

Academic Youth and Participation in Voluntary Work

‘A Field Study of a Test Group of Academic Youths in the Faculty of Arts – Department of Sociology – Damascus University’

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Foreword

All Arab communities have noticed the importance of voluntary work and realized its significant role in developing society and reinforcing youth abilities in activities that can develop their social abilities and practical experience necessary for the development and progress of their societies.

No doubt, this realization is represented in great number of workshops and local and international conferences seeking to stress the importance of voluntary work in society. That is most manifested in the recent conference which was held in Syria, and stressed the importance of volunteering as a critical personal element for shaping up the individual’s experiences as a human being and as a citizen, and for the importance of work whether it is paid or voluntary because this considered a kind of knowledge, experience and self-confidence for any human being

Opening speeches in the conference mentioned that voluntary work represents the highest degrees of philanthropy and citizenship. To volunteer to serve others by your own will as an individual or through an institution is an effective way for profound communication. Volunteering is considered to be a significant aid for official efforts in many fields. In this sense, volunteering turns into a social institution with wide horizons through which society is established on two bases: the basis of those who benefit from the voluntary work; and the basis of the volunteers in the same time. This strengthens the ties between different members of society who share the same concerns and the same problems, working all together to solve them. This age, as mentioned in the opening speech, is the age of human development in which man is both the aim and the way to make any significant change on all levels; thus, developing the spirit of initiative and participation, and supporting the concept of volunteering in man form together the essential elements of individualistic, social and institutional development, especially that fields of voluntary work can be handled by all society members regardless of their age, class or role. Though we have the proper social and moral background for embracing voluntary work, through the deep-rooted concept of familial and social solidarity, yet it is still far from offering the hoped-for outcomes due to absence of association between our voluntary work and

our needs of development on the one hand, and lack of coordination between different concerned bodies on the other.

We know that challenges are huge, and making a better future for our nation requires us to work hard all together, offer more commitment to the public interest, and offer initiatives for their sake without expecting any kind of gift or reward. There is an urge need to spare no effort in spreading the concept of volunteering in our society in order to make it a part of the society's values and ways of behavior. Setting the proper environment for volunteering is also badly needed, through removing the obstacles hindering its way of progress and extension, so we may achieve a fully organized and fruitful voluntary work, based upon our needs of development in all of its concerns and different domains; such as qualifying and developing manpower, finding more job opportunities and treating the problems of environment; in addition to the public issues which concern the whole society, and considering finding solutions for those issues as one of the duties and responsibilities of the citizen. (www.souria.com)

This foreword may form the basis upon which this study has been made.

I. The Problematic Issue

1) The problem of the research

As already mentioned, social voluntary work is a corner stone in building societies and developing them in this age. Because of the tremendous challenges facing societies, government institutions cannot in fact carry out the developing process and providing the individuals' needs all by themselves unless they cooperate with other institutions that contribute effectively to the development of society and reinforcing its abilities in different fields (economic, social, cultural, etc.) Despite the crucial importance of social work in developing societies and developing their members' abilities, we notice that the degree of practicing it differs from one group to another within the Syrian society; for there is a number of individuals who practice social work, but others may be reluctant to participating in it. This reluctance might be attributed to: first, the vagueness of the concept of voluntary work to the Syrian society in the first place, beside other reasons related to family, financial circumstances, etc.; second, the spread of indifference amongst youths; and third, those who practice social work do not support the initiatives of young volunteers or appreciate their act of volunteering.

Consequently, we had to survey amongst youths in Syrian universities, particularly the students of the Faculty of Arts in Damascus University, to know what do these youths know about the concept of volunteering, and recognize their size of participation in it if any, and to what extent they are ready to participate in voluntary work of any kind in the future; especially that government bodies concern themselves with this issue through the Youths Conference for Voluntary Work held in Syria in April 2007.

This study attempts to offer answers for the following questions:

- How do youths look at voluntary work?
- How much do they know about the voluntary works in which they can participate?
- Can the academic youths supply an accurate definition for voluntary work?
- Have they participated in a voluntary work of any kind before? What were those participations?
- Does the volunteer person receive any kind of rewards for his work?

2) Objectives of the research

- Determining the concept of social voluntary work as the test group members understand it.
- Introducing the concept of voluntary work to the academic youths, and spreading the spirit of cooperation amongst them to support their participation in it.
- Specifying the reasons of motivating individuals to participate in voluntary work.
- Concluding scientific results that may be able to contribute to increasing the test group members' participation in voluntary work.

3) Previous studies

The studies about the concept of volunteering in the Arab countries are too few; maybe because of the lack of understanding of the importance of social volunteering and its mechanism of accelerating the process of development in different societies. Recently, many conferences and workshops have been held to discuss volunteering, its beginnings and objectives, and stressed the necessity of rewarding the services of young volunteers of both genders with token rewards as a symbol of appreciation; and appreciating their services on a wide scale to attract as many youths as possible to participate in developing their societies through their volunteer services; provided that this support is offered from official governmental authorities.

Among the social studies about this topic was a study presented by Rashed al-Rashed from, the United Arab Emirates, titled *Volunteering and Governmental Regulation in the United Arab Emirates*. This study aimed at:

- Studying and recognizing the status of social work in the Gulf countries in order to obtain comparative data about its objectives, features, activities, contributions and obstructions facing it.
- Determining the common or prominent or exclusive characteristics of social voluntary work, and analyzing them in order to determine the causes and results.
- Recommending characteristics and principles for a flexible common policy to be applied in all Gulf countries, aiming at activating and developing social voluntary work.

