

Rizal's Teachings and Their Impact on APMed Students' Perspectives on National Service

Kirk Aedrix Abella, Ma. Andrea Balod, Lei John Borja, Kelsy Leigh Bugarin, Blessie Jayniel Javier,
Sophia Angela Reginaldo, Marilyn Balmeo, LPT, PhD

Saint Louis University-Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines continues to face a huge shortage and uneven distribution of healthcare workers. This becomes more serious with the constant outmigration of medical professionals in the country. Despite the extensive literature on the value of the Rizal course in fostering nationalism, little was known about how these ideals influence students in medicine-track programs who will soon occupy various important roles in the country's healthcare system. This study tried to determine the impact of the Life and Works of Jose Rizal (GRizal) course on Accelerated Pathway for Medicine (APMed) students' perspective towards national service. This study used a quantitative descriptive design where a 4-point Likert scale survey was administered to 44 first year APMed students to measure their civic responsibility and willingness to serve the nation after learning GRizal. Results showed that Rizal's teachings had a significant positive effect, wherein civic responsibility produced an overall mean of 3.08 (Agree), while willingness to engage in national service produced a mean of 3.01 (Agree), with 23 APMed-I students showcased strong agreement to provide their service in underserved communities. These findings demonstrated that the GRizal course effectively increased social awareness, reflection on ethical and medical issues, and nationalistic values among the medical students. In the context of a country that currently faces an issue with the rising amount of brain drain, the course's capacity to promote civic consciousness and national commitment affirmed its continued relevance in medical education. It was recommended that future research should examine if these strengthened positive perspectives would continue to medical training and into professional practice.

Keywords: Jose Rizal; national service; civic responsibility; APMed students; medical education

INTRODUCTION

As stated by Robredo et al. (2022), the Philippines is globally recognized as a producer of Filipino health care workers. However, 20% of the country's health workforce is employed overseas. This includes 17,000 nurses who signed overseas contracts in 2019. Despite being a country that produces health workers, less than 25% of cities and municipalities meet the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended health worker to population ratio; this results in understaffed and overworked health care workers. This situation reflects the ongoing issue of brain drain, as discussed by Caino and Casillote (2024), wherein skilled professionals, particularly in the medical field, migrate abroad in search of better pay, safer working conditions, and greater opportunities; in short, greener pastures. The Philippines still continues to experience a shortage of medical professionals nationwide. This greatly reduces the quality of healthcare and lessens the willingness of future healthcare workers to serve the country.

During the pre-colonial Philippines, its peoples' loyalty was often tied to the local government system wherein each community within geographical territories had different rulers, hence, the Philippine archipelago had no trace of a unified front (Akmad, 2024). Furthermore, nationalism, a factor that plays a vital role in building national consciousness, had only begun to form due to the noble efforts of prominent figures, such as Jose Rizal, Marcelo H. Del Pilar, and Andres Bonifacio, in Philippine history who fought for the country, in each their own way, contributing to institute Filipino identity and unity at the face of oppression, flourishing the feelings of nationalism and patriotism the Filipinos of today possess. On the other hand, as defined by Dang

et al. (2021), civic responsibility refers to an individual's perceived sense of responsibility and obligation to contribute to the overall beneficence of their community. Emphasizing how an individual's trust and relationship with others as well as attachment to their geographical place leads to higher tendency for active participation towards the collaborative effort to solve problems within the community.

Jose Rizal, recognized as the national hero of the Philippines, is continuously contributing to shaping the Filipino national consciousness through his literary works. In line with Laput (2019), among his various literature, common themes arise like the conviction that education and moral responsibility serve as the heart and soul of nation-building. His ideals emphasized the importance of national service beyond military engagement; that even common folks can contribute to the country. This includes the brain power, specifically people specialized in the medical field. Furthermore, as stated by Badilla (2023), Rizal's ideals remain relevant, especially regarding the perspectives toward national service. Amidst globalization and the progression of the digital age, his teachings have become a source of education and serve as a way to kindle nationalism among Filipinos. Within the medical field, the literature of Jose Rizal indirectly calls the citizens to serve the nation to promote public health and contribute to the collective well-being of the Filipino people. Additionally, Fabillar (2022) underscored that in the 21st century, Rizal's legacy of patriotism and nationalism inspires and guides Filipinos toward serving the country. This influence is especially relevant as citizens prepare for civic responsibilities, specifically in the medical field.

