Clinical and Applied Sociology

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March 9, 2024

Professor

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[Assignment Instructions]

***Assignment #3 – Essay***

1. Write a 5-page essay addressing the following:
   1. Create a hypothetical project for applied sociology (descriptive problem identification/diagnosis) based on a problem within an organization you either work for/with or with which you are familiar.
   2. Extending this project might include a “clinical” intervention to lead to social change. What might the intervention look like and how would it be implemented?
   3. Evaluate ethical considerations for the above two scenarios.
   4. Propose means by which the project outcomes could be evaluated or  measured for effectiveness.
2. **Paper Outline** 
   1. **Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.**
   2. **Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.**
   3. **End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.**
   4. **Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).**

*PAPER OUTLINE (as requested in the Assignment 3 instructions)*

**Title: Applied Sociology Project in a Volunteer Hospital Foundation: Addressing Problems, Implementing Interventions, and Evaluating Ethical Considerations**

**Introduction**

**a. Descriptive Problem Identification/Diagnosis**

**b. Clinical Intervention for Social Change**

**c. Ethical Considerations**

**d. Project Outcomes Evaluation:** Measuring the effectiveness of the intervention is vital for ongoing improvement. Several means can be proposed for evaluating project outcomes:

1. **Surveys and Feedback**
2. **Retention Rates**
3. **Qualitative Interviews**
4. **Observational Data**

**Conclusion**

*[End of Assignment 3 Outline]*

**Applied Sociology Project in a Volunteer Hospital Foundation: Addressing Problems, Implementing Interventions, and Evaluating Ethical Considerations**

**Introduction**

Applied sociology involves the practical application of sociological principles to address real-world issues. In this essay, we will outline a hypothetical project focused on the Bear Valley Community Hospital Foundation, covering problem identification, clinical intervention for social change, ethical considerations, and methods for evaluating project outcomes.

The first step in our hypothetical project is to identify a relevant issue within the Hospital Foundation. Let's consider the problem of low volunteer retention rates. Through a sociological lens, we can explore the root causes, such as insufficient engagement, lack of recognition, or unclear roles for volunteers.

**Descriptive Problem Identification/Diagnosis**

The identified problem is a post-pandemic reduction in volunteerism in our Hospital Foundation.

While the COVID-19 pandemic may not be fully to blame for reduced volunteerism, community volunteer recruitment efforts face challenges in a post-pandemic world. During the present *post*-pandemic era, our local hospital’s most dramatic public health crisis has subsided despite continued shortages. Yet the Foundation’s volunteer membership has not recovered. In order to continue helping our hospital with unfulfilled equipment needs, it is essential for membership numbers to increase. The purpose of this action research project will be to address the problem of post-pandemic reduced volunteerism in our Hospital Foundation.

The retention/recruitment problem is significant because individuals are hesitant to participate in-person, and organizations are hesitant to utilize volunteers despite the need and benefits.   
As Vice President of the Foundation, I am taking it upon myself to analyze effective ways to retain volunteers, encourage former members to return, and hopefully grow our membership base as well. Based on the findings of this preliminary research, I will document the effectiveness of adaptive efforts made by the leadership of our 100% volunteer organization to recruit new members from the community in a post-pandemic era of lingering uncertain duration. Reviews of the scholarly literature serve as explorations of how other organizations have addressed their pandemic-related volunteer shortages.

Community volunteer recruitment efforts face challenges in a post-pandemic world because vulnerable individuals––particularly older adults––have become hesitant to participate in-person, and organizations have become hesitant to utilize volunteers despite the need and benefits to all (Colibaba et al., 2022, p. 5). Community volunteers rely on nonprofit leaders to insure their safety while providing opportunities for meaningful engagement. One psychological factor that provides meaning to volunteers is “the sense of ownership one holds toward the organization” (Ainsworth, 2020, p. 2). With the feeling of ownership, one is less likely to abandon that which they own. While, as Ainsworth asserts, “the sense of ownership may be generated by those involved in volunteering” (p. 3), I maintain that the psychological perception of volunteers’ ownership must first be cultivated and overtly encouraged by a nonprofit organization’s *leadership*.

**Clinical Intervention for Social Change**

To address the identified problem, a clinical intervention could involve implementing a comprehensive volunteer engagement program. This program could include regular training sessions, recognition ceremonies, and the establishment of clear roles and responsibilities. The intervention aims to create a positive and supportive environment, fostering a sense of belonging and commitment among volunteers.

The implementation of this intervention would require collaboration between sociologists, hospital staff, and current volunteers. Workshops and training sessions could be conducted to educate volunteers about the importance of their roles and the impact they make. Regular feedback mechanisms and recognition events would be integrated into the organization’s routine.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are paramount in any applied sociology project. In our case, several ethical considerations should be taken into account. Firstly, obtaining informed consent from volunteers to participate in the intervention is crucial. Transparency about the goals, methods, and potential impacts of the intervention is essential.

Respecting the autonomy and dignity of volunteers is another ethical concern. Avoiding any form of coercion or manipulation in encouraging participation is imperative. Additionally, confidentiality should be maintained, ensuring that personal information about our volunteers is handled with the utmost care.

**Project Outcomes Evaluation**

Measuring the effectiveness of the intervention is vital for ongoing improvement. Several means can be proposed for evaluating project outcomes:

1. Surveys and Feedback: Conducting surveys among volunteers before and after the intervention can provide valuable insights into changes in satisfaction, engagement, and perceived impact.
2. Retention Rates: Tracking volunteer retention rates over time will indicate whether the intervention has positively affected the longevity of volunteers' commitment.
3. Qualitative Interviews: In-depth qualitative interviews with volunteers can offer a nuanced understanding of their experiences and the impact of the intervention on their sense of purpose and satisfaction.
4. Observational Data: Observational data, such as attendance at training sessions and participation in hospital activities, can serve as objective indicators of increased engagement.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the hypothetical applied sociology project within a volunteer Hospital Foundation provides a comprehensive approach to addressing volunteer retention issues. The clinical intervention emphasizes creating a supportive environment, while ethical considerations underscore the importance of transparency and respect for volunteers. Evaluating project outcomes through various methods ensures a thorough understanding of the intervention's effectiveness, allowing for continuous improvement in volunteer engagement strategies. This holistic approach exemplifies the potential impact of applied sociology in real-world settings.

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