The study came out with the following results:

- Some regulations organizing social voluntary work are too old-fashioned for many modern changes in society. This is due either to the ancientness of those regulations, to their inadequacy, or to their confusion of the nature of clubs' work with that of public interest societies.
- Administrative units supervising the activities of public interest societies in most of the Gulf countries are characterized with inadequacy and lack of personnel, which affect negatively their responsibilities and supervision functions, as well as to their ability to develop those responsibilities.
- Lack of training opportunities for all staff in the administrative units supervising the activities of public interest societies, which has a negative impact on their acquisition of more up-to-date technical information and knowledge in terms of supporting and developing social voluntary work. (Rashed 1988, 13, 14, 51, 52)

Rashed's study focused on the topic of voluntary work in public interest societies and their administrative cadre, but has not tackled voluntary work in general away from those societies, despite the fact that the efficiency of voluntary work in those societies does not depend fully on the official cadre within them alone, but also on outer youth volunteers.

4) Concepts used in this study

- **Voluntary work:** It is the work based mainly upon human efforts presented by society members, individually or collectively; founded basically on will and self-motive, whether this motive is conscious or unconscious. The volunteer does not expect materialistic rewards or private profits other than acquiring the feeling of belonging to one's society and holding some responsibilities contributing to meeting urgent social needs or serving a societal cause. (www.islamonline.net/arabic)
- **Voluntary behavior:** Individual's demeanor that is characterized by voluntary work qualities, but comes in the form of response to emergency conditions or to certain human or moral incidents. (www.islamonline.net/arabic)
- **The volunteer:** A society member who has got the money or the time to help offer what s/he can to society under the umbrella of social governmental or non-governmental institutions, without expecting any kind of materialistic reward for the services they offer.

II. Social Volunteer Work (Concept and Beginnings)

1) The beginnings of volunteer work

Volunteer work, with its social and human dimensions, represents a civilized behavior characterizing different communities and civilizations since long ago, and became a symbol for solidarity and cooperation among society members within society institutions, since volunteer work has correlated firmly with all aspects of benevolence and good deeds in all human communities since historical times since it is a human practice. If we refer to religious doctrine, for instance, we will find that calling for committing to good manners and doing charity and spreading love and feelings of fraternity amongst people represent the core of divine religions which came to stress the principles of good and love, and build the society on the bases of solidarity, cooperation and equality. Accordingly, works of aid and charity were connected with piety and worshiping of God, motivated by both human and religious motives (al-Akhras 2000, 16); initiatives, however, were limited to wealthy individuals.

In the early 1960s, the Syrian government adopted a right-minded policy in terms of social care, represented in setting governmental institutions since taking care of the needy social classes is a government's duty rather than individuals'. Government started with people with disabilities and the elderly and juvenile delinquents; afterwards, it began to support non-governmental societies and institutions so they can carry on offering their services hand in hand with government institutions. (al-Akhras 2000, 17)

Different changes the Arab societies and others have undergone prove that the different social care efforts require different classes of society to cooperate with the government and societies of charity in order to deliver their services to each and every one in need.

But is it acceptable that volunteer aid remains limited to taking care of the different needs of the poor only? Civilized development in all domains requires, in addition to all of the above, other efforts such as contributing to keeping the environment clean for instance, or urging citizens to donate blood, etc. These all are categorized under voluntary work. In order to activate it efficiently, voluntary work needs us to formulate a cultural concept and pass it on to the coming generations through the process of social upbringing. (al-Akhras 2000, 17)

Due to its peculiar importance in developing society in general and social development in particular, voluntary work enjoys a high status in the modern communities throughout the world. This is manifested in the great number of non-governmental voluntary work institutions. In the late 20th century, the world witnessed a boom in the number of non-governmental organizations and institutions contributing to comprehensive development. The number of non-governmental organizations reached in the 1980s about 50000

organizations and institutions working in the various domains of development, where the number of beneficiaries of these organizations and institutions' services in the developing countries was about a 100 million people, most of them came from Asia alone. (www.islamonline.net/arabic)

2) Importance of voluntary work

No doubt voluntary work is of a great importance affecting positively the lives of individual, family and society. Among these positive effects is improving the livelihood and the economic and social status of the people, maintaining Islamic values and manifesting the principle of social solidarity, and investing leisure time in the best way possible. Voluntary work is considered a practical manifestation of the principle of social solidarity, since it implies works of charity carried out by a group of people who sense the others' pains and needs, which makes them dedicate their efforts, time and money for the sake of those people hoping they would provide good and benefit for them.