The Philippine government enacted the Republic Act No. 1425, or the Rizal Law, to direct the curricula of all educational institutions to study the life, works, and writings of Rizal in order to preserve and promote his ideals. Its primary purpose is to instill patriotism, to develop moral character, and to strengthen civic conscience among the youth who are viewed as the hope of the nation and as future leaders. According to the Supreme Court E-Library (2019), the preamble of RA 1425 emphasizes the "need for a re-dedication to the ideals of freedom and nationalism for which our heroes lived and died," which highlights the recognition of government in quality education as one of the strongest tools to nurture nationalism and civic responsibility. By requiring the reading of Rizal's masterpieces, specifically the *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, the law ensures that the students understand his vision for social reform and moral awakening, resulting to a transformation of education into a means of developing citizens who embody love of country and social integrity.

Even though RA 1425 is over six decades old, it remains central in the different discussions on national identity and education. On the work of Evasco (2024), *Rizal's Life in Philippine History: Awakening Filipino Nationalism for the 21st Century*, she argued that the realities of modern Filipino society remain closely connected to the struggles faced on Rizal's time then, which means that the law and the required study of his life and works is still relevant. For medical students in particular, this is important as their future profession embodies the principles of ethical service, social justice, and public welfare which are all of the ideals that Rizal lived by and fought for. Therefore, more than just a legal obligation, the law still serves as a moral guide that inspires the development of citizens who are responsible, service-oriented, nationalistic, and committed to uplifting the Filipino people's welfare.

In the Philippines' Higher Education, the Life and Works of Jose Rizal course remains a part of the curriculum as under Republic Act No. 1425, with the purpose of promoting nationalism, moral integrity, and civic consciousness among students. Quiñanola et al. (2024) explored this course's teachings and learning experiences at Cebu Technological University–Moalboal Campus using a phenomenological approach. Their study identified three major themes: Symbol of Filipino Nationalism, Struggle of Bridging Past and Present in Education, and Strategic Instruction for Effective Learning. Collectively, these reveal the challenges that both educators and learners navigate in efforts to show the relevance of Rizal's ideals in contemporary times. Despite students' perception of the subject as tedious or detached from modern standards, the study emphasized that innovative pedagogical strategies, such as contextualized discussions, multimedia integration, and experiential learning, can enliven the course. Hence, these approaches were suggested not only to enhance classroom participation and interest but also to continue Rizal's legacy of inspiring patriotism and critical reflection among learners in tertiary institutions.

Supporting this, Balmeo et al. (2024) highlighted the transformative potential of integrating Rizal's teachings

into the moral and civic formation of college students at Saint Louis University. Their research revealed that studying Rizal's life and works significantly improves learners' moral character, personal discipline, civic conscience, and awareness of their duties as citizens.

This underscores the course's continued relevance as more than a historical requirement but a vital instrument for creating socially responsible, value-oriented individuals who embody national pride and ethical awareness. Together, these studies affirm that the Rizal course is not only an academic mandate but also a dynamic avenue for character and nation building. Through engaging instruction and values-based learning, higher education institutions can sustain the enduring significance of Rizal's ideals in shaping an informed and patriotic Filipino citizenry.

Although several recent studies have investigated how the inclusion of the Life and Works of Jose Rizal in higher education curricula influences students' moral character, civic conscience, and responsibilities of citizenship (Balmeo et al., 2024), most of those focus on general or humanities student populations. For example, in the same study, they examined how studying Rizal's life and writing influenced the students from the School of Nursing, Allied Health, and Biological Sciences (SONAHBS), there still remains a gap in understanding how these teachings impact students in a medicine-track program such as the Accelerated Pathway for Medicine (APMed).

Medical students encounter distinct social expectations, ethical obligations, and service-oriented responsibilities that are different from those of other health disciplines. Thus, the way Rizal's ideals resonate with their perspectives towards national service may likewise vary. Also, most previous studies, including those by Bastida et al. (2024), emphasize the attitude or appreciation of qualitative or immediate course satisfaction rather than empirical evidence about how Rizal education shapes civic or service-oriented perspective specifically among future physicians.

This study will address the gap by providing a quantitative assessment of how the GRizal course influences APMed students' sense of civic duty and national service. By focusing on future medical professionals, the study not only extends the scope of previous works but also shows Rizal's teachings within the context wherein compassion, integrity, and service are professional imperatives. The findings aim to reinforce the relevance of Republic Act No. 1425 (Rizal Law) in fostering civic-mindedness among future physicians and guiding educators in enhancing the integration of Rizal's principles into medical education.

