



My Experience at Eklavya Foundation

I chose Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health to complete my Community Engagement course requirement because I believed that with its community-oriented mental health initiatives, it would be the perfect fit. While I joined with some specific, short-term goals in mind, the actual experience expanded my perspective in multiple ways. During my internship, I was involved in research-based work that focused on understanding and compiling mental health representation in popular media. My tasks included synthesizing academic sources, collecting film and celebrity representations and organizing the findings into visual charts and extensive notes that could effectively communicate these insights to a wider audience.

I primarily worked on two charts: 'Celebrities and Mental Health' and 'Movies and Mental Health'. The first chart compiled public statements from both Indian and international celebrities who have spoken openly about their experiences with mental health challenges. The focus was on direct quotations that would lead to awareness and empathy in the society. The second chart analyzed films based on their accuracy and sensitivity in portraying mental health. I selected eight films, four that depicted mental health positively and four that contributed to stigma or misrepresentation.

Professionally, this internship opened up a whole new way of engaging with psychology for me. I discovered topics and research I hadn't explored before and learned how to read and understand academic work with a more analytical mindset. Designing and compiling the charts taught me how to organize information and how to turn facts into visuals that can be more accessible to people. I also found myself thinking more critically about the role of media and celebrities in shaping how we understand mental health, realizing how easily public narratives can influence what people believe or how they feel. This experience definitely helped me understand psychology as connected to the world outside the classroom, and how it can be used to bring about change.

Working with other interns and my supervisors was a practice in sharing and refining ideas together. Presenting my work and putting forth ideas also gave me a sense of confidence. I began stepping out of my comfort zone, where I had never really experienced academics outside textbooks and the classroom. It was an important primary step into more professional spaces in the future.



Throughout the internship, I had the opportunity to interact with Dr. Anil Vartak, while brainstorming and getting feedback on my work; and he was always brimming with innovative ideas and thought-provoking perspectives. Every discussion with him felt like a learning experience in itself, and his passion for mental health and community well-being was very motivating. My supervisor, Ms. Rutuja Dixit, was equally supportive and approachable. She created a friendly and encouraging environment where interns felt comfortable to ask questions, share opinions, and experiment with ideas; and it was because of her that the experience was enriched tenfold. What was heartwarming for me was the organization's genuine care for its interns, they gave us flexibility and autonomy in our

work, understanding that we were also full-time students managing academic commitments.

The atmosphere was open, collaborative, and free from unnecessary rigidity, which made it easier to focus on meaningful learning and our work rather than getting caught up in formalities.

Everyone I worked with seemed personally committed to the cause, and that made a lasting impression on me. Seeing how genuinely passionate and grounded the team was reinforced my belief that genuine social change is driven by such people, who truly care. Seeing their passion and sincerity made me hopeful about the impact they can continue to make in the community. I'm grateful to have been part of their efforts, and I sincerely wish the team continued success in their mission.

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