Voluntary work's importance is clear in the following:

- Building up youths' participation and feel of belonging to their society.
- Developing youths' abilities and personal, scientific and practical skills.
- Offering youths the opportunity of discovering the flaws in the society service system.
- Offering youths the opportunity of expressing their opinions and thoughts in public issues and society concerns.
- Making youths able to offer services in their own hands, and solve different problems by their own efforts.
- Pave the way for youths to participate in determining priorities for their society and making decisions. (www.inoad.org.ae/homaid)

3) Domains of voluntary work

Fields of voluntary work differ according the various domains covered by voluntary work in society. Among the most prominent of those domains are:

1. **Social domain:** Since its early beginnings, voluntary work has based upon the idea of good and charity derived from religious doctrine. Helping the impoverished and meeting their basic needs of food, water, clothes and shelter were among the first priorities for volunteers in this domain.
2. **Health domain:** This domain aims at providing primary health care for those who need it; so doctors, nurses and paramedics volunteered to ease the pains of those patients. In this particular domain, emerges the significant role of 'civil defense' whose crucial importance manifests itself in cases of emergency and danger. Workers in civil defense must enjoy special qualities such as physical strength, above 168 cm height, bravery, boldness, etc.

- 3. Educational domain:** After providing the basic needs that guarantee the survival of man like food and medicine, we must contribute to building up the thought of those needy through providing them with knowledge and education. This is where workers in the educational domain come, as well as students who volunteer to teach children, pupils or adults through literacy courses. This is clear, for example, in the activities of a group of Arab and foreign volunteers in the Palestinian refugee camps; and in the deeds of the academic students during official exams, when they volunteer to deliver improving lessons for pupils taking those exams; and the academic students who volunteer regularly to teach children with special needs during exams, which is seen in *Zaid bin Harithah Institution for Child Care*.
- 4. Environment domain:** This domain has evolved a lot during the recent years because of the aggravating environmental problems which are threatening the whole world with serious disasters. In this regard, volunteers work out of the feeling of responsibility toward our Earth in an attempt to save its natural resources maintaining our survival. In this regard, campaigns of environment awareness are launched to introduce healthy and simple methods to the society starting from home by reducing the amounts of garbage or contributing to the process of garbage recycling. Moreover, campaigns of beach cleaning and maintaining natural preserves are also launched. An observer of voluntary activities will notice many examples with this respect like planting jasmine in Damascus and cleaning the basin of Barada which was announced of via different means of media.
- 5. Defending human rights domain:** Last but not least, this domain is by no means less important than its precedents. In fact, it is the most important one because it defends human rights to honorable living in their own land and country, and protecting them from any kind of exploitation, occupation or aggression that might threaten their safety, property or future. The most prominent example in this regard represents itself in the volunteer men in the Islamic Resistance who were and still are giving up their education and work to join the troops who dedicated themselves to be partners in the honor of defending their land and faith. When it comes to this, altruism and sacrifice rise to the highest levels, namely sacrificing the soul for the sake of the cause.

III. Academic Youths: Definition, Needs and Problems

Youths make a distinguished class in any community for subjective and objective reasons briefed in their presence in all classes and groups of society. They are the vital artery flowing efficiently in the form of innovation and excellence to burst into energies in different aspects of life to build the pillars of the present and secure the future.

Youths represent the center of the society and the core of its effective and productive power. There is no successful change whatsoever unless it relies on youths' abilities, energies and creativity. Along human history, youths remained the center of innovation, spring of genius, source of future wealth, as well as the holders of the trust torch to pass it on to the coming generations. Youths, as far as the concept as well as the characteristics are concerned, present a synonym for hope, progress, optimism and confidence in the future. Youth is the most magnificent and complicated stage at the same time, according to which the degree of coherence of the other stages is determined. Therefore, any disturbance or waste in the first two stages (childhood and adolescence) affects youth in the third and most important stage (stage of giving) positively or negatively.

Youths represent half the present and of all the future; they are the most active class in the society; they are considered to be a source of social transformation; and looked at as social, interactive, psychological beings that accept change and swift adaptation to all changes. Furthermore, youths are characterized with productivity, ability to give and innovate in all fields. Youths are qualified, in terms of physical strength, practicality, education, culture and behavior in order to carry out their responsibilities in building their society; for their distinguished qualities make use of time and accelerate the process of development.

1) Definition of youth

There is no one final definition for youth; in fact, there is a difficulty in determining a clear definition for this concept. The difficulty of adopting a certain comprehensive conventional definition for youth is attributed to many reasons, most important of which is the disagreement on the aims sought from putting the definition and contrast of concepts, and the general ideas upon which the psychological and social analysis serving these aims are based.

Therefore, the concept of youth is subject to different views:

- a. **Biological view:** this view stresses the biological factor as youth is a phase or a certain stage during man's growth, in which man is physically, mentally and psychologically mature. Some say that this phase is between the age of 15 till 25, and others determine it as from 13 till 30.

- b. Psychological view:** this view is a situation related to age and subject to biological growth on the one hand, and to the society's culture on the other. It starts from puberty and ends when the individual becomes an adult, when the process of social custom acquisition is also complete. This definition attempts to merge age factors with the culture acquired from society (the static and the variable).
- c. Sociological view:** this view sees youth as a social reality, not a mere biological phenomenon i.e. there is a number of features and characteristics which if were available in one class of society, this class would be the youth class. (www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic)

Regardless of these views, academic youths are every young man or girl having the baccalaureate degree, and have registered in a university to get an academic degree.

