% of participants agreed that Supercamp improves their soft skills, especially in communication, leadership, and collaboration aspect. The participants had also changed their perspective about future profession 58.5%.

Conclusion: Supercamp is still an effective program to improve soft based on the medical student perspective.

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Introduction

As one of the oldest medical education institutions in West Java, the Faculty of Medicine Universitas Padjadjaran (FMUP) is an integral part of West Java Province to improve the community health status. Supercamp had initiated in 2012 as the translated program from university mission "Science for Society, from West Java to the World for Global Health" which integrated learning with research and community services activities. These were started from Southern West Java (Garut) and then continued yearly to South Cianjur (Cidaun) and South Sukabumi (Jampang Kulon). In 2017, as an effort to participate the acceleration of local health development, especially in Bekasi, Northern West Java, FMUP mobilizes its attention and resources through the event of an integrated curriculum that aligned with the educational pattern that carries the principle of student-centered, problem based, integrated, community, and systematic (SPICES) in collaboration with government, private, and community. At least 1000 students and 300 faculty members from various levels of education and field of expertise will be involved intensively in various health development programs not only focus on health services aspect but also health promotion and preventive medicine effort according to experience learning approach, patient-based, and community settings. Finally, FMUP has prepared its graduates to participate in the development of local and global health sectors as an agent of changes (1).

As an educational institution, FMUP realizes that being a doctor, which is the primary to serve in primary health care, is a professional that expected not only academic and clinically competent but also inherit excellent soft skills to serve public society (2). Soft skills and hard skills are essential in the practice of a doctor. While hard skills deal with technical proficiency, soft skills relate to personal values and interpersonal skills that determine a person's ability to fit in a particular situation. These skills contribute to the success of organizations that deal face-to-face with clients. Soft skills as personal qualities, attributes or the level of commitment of an individual that sets him/her apart from other individuals who may have similar skills and experience (3). To apply transformative learning as a way of adult learning, FMUP created Supercamp as one of the examples of the strategy of faculty to seek ways to be more relevant, to bring their knowledge base to bear on community problems, and to offer society leadership which is consistent with broader core soft skill values (4). Transformative learning is a term initially applied more narrowly to the

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transformative educational development of adult learners. Student transformative experiences can take place both in and out of the traditional classroom, encompasses all aspects of student learning including curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities, including community was the site out from the conventional class contain regular exercise mostly curricular activity (5). This study aimed to evaluate the Supercamp program through the medical student perspective as one of the practices for the development of soft skills.

Materials and Methods

This study was a descriptive mixed-method cross-sectional design conducted July–August 2017, using an electronic questionnaire given to Supercamp participants including the first-year undergraduate and postgraduate medical students, and agreed to participate in this study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Faculty of Medicine Universitas Padjadjaran. The survey questionnaire distributed before and after completed the program. Supercamp Program organized for three days 13–15 August 2017 as an integration program with the other faculties in Universitas Padjadjaran, FMUP was part of Health Cluster. Some questions are addressing how well faculty organized and socialized the program to their student and whether students were known the Supercamp goals. The students then have to rank their expectations of each soft skill area based on their perception (rank 1–7). The soft skills area addressing in this questionnaire were leadership, communication aspect, teamwork creativity, independence, problem-solving, critical thinking, and others. The questionnaires were consisted of closed and open question focused on achievement of overall goals as the program, which program could full fill the purpose of each soft skill aspect and the quality of the program. The participant was asked to give their opinion about the continuity of the program using free text questions. The result analyzed by Microsoft excel 2013 and quantitative data presented in percentage. Qualitative data were analyzed using a framework method to construct a set of matrices that allowed us to consolidate a view of the thematic elements from open questioner answered (6).

Results

Five hundred fifty-nine participants consist of undergraduate and postgraduate programs agreed to follow the study before the Supercamp program held, but only 504 responded on the post Supercamp survey. Table 1 showed the characteristic of the participant, and table 2 summarized the answered questions given before and after the Supercamp program to the participants.

Table 1: Characteristics of Study Participants

Characteristic	Before Supercamp Survey (n)	After Supercamp Survey (n)
Undergraduate Program	262	227
Postgraduate Program	297	277

Table 2: Questions Posed to Students

No	List of Questions	Respons (N)	(%)
Before the Supercamp program survey			
1	Knowing that Supercamp is an integrative program to improve student soft skill		
	▪ Not known		
	▪ Known	13	2.3%
		546	97.7%
2	The source of Supercamp information to the students		
	▪ Senior	302	39.3%
	▪ Faculty	423	54.9%
	▪ Program Book	22	0.4%
	▪ Website	24	0.4%
3	Perception of faculty preparation and organized Supercamp program		
	▪ Very good	59	10.6%
	▪ Good	265	47.4%
	▪ Well Prepared	183	32.7%
	▪ Bad	25	6.8%
	▪ Very Bad	14	2.5%
4	Students Perceptions of the importance of soft skill development as a priority during medical education curriculum		
	▪ Not important	2	0.4%
	▪ Less important	4	0.7%
	▪ Important	173	30.9%
	▪ Very important	380	68%

