

PSYCHOLOGICAL & PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS IN FLOOD AFFECTED VICTIMS: A SERVICE LEARNING INITIATIVE

Dr. Seena M Mathai, Asst professor, Dept. of Psychology, U C College, Aluva

Keywords: Service Learning, Coping strategies Solution Focused Brief Therapy, Collective recovery and resilience, Disaster Management

Human learning is greatly complex and it is a lifelong process, building skills and knowledge throughout the life which occurs through various experiences encountered in the course of our lifetime. Experiential learning is the most excellent method of learning involving the application of knowledge to experience in order to develop skills or new ways of thinking (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Experiential learning is also built upon a foundation of interdisciplinary and constructivist learning. Experiential methodology doesn't treat each subject as being walled off in its own room, unconnected to any other subjects. Compartmentalized learning doesn't reflect the real world, while as the experiential classroom works to create an interdisciplinary learning experience that mimics real world learning (Wurdinger, 2005). Service learning provides service and consequential learning which has collective impact on gaining knowledge. This article addresses the need for service learning which was significantly experienced by our students through practice of various awareness programmes and intervention techniques among the flood affected people of Aluva and Paravoor Thaluks in Kerala. This study emphasizes how the practice of experiential learning was beneficial for both the community as well as the students during the disillusionment phase of flood disaster. Nearly 10000 people were camped in our college and hence we were able to actively use this opportunity to enhance many skills. Social interactions and transactions among various strata of people for about a month enabled us to understand those psychological coping mechanisms adopted by the different strata of people in the community. We could identify the different factors which potentially resulted in poor mental health. The psychology department gave training to the graduate and post graduate students on giving awareness and Solution focused Brief therapy which is a brief therapy concentrating on finding solutions in present time and exploring one's hope for the future. This therapy focuses on social constructionism which allows them to make positive changes more quickly. The

effectiveness of this practice was fruitful and enabled to focus more attention on the need for collective recovery and resilience.

The experiential activities during the service learning activities during and post disaster management helped the students to understand the underlying content, created a safe space for them to work through their own process of self-discovery and the learning activities were personally relevant to the student in deciding psychological mitigation measures like creating awareness programmes and building psychological capacities in people at very early stages in life. Despite many challenges during disaster management, the students were successfully able to meet social needs and improve educational outcomes. To recapitulate, this paper thoroughly reflects the outcome of community engagement service and experiential education.