2) Importance of caring about youths

One might wonder what is focusing and caring about youths for, and the answer is in the following:

- a. Caring about youths is no longer a local phenomenon; it is universal since they are the partners of the present and future.
- b. Youths play a significant role in development; they represent an essential partner within many institutions in the society.
- c. Considering youths' issues, problems, interests and orientations is of a crucial importance; and indeed they have attracted the attention of sociologists, psychologists, educationists and anthropologists, which means that a special domain has been allotted for them consisting of thought, values, orientations, customs, desires, interests, etc.
- d. Caring about youths may grant them the appropriate role for them that suits their abilities and ambitions.
- e. Caring about this social class comes out of their being a source for social transformation and an inevitable factor in technological revolution where a young man can be transformed from an ordinary worker exhausted by routine and restrictions into a creative person who can contribute to problem solving.
- f. Youths as a social class are an integral part of the social structure that affects and being affected; and thus, youths values and orientations might reflect the values and orientations of the society in which they have grown, and lead it to many patterns of behavior like emigration and its repercussions of fanaticism, mental illness, class

awareness, struggle, political dullness, predomination, conformity and social participation.

- g. Developing youths' knowledge and improving their skills, and accepting their participation in discussing and debating life issues.
- h. Training youths and qualifying them practically, technically and educationally in order to qualify them to participate in strengthening the feeling of belonging and holding responsibility, and carrying out their duties.

What distinguishes youths most as a transformation power in the society is:

1. Youths are the most ambitious group in society; this means that progress and change within this group cannot be restricted to a certain limit. Any political party, youth organization, or any other social group must have a place among their priorities for attracting youth energies and make them function to serve certain aims.
2. Youths are more open to change; this fact must be considered a main characteristic within the world of politics which as a dynamic and changing world that always holds something new. Accordingly, the youths' objective openness to change and accept everything new and deal with it in a creative and innovative manner will guarantee keeping up with new changes and adapting to them so smoothly.
3. Youths enjoy enthusiasm and vitality in thought and practice which generates a tremendous power for progress. Youths active and vivid in their reaction to political changes and society's needs are considered to be a guarantee for moving on steadily.
4. Youths are willing to give limitlessly when they are convinced and aware of what they are doing. This is so simple to understand; youths' giving is based on two main conditions. First, they must be convinced i.e. we must respect their intelligence and deal with them as beings not mere tools. And second, youths must realize what they are doing, and be aware of the objectives, and convinced with the means and way to achieve these objectives. When these two conditions are available, youths will give limitlessly and will carry out their duties with all fidelity and devotion.
5. Youths are a great social force since they are an essential sector in the society; gaining this force to the side of decision makers and politicians means winning the battle of transformation.
6. Youths are an enormous economic force; it is the young workers who produce with their own hands, and young learners who produce with their thought what their society needs, and they are the ones who build their nation and guarantee its invulnerability and economic force. Youths' role in comprehensive development is a

significant and pivotal one; enlightened youths' minds construct the scientific basis which guarantees success and progress with respect to economy as well as development. (www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic)

3) Needs of the academic youths

To determine the degree of youths' readiness to join the societal work whether it is social, political or developmental, we are required to know the basic needs of youths and work on fulfilling them or take them into account when putting plans and programs because those are necessary needs that must be fulfilled.

Needs mentioning, of course, that the concept of needs is a relative one i.e. differs from one society to another according to the nature and characteristics of the society and the level of economic and social development. Experts in working with youths agree on the following needs as general ones that apply to all types of youths:

1. Youths need to be accepted with their mental and physical development so they can realize what is going on around them.
2. They need to release their energies into interesting activities; particularly that youths have tremendous energies, and holding them in without releasing them in some constructive activity will increase their disturbance, boredom and nervousness.
3. They need to find themselves through the freedom and awareness of choice for their part in the society, and their feeling of belonging to a certain idea or a certain group in the society which has certain goals.
4. They need a primary health and psychological care that will provide them with balanced growth and give them the general health knowledge which makes them capable of understanding the physical changes they undergo during the critical period of adolescence.
5. They need to obtain knowledge and education for how much these two are representing a key role in one's life, and broadening mind horizons, in addition to their being an acquired right that is as necessary as water and air in an age where there is no room for ignorant.
6. They need independence within the family as a start for formulating their independent personalities, and qualifying them for making critical decisions concerning life, work, belonging through volunteer means without any kind of intervention.
7. We must provide the youths with the basic needs of food, water, clothes and shelter without which youths will turn into homeless or beggars.

8. They need entertainment, because youth life is no all about hard work. Youths need recreation and entertainment places (cinemas, theatres, parks, youth camps, etc.)
9. They need sex knowledge, especially at the beginnings of their awareness of the physical changes they undergo during adolescence; and providing a minimum level of sex knowledge through social and youth supervision centers in order to protect youths from deviance or receiving a confused and distorted knowledge of sex.
10. They need to develop young leading characters through developing leading abilities and crystallizing promising talents, which is rather not done by an act or measure, but by fully considered educational policies, supported by practical experience, that reinforce leading youths' confidence in their own abilities, and provide them with practical choices. (www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic)

4) Youths' problems

Every particular stage in life has distinguishing characteristics in terms of mentality, physique, organic and psychological illnesses and behavior. However, those which emerge in youth and adolescence ought to be the most serious ones. It is useful for us in this regard to mention the most prominent of these problems that some of which make youths suffer in private, and others are being mentioned to the family or society. Shedding light upon those problems for studying and concluding results about them might reduce their unpleasant impacts upon youths, their families and society. Those are:

1. Parent intervention (clash of generations).
2. Leaving school at an early age.
3. Disobedience.
4. Wild imagination and daydreaming.
5. Arrogance and carelessness.
6. Anxiety.
7. Sex.
8. Narcotics and smoking.
9. Unemployment.
10. Internet addiction.