Goal of the study

This study aims to establish a clear understanding of APMed students' perspectives on how Rizal's teachings shape APMed students' sense of civic responsibility and national service. Furthermore, to support this, the study intends to provide empirical evidence through statistical data that describes APMed students' perspectives toward national service after taking up GRizal.

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of Rizal's teachings on APMed students' perspectives toward national service. Specifically, it aims to determine the extent to which the GRizal course impacts APMed students' perspectives toward national service.

Questions/ Problems to be answered

The study aims to determine the impact of Rizal's teachings on APMed students' perspectives toward national service. Specifically, it aims to answer this question: To what extent does the GRizal course influence APMed students' perspectives toward national service in terms of:

- Attitude towards civic responsibility; and
- Willingness to engage in national service?

Significance of the study

By examining the impact of Rizal's teachings, this study will offer valuable perspectives for students, educators, the community, civil society organizations, and future researchers on promoting civic duty and social responsibility.

The study can serve as a tool for the following:

- **Students:** Helps students reflect on Rizal's life, principles, and values to develop civic duty, social responsibility, and commitment to serving the nation as future medical professionals.
- **Teachers & Educators:** Provides insights for enhancing teaching strategies and curriculum design, promoting civic consciousness, ethical conduct, and a sense of responsibility among students.
- **Community:** Highlights how Rizal's teachings shape students' appreciation of their roles as Filipino citizens, encouraging ethical behavior, civic engagement, and involvement in initiatives that benefit society.
- **Civil Society and NGOs:** Provides organizations with guidance on how to promote youth involvement in social and national initiatives, as inspired by Rizal's teaching.
- **Future Researchers:** Acts as a guide for further studies on the impact of Rizal's teachings in cultivating civic awareness, ethical conduct, and national service perspectives among students.

Scope and Delimitation

The scope of this study focused solely on the impact of Rizal's teachings on APMed students' perspectives toward national service, excluding other factors that may impact the future national service of APMed students. Additionally, this study focused only on the first batch of first year students of APMed for the academic year 2025-2026, thus omitting the insights of other students in the medical field of other years and courses. These parameters were set to ensure the study's manageability and completion within the given time frame.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative type of research, specifically a descriptive research design. According to Ghanad (2023), quantitative research involves the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantifiable data in order to describe the specific qualities and significant differences within a large sample from the population, therefore arriving at generalized findings.

Whereas the descriptive research design, as defined by Deckert and Wilson (2023), is a systematic approach that aims to describe the significant characteristics or variables of a population through observations in the sample's natural setting, wherein there is no manipulation of the identified variables. Through this type of study, the researchers were able to acquire a clear understanding of the phenomenon being investigated by investigating the different patterns or trends between the identified variables.

Respondents of the Study

The participants of this study were all the 44 first-year students enrolled in the Accelerated Program for Medicine (APMed) Program at the Saint Louis University - School of Medicine (SLU-SOM). Total population sampling technique was used to select students who will be completing one semester of "The Life and Works of Rizal," ensuring that all participants were able to reflect meaningfully on the relevant issues to this study. The study was conducted within the SLU Main Campus in Baguio City, Philippines. Conducting the study within SLU-SOM provided ease of access to participants and allowed for a contextualized understanding of how Rizal's teachings influenced the perspectives of first-year medical students regarding their role in national service.

Data Collection

In collecting the data for this study, the researchers utilized a survey tool containing a 4-point Likert scale,

sourced from Rosario and Compas (2025), which studied the social and personal influence of Rizal's works and life on university students. As stated by Mills (2024), a survey consists of a series of structured questions that are pre-determined to acquire sufficient data. Each question is designed to acquire or measure specific data necessary to gain a deeper understanding of different populations, as well as help in identifying problems or concerns that the participants have, leading to the development of solutions. Furthermore, Phillips (2016) adds that surveys are generally used to characterize human emotions and opinions, which are objectively unobservable. The 44 students enrolled in the Accelerated Program for Medicine (APMed) Program at the Saint Louis University - School of Medicine (SLU-SOM) answered a 6-item survey through Google Forms in order to acquire the data. By using a survey as a tool, the researchers were able to determine the impact Rizal's teachings have on the APMED students' perception of national service.

