EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE COMMUNITY WORK

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Abstract: Community work activities are an integral part of many courses. It sensitizes students towards issues in society. After Covid 19 many organizations are offering opportunities for community work in online mode. This study has been to find out the experiences of students of online community work. The data has been collected from the students of the teacher education institution from Mumbai. The research also focuses on the problems faced during online volunteering work. The findings of the research focus on the satisfaction received by the volunteers, convenience with respect to time and place while participating in the activities, and skills learned by participation in these activities.

Index Terms – **online community work, volunteering, community service**

I. INTRODUCTION

 "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Mahatma Gandhi.
 Bringing the change in society is in the hands of an individual. There is immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to *work* toward the same goals. The young generation has the power to change the society. They need to be sensitized towards the problems in society. The sensitization would lead to taking correct stand towards solving the problem. Therefore, most academic courses have included community work activities as an integral part of the curriculum.
 This provides opportunity to students to give back to society. The community service activities are planned very carefully to provide first-hand experience to the students to get aware about the problem. At the same time, it provides the chance to get connected with society and put forth efforts to solve the problem in society.
 During Covid 19 pandemic when all the educational institutions shifted to online mode, the organizations working for the community also underwent change and most of the activities were shifted to online mode.
 Society has once again been able to come back to normalcy after Covid pandemic. But online activities became the new normal situation. Various organizations are still providing opportunity to render community services in online mode. The volunteers have numerous experiences during online community work. The researcher was curious to know the experiences of the community service volunteers in online mode.

II. OBJECTIVES:

To study the experiences of social service volunteers during online mode
To study the problems face by the volunteers while rendering community services in an online mode

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The researcher has selected the survey method to study the experiences of online community work.

IV. SAMPLE:

Hundred students of teacher education program were the sample for the research. The data was collected from the student teachers from Mumbai city.

V. TOOL FOR DATA ANALYSIS:

The researcher has used percentage to analyse the data.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

- **Task carried out to render community services**

The various tasks were carried out during online community work. 80 % of volunteers were part of the outreach program. 46% of volunteers provided support to the office. 24% of volunteers have handled fundraising activities. There were 40% of the volunteers participated in the translation & editing the activity.

The outreach programs included online teaching of various subjects, communication skill development sessions, craft activities, mentoring programs for students in the rural area and for deprived children

- **Time allotted by volunteers for volunteering virtually**

92% of volunteers devoted 3-5 hrs to online community work weekly. 54% of volunteers devoted 5 to 8 hrs to online community work. Only 4% of volunteers devoted more than hrs to online community work.

- **Convenience with respect to time and place**

All volunteers could easily devote time for community work as their traveling time was saved. There was a facility to conduct online activities at the convenience of the volunteers which motivated students to participate in the activities. The students have participated in community work activities from their homes.

- **Duration of virtual volunteer:**

86% of volunteers have chosen the online activities in which they need to render services for 1 month to 6 months. 4% volunteers have chosen the online activities in which they need to render services for 6 months to 1 year.

- **Reasons for becoming a virtual volunteer**

100 % of students were part of online community unity service to fulfill the requirements of the program.

- **Enhancement of skills**

89% of students felt that their skills were enhanced due to online volunteering work and it will help them in future employment. 11% of students chose an online communication activity to learn a new set of skills. The students used various online tools for the preparation of presentation & evaluation activities.

- **Contribution:**

All the students agreed that they could contribute outside the local community due to online community activities. Reaching children in rural areas was easily possible due to online mode. The students felt some of the activities they have done, would have required more time in offline mode.

- **Connecting with others:**

All students were very happy to connect with other volunteers are also people from various parts of the country using online mode.

- **Satisfaction**

96% of students were satisfied with their experiences of community work in online mode. 4% of students wished these activities in offline mode would have more effective. All students are willing to participate in online community work activities in the future.

- **Problems faced by student volunteers**

92% of the students have faced connectivity issues sometimes during the outreach program. 8% of students have not faced connectivity issues during the sessions.

98% of students agreed that when many participants connected from one device, it became difficult to conduct the activities sometimes.

87% of the students agreed that there was the facility to reschedule the activities in case of connectivity issues. 3% of students found it difficult to reschedule the activities

CONCLUSION:

Online community work has built a good bond between students and society. The student volunteers also realized their personal strengths and weaknesses by participating in community work activities. There are so many community work activities happening around us but many times it is hard to catch them in time due to our daily schedule. The online volunteering projects provided flexible timeslots to all the volunteers. As these volunteering opportunities were entirely online, volunteers have to think out of the box to conduct outreach activities effectively. The students have learned various new skills by participating in the activities. Students could show their philanthropic side by getting involved in virtual volunteering at their convenience. All the students added the certificate or work experience of online volunteering work in their resumes. The student volunteers agreed they had a very satisfying experience of participating in online community work activities. The volunteering work done by all the student volunteers was a precious service provided for society.