IV. Field Study

1) Method

This study can be categorized under analytical descriptive studies that apply the functional method which describes accurately the phenomenon or the problem in question, and discusses it numerically and analytically. 'Analytical discussion describes the phenomenon and clarifies its characteristics, whereas numerical discussion presents data in numbers clarifying the size of the phenomenon and its correlation with other phenomena.' (Obeidat 1982, 83)

A series of interrelated methodological measures in this study is based upon descriptive method starting from putting forward scientific hypotheses, determining the fields of the study, the test groups and the methodological research means and tools.

2) Research hypotheses

This study starts from a principal hypothesis saying that during the last two decades, the Syrian society has undergone a number of different circumstances resulting from the revolutionary technological development along which different new standards have spread and cohabitated with the traditional ones of the Syrian society; this has led to reducing the part of institutions responsible for social upbringing in passing the traditional values and standards on to the new generations, which made the new generations dwell in what is called 'technological chaos', and the gap between generations expanded so much regarding what parents want for their children versus what children want for themselves, which reflected on children's participation in voluntary work.

The sub-hypotheses of this research are:

1. Family might be responsible for passing on the real concept of voluntary work to the youths.
2. Decline of economic circumstances might have negative effects on academic youth joining voluntary work.
3. Mixing genders might obstruct practicing the voluntary work.

3) The community and the test group

This study is not meant to represent all academic youths in Damascus University, our aim rather is recognizing the reasons behind academic youths' reluctance to participate in voluntary work. Therefore, this study will be the core of a more comprehensive study that will benefit from findings of this one. **(Note: the findings of this study will not be generalized and will remain exclusive for the test group in question)**

The community of this study is composed of the students of the Faculty of Arts – Department of Sociology out of which a test group will be chosen in a simple random manner.

4) Fields of the study

- **Time:** From September 20th, 2006 to November 6th, 2006. Part of the test group was studied in the period from July 20th, 2007 to September 28th, 2007.
- **Place:** Faculty of Arts – Damascus University.

5) Means followed: the study adopted the means of social survey over the test group.

6) Tool used: the study relied on a questionnaire as a basic tool for collecting data from the test group. This questionnaire was formed depending on scientific hypotheses put as determiners for the study and for its path.

7) Analyzing and interpreting data: resulting data was filled manually due to the small size of the test group, and we recorded the percentages only because of the shortage of time specified for this study.

V. Results and Recommendations

A) General characteristics of the test group

1. Gender

Chart (1): Distribution of test group members according to gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	41	27
Female	109	73
Total	150	100

Chart (1) shows that % 73 of the test group was females, whereas % 27 were males. This contrast can be distributed to the fact that female students in the Department of Sociology are more than the male ones; besides, attendant females are much more than attendant males in this department.

2. Age

Chart (2): Distribution of test group members according to age

Age	Number	Percentage
18 to < 20	11	7.3
20 to < 22	119	79.3
22 to < 24	17	11.3
24 and more	3	2
Total	150	99.9

This chart indicates that Sociology students mostly do not fail their exams; they pass their academic years successfully perhaps because they joined the department out of their own will, or due to this department's importance which they have experienced through the curriculum.

3. Academic year

Chart (3): Distribution of test group members according to their academic year

Academic year	Number	Percentage
First	11	7.3
Second	13	8.7
Third	97	64.7
Fourth	29	19.3
Total	150	100

The increase in the number of 3rd year students can be justified by the fact that it was a group of 3rd year students who collected the data; and since the process was random, the students thought it would be easier if they collected the data from their own colleagues.

4. Job

Chart (4): Distribution of test group members according to their jobs

Job	Number	Percentage
Unemployed	103	68.7
Governmental employee	12	8
Taxi driver	9	6
Private employee	14	9.3
Business	12	8
Other	0	0
Total	150	100

Chart (4) indicates that % 68.7 are wholly devoted to study and attendance, and do not have a job of any kind. Perhaps this is because they believe that attending college and having a job in the same time will negatively affect one of them, so they devote themselves to university in order to get the utmost of benefit. Or there might be no proper job opportunities so they can practice both job and study and still be successful at them.

B) Information about the families of the members

1. Parent educational level

Chart (5): Distribution of members according to parent educational level

Parent educational level	Educational level of father			Educational level of mother			Total
	Low	Average	High	Low	Average	High	
Number	20	113	17	66	69	15	150
Percentage	13.3	75.3	11.3	44	46	10	100

Close reading of these numbers will make us realize that change has started to take place in terms of education, and the coming years will probably witness a rise in parent educational levels when the numbers under 'high' and 'average' will rise, and disappear or at least go down under 'low,' so the children will be able to receive a decent social upbringing that takes their value and knowledge level up to high levels so they can play an efficient role in developing their society.