Data Analysis

Upon acquiring the necessary data, this study employed a descriptive analysis for summarizing the responses of the participants for questions 1 and 2. Kumar (2025) defines descriptive statistics as an analytical method used by researchers to produce clear and concise summaries of data, with the use of central tendency and dispersion measures, allowing for the identification of patterns, trends, and distributions in the dataset. Overall, the use of descriptive analysis enabled the researchers to describe the data meaningfully and statistically determine the impact of the GRizal course on the perceptions of the participants towards national service by providing a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of the participants.

Based on the study by Nee and Yunus (2020), the four-point Likert scale assesses the intensity of responses based on the assumption that attitudes and experiences can be placed along a continuous and linear path from strong agreement to strong disagreement. This is translated into the following: Scores falling in the range of 3.26 - 4.00 indicated for "Strongly Agree," 2.51 - 3.25 indicated for "Agree," 1.76 - 2.50 indicated for "Disagree," and 1 - 1.75 indicated for "Strongly Disagree." The method assumes attitudes, to which one can measure effectively, and provides an organized manner under which the responses of the participants will be analyzed.

Table 1 Interval of scores used to assess the students' perspectives

Mean Score Range	Interpretation
1.00 - 1.75	Strongly Disagree
1.76 - 2.50	Disagree
2.51 - 3.25	Agree
3.26 - 4.00	Strongly Agree

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the summary of the key findings, its corresponding interpretation, the discussion of corroborated studies, and its implications in line with the study's research questions. Correspondingly, these findings emerged from the dissemination of a 6-item questionnaire to the sample and their completion thereof, answered through a 4-point Likert scale. The questions primarily focused on identifying the perception of the APMed students towards national service in terms of attitude towards civic responsibility and willingness to engage in national service.

Table 2 Attitude towards civic responsibility

Mean Scores	Frequency	Interpretation
2.25	4	Disagree
3.09	25	Agree

3.91	15	Strongly Agree
Total 3.08	44	Agree

Table 2 presents the distribution of the first dimension that measures the impacts of Rizal’s teachings on APMed students in terms of attitude towards civic responsibility, which was measured through three statements (Items 1, 2, and 3). Of the 44 respondents, 4 fall under the disagree range, having a mean score of 2.25. While 25 respondents, with a mean score of 3.09, fall under the agree range, consolidating the majority of the responses. Lastly, 15 respondents answered strongly agree, resulting in a mean score of 3.91.

These results reveal that the APMed students have a positive attitude towards civic responsibility, where the majority view service to the community as a personal duty. This aligns with the findings of Balmeo et al. (2024), which emphasized the transformative potential of the GRIZAL course in shaping students’ moral character and sense of civic conscience, leading to their awareness of their duties as citizens of the Philippines. Furthermore, Evasco (2024) supports the idea that these high agreement rates reflect the course’s relevance in developing a sense of social justice and in the want to contribute to the public welfare within students, particularly in medicine students, as their profession is deeply aligned with providing compassionate service to society. This proves that the GRIZAL course acts as a moral guide capable of promoting a commitment to service within future physicians, which can essentially address the Philippines’ problem of a shortage of healthcare workers. These corroborated studies highlight the effectiveness of the mandated Republic Act No. 1425 in fostering an understanding within prospective healthcare professionals that their responsibilities are not only confined to clinical care, but a broader commitment to the development of our nation.

Table 3 Willingness to engage in national service

Mean Scores	Frequency	Interpretation
2.33	2	Disagree
2.89	19	Agree
3.80	23	Strongly Agree
Total 3.01	44	Agree

Table 3 illustrates that 2 students fall within the range of “disagree”, 19 students fall within the range of “agree”, and 23 students fall within the range of “strongly agree”. Comprising a mean score of 2.33, 2.89, and 3.80 respectively. Overall, the APMed students “agree” and are willing to engage in national service.

The results in Table 3 shows the strong willingness of APMed students to engage in national service, as indicated by a mean of 3.01. This positive stance is meaningful when viewed on the background of the "brain drain" phenomenon described by Robredo et al. (2022), where difficult working conditions often cause health professionals to work abroad. In contrast to this trend, the students’ commitment offers evidence that Republic Act No. 1425 (Rizal Law) is successfully fulfilling its purpose to instill a deep civic conscience in the youth. Aligning with Dang et al. (2021) perspective on civic responsibility, these findings suggest that these future medical doctors are internalizing a sense of obligation to their respective communities, directly in line with Rizal’s call to use their education for building up the nation. Furthermore, the results addressed the research gap mentioned by Bastida et al. (2024), implying that even being under a demanding educational curriculum, the subject GRizal helps the students adapt a service-oriented mindset. Overall, the results show that the Rizal course is more than just an academic requirement but also serves a role in molding future doctors who prioritize public welfare over personal gain.

