

## What Students Learned from Visiting Social Organisations and Contact with Vulnerable People

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### Abstract

The study examines undergraduate students' learning experience in a community-based research service-learning course. The focus is on the lessons learned from the visit and cooperation with social organisations and from the contact with vulnerable people. We obtained data through qualitative interviews using inductive coding following the specific qualitative content analysis approach proposed by Mayring. The research population consisted of 13 geography students in the bachelor's degree programme at the Ruhr University Bochum, Germany. Despite the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was possible to demonstrate that the experiences positively contributed to character development. Students developed a greater understanding of life realities that differ from their own. The importance of not having prejudices, being tolerant, helping others, and being grateful for one's own life situation were also mentioned as learning effects. In addition, a wide range of theoretical and practical knowledge was gained, including knowledge on how to deal with vulnerable people in daily life and expertise in the structure, local distribution and working methods of social organisations and assistance service providers. Our findings demonstrate that collaboration with social organisations in service-learning or community-based research projects, as well as working with vulnerable groups of people, offers a holistic learning experience and can make an important contribution to value-oriented education.

**Keywords:** community-based research, learning outcome, service-learning, student