2. Parents' work

Chart (6): Distribution of members according to parents' work

Father's job	No.	%	Mother's job	No.	%
Unemployed	5	3.3	Housewife	77	51.3
Worker	14	9.3	Housemaid	12	8
Government employee	57	38	Government employee	41	27.3
Private employee	17	11.3	Private employee	8	5.3
Specialist work	15	10	Specialist work	12	8
Trader	30	20	Business	0	0
Other	12	8	Other	0	0
Total	150	100	Total	150	100

The interesting point about these charts is fact that numbers are similar between fathers and mothers when comes to specialist work like medicine, pharmacotherapy and engineering. This indicates gender equality in terms of different types of work, even with % 51.3 of women unemployed.

3. Taking care of children

Chart (7): Who takes care of children?

Caretaker	Number	Percentage
Father	5	3.3
Mother	81	54
Both	45	30
Depends on the issue	10	6.7
Other	9	6
Total	150	100

Chart (7) indicates that mother is the pillar of the house; she is responsible for taking care of % 54 of children. The chart also shows that some families take care of the household by both father and mother participating taking care of the children. This highlights high awareness with a considerable % 30, and it is reliable for many things like participating in bringing up children instead of leaving it to one person, and considering children's different issues as a common concern that must be debated and discussed between both parents. This imposed a change in the traditional way of upbringing which left the children to a single member of the family who managed the children's issues according to his or her own opinions and desires however related they were to them (father, big brother, grandfather, etc.) If this indication is accurate, it will cause a profound change in the process of upbringing in decades, not centuries.

It does not end at discussing matters between parents; there are, however, different areas upon which depends one of the parents interference. Those areas are agreed upon in advance. Finally, a few members of the test group (% 6) say that they do not depend any longer on anybody in carrying out their own issues. Though few in number, yet they represent a good omen of a promising generation that can hold the responsibilities of life.

C) Information about voluntary work and workers in social institutions

1. The members' view of voluntary work

Chart (8): Members' view of voluntary work

View of voluntary work	Male	%	Female	%
Aiding the poor	5	12	25	23
Aiding the orphans	0	0	2	2
Aiding people with disabilities	8	19.5	5	5
Aiding the elderly	0	0	0	0
All of the above	23	56	72	66
Other	5	12	5	5
Total	41	99.8	109	100

The test group members believe that voluntary work is a service offered for free, without expecting a reward or profit, to every person or a group of people who are in need, whether they are orphans, elderly or physically challenged. The answers above result from the members' previous participations in voluntary activities, so their answers were clearer and more comprehensive from other members' answers which conveyed only what they know about voluntary work or the stereotypical image of it in their minds, which is limited only to aiding people with special needs. Of course this understanding comes from the fact that their knowledge is limited to certain needy groups because of inaccurate information they have received from their society.

2. Participation in voluntary work

Chart (9): Members' willingness to participate in voluntary work according to gender

Participation in voluntary work	Male	%	Female	%
Yes	26	63	69	61
No	15	27	43	39
Total	41	100	109	100

3.a. Request for parents' permission to participate in voluntary work

Chart (10): Request for parents' permission to participate in voluntary work

Request for participation	Male	%	Female	%
Yes	27	66	49	45
No	14	34	60	55
Total	41	100	109	100

Chart (10) shows that there is an increasing eagerness among female students to voluntary work so % 45 of them request parental permission for voluntary work against % 66 of males; though some said that even if they got permission, they do not know where, how or when to go, or the mechanisms regulating the voluntary activities. Some of the unwilling to participate justified their attitude by lack of time; others believed it was a waste of time since they are financially unqualified and they have to look for a job first so they could make ends meet.

3.b. Parents' response

Chart (11): Parents' response to the request

Parents' response	Male	%	Female	%
Yes	12	44	22	45
No	15	56	27	55
Total	27	100	49	100

Chart (11) shows that % 56 of male students' parents prevented their boys from participating in voluntary work, and also % 55 of female students' parents have prevented their daughters from taking part in any activity not related to their study.

4. Reasons of parents' refusal

Chart (12): Parents' excuses for refusing their children to participate

Excuses	Father				Mother			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
Lest neglecting study	3	20	7	32	8	53.3	2	9
Lest dealing with strangers	0	0	5	23	0	0	9	41
Not seeing the benefit from voluntary work	0	0	4	18	2	13.3	4	18
Fearing relatives' reaction	0	0	6	27	0	0	7	32
Searching for job	10	67	0	0	5	33.3	0	0
Voluntary work is luxury only for the wealthy	2	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
All of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	15	100	22	100	15	99.9	22	100

5. Kind of voluntary work practiced by members

Chart (13): Kind of voluntary work practiced according to gender

Voluntary work practiced	Male	%	Female	%
Aiding orphans	0	0	4	18
Blood donation campaign	1	8.3	1	4.5
Environment protection	0	0	0	0
Food for the impoverished	0	0	1	4.5
Joining the Red Crescent during the 2006 Israeli aggression against Lebanon	4	33.3	5	23
Joining voluntary activities organized by the Department of Sociology	7	58.3	11	50
Total	12	99.9	22	100

In this context, we must **highlight** that one of the activities seen by the members as voluntary work was volunteering for aiding our Lebanese fellow brothers who were displaced by the Israeli aggression against Lebanon in July 2006. In this regard, we need to distinguish *voluntary work* from *voluntary behavior*. Aiding the Lebanese displaced people in 2006 was rather a voluntary behavior which was defined in the first part of this research as ‘Individual’s demeanor that is characterized by voluntary work qualities, but comes in the form of response to emergency conditions or to certain human or moral circumstances, and ends in correspondence with them.’

