

Year two: the impact of addictions education and the experiential activities on attitudes of students

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to examine the effects of education and experiential learning on counseling student's perceptions of substance use and counseling those with substance-related problems. Some counselors report having had negative experiences and beliefs about substance use, abuse, and persons with substance related-problems. A counselor's negative beliefs and experiences can impair their capacities of working effectively and empathetically with persons who seek help for substance abuse problems. Research reports that education can assist helping professionals to be able to work more efficiently with clients with substance abuse struggles by increasing awareness of substance abuse problems, enhancing empathy, increasing professional's ability to relate with what clients may be experiencing, training in appropriate interventions, and referral skills.

Design/methodology/approach: This study measured changes in students' attitudes toward addictions following completion of a 15-week addictions counseling course, which incorporated multiple experiential activities in conjunction with information about the effects of various substances and different treatment modalities.

Findings: The results revealed significant changes in treatment intervention and non stereotyping.

Originality/value: These changes suggest education might affect attitudes toward substance abuse. The implications of this study can guide counselor educators in designing effective addictions courses and can lead to future discussions on how to use experiential learning in the classroom.

Keyword: Stigma; Attitudes; Addictions education; Experiential education