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COMPETITIVE DIVISION- ACADEMIC

Mental Health and Disaster Volunteering: Predictors of Stress and Depression Among U.S. Volunteers

Research shows that community-based, non-disaster volunteering can positively impact mental health by fostering camaraderie, instilling a sense of purpose, promoting mastery, and aiding in developing coping strategies. However, disaster volunteering might have adverse effects due to role strain, traumatic stressors, and insufficient support. Despite much research highlighting negative outcomes, some evidence suggests that disaster environments may also foster positive mental health outcomes, similar to other forms of volunteering. Given the conflicting findings on disaster volunteerism's mental health impacts, this research quantitatively explored the relationship between disaster volunteer stress and depression, considering demographic and volunteer-related variables. Survey data were collected from October to December 2023 through social media recruitment and snowball sampling, with 110 participants. This poster presents research findings describing the correlations and the significance of mastery, social support satisfaction, volunteer impact, efficacy, and fulfillment in relation to volunteer stress and depression. Additionally, the poster will discuss open-ended survey responses to highlight volunteer motivations, coping mechanisms, and reintegration experiences in the U.S. Finally, the poster addresses research limitations, suggests future research

directions, and offers recommendations for nonprofits and emergency managers working with disaster volunteers.

Presentation Theme: Research - Disaster Behavioral Health/Volunteer Management

Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research: Dissertation Advisor: Sarah E. DeYoung, PhD - Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, Disaster Research Center, University of Delaware