Synthesis of all the findings of the study

The findings of the study demonstrate that the Life and Works of Jose Rizal (GRizal) course contribute positively to the development of civic responsibility and national service perspectives among APMed students.

The overall mean of 3.08 for attitude toward civic responsibility and 3.01 for willingness to engage in national service, both interpreted as “Agree,” indicates that the students recognize service to the community as a personal and professional responsibility. Notably, 23 out of 44 respondents strongly agreed with their willingness to engage in national service. The findings further show that Rizal’s teachings strengthened students’ commitment to serving underserved and remote communities, while encouraging them to critically examine healthcare concerns and respond responsibly.

These findings are particularly significant in addressing the Philippines’ persistent shortage, maldistribution, and outmigration of healthcare professionals. The study suggests that the GRizal course can serve as more than an academic requirement; it can be a values-based avenue for cultivating future physicians who see their knowledge and professional skills as instruments for nation-building. By emphasizing Rizal’s ideals of compassion, integrity, social responsibility, and service to the Filipino people, medical education can help nurture a stronger sense of commitment to communities that remain underserved.

In this sense, the course may contribute to countering the mindset that professional success necessarily requires migration, although the study appropriately recognizes that positive perspectives among students do not automatically guarantee that they will remain and practice in the Philippines. Ultimately, addressing brain drain requires more than instilling patriotism; it calls for the sustained development of value-driven professionals alongside improvements in the healthcare system and working conditions.

The study recommends using Rizal’s teachings to strengthen civic duty early in medical training, while encouraging students to critically analyze healthcare gaps, workforce maldistribution, and possible systemic reforms. Thus, national service should be understood not simply as an obligation to remain in the country, but as a commitment to use one’s education, expertise, and professional capacity for the welfare of Filipinos. Future research should determine whether the strong service-oriented perspectives observed among APMed students are sustained throughout medical training and eventually translated into actual decisions to serve in the Philippines after graduation.

CONCLUSION

This study is primarily designed to explore whether the mandated course the Life and Works of Jose Rizal (GRizal) course effectively influences the perspectives of students from the Accelerated Pathway for Medicine (APMed) toward national service. Amid the national challenge of healthcare worker brain drain and maldistribution, this research specifically focused on whether Rizal’s patriotic ideals still resonate with future medical doctors. The results gathered through the survey greatly suggest that the GRizal course reinforces the students’ service-oriented perspectives. The consistently high mean scores across all items demonstrate uniform and impactful positive influence of Rizal’s teachings on both their attitude toward civic responsibility and their willingness to engage in national service.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Teachers in medical education should intentionally integrate the life, works, and ideals of Jose Rizal into relevant learning experiences by connecting his themes of patriotism, compassion, social responsibility, ethical leadership, and service to contemporary Philippine healthcare issues.
- Build value-driven professionals: Educators should use Rizal’s teachings to strengthen moral character and civic responsibility, highlighting compassion and integrity as essential job qualities. Since the course successfully promotes reflection on values and professional roles, this progress should continue to fight “brain drain” by teaching a strong sense of duty to the Filipino people early in medical training.
- Promote close analysis of healthcare systems: Educational institutions should encourage students to use Rizal’s social activism as a framework for analyzing current systemic health gaps and maldistribution of the workforce. Improving the critical thinking skills shown in this research, future doctors can make a

change and advocate for better healthcare fixes and policy changes, rather than simply letting the health sector's issues remain as is.

- Future researchers are encouraged to replicate the study using a larger and more diverse population of medical students from different medical schools and geographical areas in the Philippines. Expanding the sample would provide a broader understanding of how Rizal's teachings influence civic responsibility and willingness to engage in national service, while also determining whether the positive perspectives found among the APMed students are consistent across different contexts.
- Evaluate long-term impact through further research and evaluation: Further research is needed to determine if the high level of service-oriented perspective observed in first-year students translates into actual practice upon graduation. Over time, future studies should see whether these students actually choose to practice in the Philippines or migrate, thus evaluating the long-term efficacy of the GRizal course in influencing medical doctors to serve the nation.

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