Worth mentioning as well that a group of Sociology students have made up a volunteer team, after the department and deanery’s permission, and started their first voluntary activity by participating in cleaning the faculty with a slogan that says ‘Let us All Together Say the Word Home.’ The test group members happened to be members in the team who were very happy with their first voluntary activity, and they are planning for many future activities under the umbrella of the faculty and department. I must point out hereby that the team members were far more aware of the exact meaning of voluntary work than other members in the test group who have not participated in the volunteer team.

6. Motives for participating in voluntary work

Chart (14): Motives for participating in voluntary work according to gender

Motives for participating in voluntary work	Male	%	Female	%
Gaining life experience	5	42	9	41
Feeling of satisfaction	0	0	0	0
Religious motives	0	0	0	0
Enhancing personality	0	0	8	36
Meeting good people	2	16	5	23
organizing time	0	0	0	0
Learning new things	5	42	0	0
Running away from an unpleasant experience	0	0	0	0
Having fun	0	0	0	0
Getting a permanent job	0	0	0	0
Getting a certificate of experience	0	0	0	0
All of the above	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	12	100	22	100

7. Ways of joining the voluntary work

Chart (15): Means of joining the voluntary work

Means of joining the voluntary work	Male	%	Female	%
By friends	3	25	5	23
Student Union	2	17	4	18
Media	0	0	0	0
Parental encouragement	0	0	0	0
Relative's encouragement	0	0	0	0
Faculty and department's encouragement	7	58	13	59
Total	12	100	22	100

Chart (15) shows the significant role that educational institutions can play in urging students to participate in such activities, and increasing voluntary work efficiency so it may support society's development and progress. This is indicated in % 58 of male and %59 of female students; and if we compare these numbers with previous ones, we will find that there is some kind of convergence in male and female points of view regarding the understanding of societal issues and recognizing the importance of the participation of both genders in supporting the society's development and progress. To emphasize the institutions' role in bringing up youths, we can say that peers can help dealing with youth issues. Some members in the test group, % 25 of males and % 23 of females, have

praised peer encouragement on trying some experiences of life which they find useful and effective in bringing up solutions for youths to learn from. Needless to say that the understanding academic administration was the number one supporter for a great number of members, and helped them succeed in their first voluntary activity, and hope fore more activities later.

8. Period of voluntary work

Chart (16): Periods of joining the voluntary work

Periods of participation	Male	%	Female	%
Permanent	7	58	17	77
Less than a month	5	42	5	23
1 to 3 months	0	0	0	0
3 to 6 months	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	12	100	22	99.8

For % 58 of males and % 77 of females, voluntary work is a permanent one but only in leisure time. The rest, according to chart (16), have volunteered in aiding their Lebanese fellow brothers who fled the hell of Israeli war against them in 2006. That was a voluntary behavior as it emerges only in cases of emergency; we hope that this behavior turns into voluntary work in order for them to participate in developing their society whenever possible.

9. Advantages of voluntary work

Chart (17): Advantages of practiced voluntary work according to gender

Advantages of practiced voluntary work	Male	%	Female	%
Learning nothing	0	0	0	0
Wasting time	0	0	0	0
Good is what you do; evil is what you get	0	0	0	0
Endurance	6	50	5	23
Organizing time	0	0	5	23
Gaining practical experience in field of study	6	50	12	54
Dealing with different types of people	0	0	0	0
Learning the art of communication	0	0	0	0
Recognizing different ways of life	0	0	0	0
All of the above	0	0	0	0
Total	12	100	22	100

As far as gender is concerned, chart (17) signifies that there is no difference in terms of advantages of voluntary work. Students believe that voluntary work is marked with social sense, and since they are students of sociology, they are making use of their theoretical information acquired from college in field practices via voluntary work.

10. Parents' impressions about their children's participation in voluntary work

Chart (18): Parents' impressions according to gender

Parents' impressions	Father				Mother			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
Threatened to stop me from learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Threatened to let me go out for college solely	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Completely approve	7	58	9	41	7	58	11	50
They trust I can handle anything	5	42	13	59	5	42	11	50
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	12	100	22	100	12	100	22	100

Parents of all members were completely satisfied with their children's voluntary activities, according to the test group members when asked about their parents' impressions.

11. Members' views of mixing genders in voluntary work

Chart (19): Members' views of mixing genders in voluntary work

Members' views of mixing genders	Male	%	Female	%
Yes	36	88	78	72
No	5	12	31	28
Total	41	100	109	100

Chart (19) reflects the fact that the impacts of gender segregation are on their way to fade gradually along time; and the new generations are indeed capable of revoking or at least reducing those impacts when they start to settle down and make their families so they raise their children on the principles of not distinguishing or favoring one child over another on the basis of their gender.