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Continue of Table 2: Questions Posed to Students

5	Student expectation of the top priority (the first rank) of soft skill development during Supercamp Program		
	▪ Communication	269	50.6%
	▪ Teamwork	69	13.0%
	▪ Leadership	71	13.3%
	▪ Problem Solving	51	9.6%
	▪ Independence	38	7.1%
	▪ Critical Thinking	19	3.6%
	▪ Creativity	5	0.9%
	▪ Others (empathy, patient, endurance)	10	1.9%
After the Supercamp program survey			
1	The achievement of overall goals of Supercamp program as a program to improve soft skill in medical student		
	▪ Yes	373	74%
	▪ No	131	26%
2	The most soft skill area evelopment achieved during Supercamp (more than one answered)		
	▪ Communication	431	23.7%
	▪ Teamwork	408	22.4%
	▪ Leadership	188	10.3%
	▪ Problem Solving	204	11.2%
	▪ Autonomy	301	16.5%
	▪ Critical Thinking	152	8.3%
	▪ Creativity	138	7.6%
3	The mostsoft skill area id not meet the goals of soft skill development during Supercamp (more than one answered)		1096
	▪ Communication	70	6.4%
	▪ Teamwork	73	6.7%
	▪ Leadership	231	21.1%
	▪ Problem Solving	178	16.2%
	▪ Autonomy	88	8.0%
	▪ Critical Thinking	222	20..3%
	▪ Creativity	234	21.3%
4	The ability of Supercamp Program to change to future perspective being a doctor		
	▪ Yes		
	▪ No	457	83.5%
		90	16.5%
5	Perception of faculty organized Supercamp program after experiencing it		
	▪ Very good	23	4.2%
	▪ Good	171	31.3%
	▪ Well	191	34.9%
	▪ Bad	136	24.9%
	▪ Very Bad	26	4.8%
6	Continuity of Supercamp implementation yearly		
	▪ Agree	457	83.5%
	▪ Disagree	90	16.5%

From table 2, we found that most participants knew the objectives of Supercamp related to the improvement of soft skills of the student and thought that was very important as a priority during medical education curriculum. It might be due to these programs has been established since 2012 and has been organized yearly. Most of the students knew the information about the supercamp from faculty and their seniors. The experience of Supercamp held a year before might be influenced by our participants. Before the program held, students are given information about the schedule and activities program they will experience. Their perceptions of faculty preparation were good mostly. The three top expectations about the soft skill development during Supercamp were communication, leadership, and collab moration or teamwork

Based on the student perspective, Supercamp was succeed to achieve improvement of soft skill development in medical students (74%), especially in communication, teamwork and autonomy (431, 408,301 responses respectively). Unfortunately, there were some aspects of soft skill that Supercamp could not meet the objectives, which were critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, and creativity. After the participants had experienced Supercamp, they mostly still have the positive perception (70,4%) and supported the continuity of Supercamp to organized yearly (83,5%). The ability of Supercamp Program to change to future perspective being a doctor was agreed by 83,5% participants.

Qualitative Analysis Soft Skill Development on each Aspect

Why do you choose communication as one of soft skill aspects achieved during Supercamp?

Participants mentioned three forms two forms of activities that contributed to the development of

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soft skills, especially in communication aspects. The first is community communication, inter-professional communication, and colleague communication.

***"We experienced** interaction with the community directly, through research in public school, community health service, and give counseling"*

"Facing new people with new characters and of course, using different ways of speaking and attitudes. Communicate with homestay owners, with teachers at school as a place to retrieve data, communicate with participants."

"Establish relationships between participants and organizers to avoid miss communication.

Why do you choose teamwork (collaboration) as one of soft skill aspects achieved during Supercamp?

The participants in the study realized that collaboration is important in two conditions which is in actual activities to succeed to program itself and captured the program as the future condition that health practitioners need cooperation one to another.

"*When implementing a large program, it takes good cooperation, and this has been realized in this supercamp event."*

"Building cooperation with future colleagues (interprofessional)"

Why do you choose autonomy as one of soft skill aspects achieved during Supercamp?

Participants considered Supercamp activity to need autonomy and thought autonomy as an aspect of survival and preparation for the future condition.

"In this activity, my friends and I were able to manage the needs of each (health, food) so as not to fall ill and disrupt the ongoing activity."

"Students were required to be able to stay anywhere and in any condition, useful to prepare before the internship and post intership duties"'

Why do you choose critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, and creativity as soft skill aspects couldn't meet the objective during Supercamp?

Participants had shared their opinions. Supercamp did notgive a lot of room for students to create the program itself. Faculty community shared a lot of part in preparing the Supercamp, so most students only do the instructions. The number of students becomes another burden of Supercamp in arranging programs focused on critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, and creativity.

"Students were not given many opportunities to find solutions to a problem that occurred. ...All problems have been solved by the committee so that the participants live execute

"We are only doing more instruction and the concept of activities that have been given before."

