The Effect of Registered Student Organization Involvement on Leadership Goal Progress

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Introduction

Research into the concept of student involvement can be found in numerous journal articles, books, and publications. This past research has looked at the impact and effects of student involvement, with much of it focusing on the relationship between student involvement and persistence and achievement in academics (Berger & Milem, 1999) (Huang & Chang, 2004). Much less research, however, has looked into student's personal development in relation to their involvement levels. The few studies that have been done on student involvement and development have looked through the lens of student organizational formal positions and their impact on student development (Foreman, 2012). Others looked specifically at the impact student involvement has on specific leadership competencies, such as cross-cultural communication, which in turn impacts a student's leadership development (Harper & Quaye, 2018). This research has suggested that goal setting alone has a positive impact on goal achievement (Liem, Lau, & Nie, 2008). Thus it is important to consider what leadership-related goals students have set for themselves when looking at their leadership development. Still, research has not yet looked at the relationship between these two ideas of student involvement and students' progress on their leadership-related goals. Therefore, the Illinois Leadership Laboratory, under the direction of Dr. Rosch, examined the relationship in order to further understand the impact student involvement has on student leadership development.

Questions

1. To what extent is registered student organization involvement related to students' progress on leadership-related goals?
2. To what extent is the number of hours students spend and the number of organizations students report being involved in related to students' progress on leadership-related goals?

Regression Analysis of Involvement Effects

					Model Summary					
						Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	0.075	0.006	0.003	1.208	0.006	2.291	2	814	0.102	
2	0.117	0.014	0.009	1.205	0.008	3.296	2	812	0.038	
3	0.396	0.157	0.149	1.116	0.143	45.689	3	809	0	

Methods

For this research study, a three-phase survey was created and subsequently taken by 890 undergraduate students across 34 different universities and community colleges across the United States and Canada. The sample was comprised most highly of students who identified as White (42%; n= 360). Approximately 17% (n=145) identified as African American; 15% (n=128) as Asian American; 14% (n=121) as Latinx; and 5% (n=40) identified as multiracial, while the remainder (8%) of the sample did not report their race or identified another race. Of this sample 30% (n=263) identified as man, 67% (n= 585) identified as a woman and 1% (n=4) identified as transgender. Of these respondents, 33% (n=284) were first-year students; 31% (n=271) second-year students; 21% (n=184) were third-year students; 11% (n= 98) were fourth-year students; and 4% (n=31) were fifth-year students. The respondents were chosen to take the survey phases as part of the Leadershape Institute offered at their home institution. The first phase of data collection occurred before they attended the development program; the second at the end of the program; and the third phase four months after the program had taken place. We also collected data during the third phase that invited students to report the degree to which they participated in registered student organizations, the ways they were involved, and the progress they have made on the goals they set at the Leadershape Institute. We created a correlation matrix and regression analysis that included these variables to investigate the relationship between the number of RSOs a student is involved with and leadership development.

Correlation Matrix

Correlations										
	Org. Number	Org. Hours	Skill, Pre	Skill, Post	Motivation, Pre	Motivation, Post	Efficacy, Pre	Efficacy, Post	Goal, Post	Progress, Post
Org. Number	1									
Org. Hours	.325**	1								
Skill, Pre	.017	.031	1							
Skill, Post	.051	.059	.565**	1						
Motivation, Pre	.124**	.134**	.320**	.238**	1					
Motivation, Post	.173**	.127**	.237**	.320**	.684**	1				
Efficacy, Pre	.137**	.133**	.432**	.247**	.496**	.341**	1			
Efficacy, Post	.152**	.075*	.307**	.404**	.366**	.500**	.468**	1		
Thinking on Goal, Post	.084*	.043	.216**	.239**	.173**	.228**	.183**	.221**	1	
Progress on Goal, Post	.074*	.059	.205**	.276**	.194**	.248**	.217**	.222**	.627**	1

Results

We completed a correlation matrix analysis and analyzed which leadership variables were significantly correlated with our independent variables. The results indicated that the number of organizations and the number of hours student spent in those organizations were positively correlated with motivation to lead and leadership self-efficacy outcomes. We discovered that the number of organizations students joined was also positively correlated with the progress they reported on their leadership-related goals. These statistically significant relationships indicated a need for higher level inferential statistical analysis.

We, therefore, conducted a multiple regression analysis to determine how powerfully predictive the number of organizations and the number of hours spent in those organizations were in predicting the progress that students make on their leadership oriented goals. Our results indicated these variables contributed only 1% of the variance on the students' progress but this still represented a statistically significant relationship even when controlling for all other variables in our model.

Conclusion

Our objective was to determine if student involvement in registered student organizations had any effect on a student's leadership capacity - which is inherently dependent on a student's making progress on and thinking about their leadership goals. We found that there was a weak but positive statistically significant relationship between the number of organizations a student is involved in, the number of hours they spend on such extra-curricular activities and thus their leadership capacity.

While the correlation *is* smaller than we expected, it does imply that student involvement positively impacts leadership capacity of students to a certain limited extent. Thus, the opportunity for leadership development in registered student organizations is not being fully utilized

Future Research

For future research, we recommend inspecting whether growth of leadership capacity is more positively related to leadership involvement in registered student organizations compared to regular involvement that does not entail any leadership roles. It would also be interesting to look into the nature of student organizations which tend to have a more profound impact on leadership development; the student organizations could be fraternities, service groups, professional groups, and social clubs.

We also insist on conducting more research on the negative relationship between over-involvement in organizations and leadership capacities; is it possible that leadership capacity increases somewhat linearly with involvement, plateaus, and then starts decreasing with further increase in involvement? One could also investigate the relationship between the efficiency of registered student organizations and their structure, advising by faculty and the resources made available to them by the University.

References

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