"Variety of task division is less to explore the ability of critical thinking, especially the first day where many tablespoons are not getting the job effectively and evenly."

"Too many participants, less obvious job description, many sudden schedule changes that hinder the activity of Supercamp."

Discussion

Faculty of Medicine Universitas Padjadjaran (FMUP) increasingly seek ways to be more relevant with current social problems, through Supercamp Program. The faculty mission bring students to elaborate their knowledge base to bear on community problem and to offer society leadership which is consistent with broader core values of openness, integrity, and inclusion (4). Supercamp program is such a pathway for curriculum reform, progressing from "community service"; "internships"; "practical" or "charity work by students" as "add-ons" to a module/course in an academic program that integrates Community Service-Learning in the core curriculum. Supercamp was an example of pedagogy of engagement, like service-learning, empower students by providing them with an environment of authentic experiences that encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and the application of knowledge (7). Service-learning's focus on community makes it applicable for preparing medical students to work in communities of need. The community is an educative laboratory for the application of knowledge. Students can discover relationships among ideas for themselves, rather than being passive recipients of prescriptive information (8).

A competent physician treats the disease, while a great physician treats the patient who has the disease. The process of curing a patient requires a holistic approach which involves considerations beyond treating a disease. It warrants several skills in a doctor, along with technical expertise (9). A number of studies have found that students tend to lose empathic and idealistic motivations over the course of medical education. This loss of idealism includes a decreased interest in working in underserved communities, feeling of less responsibility for the health of society as a whole, and increased jadedness toward the medical profession overall (10). Idealism decline begins earlier than noted in other studies, implying a need for curricular interventions in the first two years of medical school (10). Supercamp is one of those interventions that make early clinical exposure to the first-year undergraduate program. Conceptualization of students about the role of soft skill education during medical programs is also important (11). This study found that most of the participants know Supercamp was one of strategy to develop soft skills during medical education in

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FMUP, and has prioritized it as an essential skill (11).

Problems were arising nowadays related to doctor behavior often associated with lack of soft skills among health professionals. Soft skill could be achieved by nature or nurture. If we're going to improve interactions between doctors and patients, I believe we must do more than refine the medical school admissions process a focus that sends current students the message that they might not be "right" for medicine and devote more time to the things that truly interfere with students graduating with and sustaining the appropriate attitudes, compassion, and skills (12). Implement curricular changes that support students' idealism, kindness, and focus on patients, such as providing earlier clinical experiences or requiring participation in student-directed clinics (12).

The study showed communication (226), collaboration (Teamwork) (71), and leadership (69) were the three top soft skills on which Supercamp should be focusing because of the student expected to achieve those skills. The most important soft skill depends very much on the context and one's personal perception. However, communication skill was immediately come to most people's mind when soft skills are mentioned (13). The importance of interpersonal communication skills has recognized as being essential in the right provider-patient relationship across health disciplines. The ability to communicate with patients, listen, be observant and respond to patients' needs, empathize, understand, and carry out consultations in an organized and professional manner is considered as the essential requirement of a competent doctor (2). Good communication skills among the doctors are crucial in building a trustworthy doctor-patient relationship that not only helps in therapeutic success by providing holistic care to the patient but also leads to job satisfaction among the doctors.

Supercamp has succeeded in achieved soft skill development, which was communication, teamwork, and autonomy. But on the other hand, it was failed to fulfill the objective in the aspects of critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, and leadership. From the qualitative analysis, the participant had the opinion the reason why It failed, and it was because students are not involved early to plan various programs. So this service-learning program can not meet the philosophy of transformative learning. Transformative learning refers to the development of leadership attributes needed to become a medical leader, i.e., someone who can make change happen in health care. A change agent does not have to be a person in authority, but (s) he does have to have a clear vision and be able to communicate that vision clearly with others. Developing an idea requires that a person (a) knows the context of medicine, i.e., how it organized and how it is influenced by politics, economy, history, technology, etc., and (b) knows him/her self, i.e., his/her norms and values, strengths and weaknesses, what (s)he wants and what (s)he finds important (14). Service-learning's central components include: "Active participation, thoughtfully organized experiences, focus on community needs and school/community coordination, academic curriculum integration, structured time for reflection, opportunities for application of skills and knowledge, extended learning opportunities, and development of a sense of caring for others."

In this study, we found that in the same soft skill area, there were weakness and program cannot meet the goals of improvement of soft skill development. In the next Supercamp program, we should be recommended to identify the goals and objectives, especially in problem solving, creativity, and critical thinking, and consider the other soft skill aspect which didn't elaborate in this study. In the second step, we should arrange the appropriate activities that facilitate those goals and develop a syllabus (15). The limitation of this study, we should do focus group discussion the more elaborated the soft skill achieve and not achieve in this program.

Conclusion

Supercamp is still an effective program to improve soft based on the medical student perspective. There is wide opportunity to improve Supercamp program activity so that it can promote other soft skills aspects other than communication and teamwork skill aspects.

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