12. Members' justifications of their views concerning mixing genders

Chart (20): Members' justifications of their views concerning mixing genders

Members' justifications of their views	Male	%	Female	%
Building society needs both genders	29	71	60	55
I avoid contact as much as I can	5	12	31	28
Mixing helps making new relationships other than romantic ones	7	17	11	11
Gender equality helps recognizing the other's abilities	0	0	7	6
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	41	100	109	100

% 71 of males and % 55 of females believe in the importance of the integration between both genders in the development of society, that is the process of development cannot be carried out by one gender alone, and any claim otherwise i.e. relying on one gender and neutralizing the other might hamper progress and development. Besides, mixing might help making strong social relationships, like collegueship for instance, away from romantic relationships which might cause parents to disfavor gender mixing as % 17 of males and % 11 of females have asserted as there is no need for mixing in university, work or anywhere else as long as there is no specific relationship whatsoever entitling them to mix. Other members justified their rejection of mixing because they do not believe in women's need to work in the first place, neither voluntarily nor professionally. They believe that women's education and mixing with men in college is justified in one case only; that is helping their future children in their study. This is claimed by % 12 of males and % 28 of females; and it implies that some women themselves do not believe in women's work; and that is due to their social upbringing which has focused on gender segregation and woman's ability to dispense with work as long as she is being taken care of by her father or husband.

13. Reward and members' response to it

Chart (21): The rewards which members have received

The reward	Male	%	Female	%
Token materialistic reward	0	0	0	0
Non-materialistic reward	7	58	9	41
Certificate of appreciation	0	0	0	0
Medal	0	0	0	0
People's love and appreciation	2	17	5	23
Neither of the above	3	25	8	36
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	12	100	22	100

Chart (21) indicates that % 58 Of males and % 41 of females have received non-materialistic rewards for their voluntary services. % 17 of males and % 23 of females said they were met with love, appreciation and support. Whereas % 25 of males and % 36 of females mentioned with little bitterness that even a little 'thank you' would have sufficed for them to ease their exhaustion and give them more strength to offer whatever they can. Though they all already do not expect any kind of reward because their job is motivated by mere moral and patriotic motives, but lack of appreciation for what they do by some organizing committees, and those committees' favoring of one volunteer over another made them implicitly desire for some kind of appreciation and encouragement. Needless to say that the reward which went to the Sociology volunteer team was presented by the university presidency for their first achievement, and to urge as well the other departments to follow their lead in setting voluntary teams in all faculties.

General Conclusions from the Field Study

- 1) Females would be more interested in voluntary work than males if they were to be offered such an opportunity; and a great number of them practice social work compared to males who have been offered indeed to participate in voluntary work.
- 2) Family plays a significant role in encouraging their daughters or preventing them in case they wanted to join the voluntary work. That depends on the customs and traditions relating the reputation of girls in a society which parents believe is changing constantly, and this change might affect the girl's reputation if she wanted to go out to other places than college or ordinary paid work.
- 3) Both genders truly want to participate in voluntary work, and they both understand very well its implications and importance in developing their society. This desire has already urged many members of the test group to participate in voluntary activities in and out of college, which ended up with them setting a volunteer team in their faculty with the aim of spreading the concept of voluntary work to include not only works of charity, but also every activity that contributes to supporting youths to become an effective human resource in developing their society and its progress. A few members believe that their parents' objection has restrained their eagerness to participate in voluntary work, and they hope that voluntary work would be supported and promoted by means of media so their parents would change their points of view and allow them to participate in future voluntary activities. Some of the group members justify their reluctance to participate by claiming that it is not their fault, but it is the fault of the social institutions responsible for them, starting from the family which did not introduce them to the concept of social voluntary work, then the school which neglected this matter afterwards, and finally they blame the media for they hardly introduce anything at all regarding such activities, and consequently they do not mention the places where youth can go to join voluntary work.
- 4) The members believe that the Sociology Department is delinquent in offering adequate information about voluntary work in which academic youths can participate and contribute to, through making special pamphlets showing the private and governmental institutions to which willing students can offer their services in their leisure times. Others mentioned that the Department's efforts have particularly aided in introducing them to the concept of voluntary work through field experiences. They also believe that the Social Service course is mostly theoretical, and lacking the practical sense which can enhance their performance in any social activity whether it is voluntary or not.
- 5) What draws the attention about the members of the test group is their vulnerability to everything being said about the workers in government or private social institutions without having their own experiences with them in this context. This vulnerability

sometimes lead to spreading rumors and doubts against voluntary work and its organizers, which spreads depression in the surrounding social environment, and hinders voluntary work and its development, and causes the reluctance of many youths to join in.

This vulnerability might be the result of the opinions of some members' who have joined the volunteer institutions previously. Those have spread the word that the organizers do not appreciate the volunteers' efforts properly. They do not mean by 'proper appreciation' materialistic rewards, but non-materialistic ones manifested in words of thanks, praise, admiration for good job or presenting cards of gratitude as a symbol of appreciation for their efforts. Not to mention the organizers' indifference of the volunteer's circumstances or ability that might sometimes prevent him or her from offering their services. As a matter of fact, **they might have a point in that**, therefore, it is badly needed that we do not turn the voluntary work into a compulsory one. Voluntary work is all about the desire from within, and always depends on the volunteers' private circumstances and their own assessment of the time during which they can offer their services. Hence the negative attitudes against some individuals and institutions.

- 6) The concept of voluntary work in our society is still immature. It needs enforcing and supporting through the efforts of all institutions together with the family and education institutions above them, because they can make this concept a main feature in the coming generations through the social upbringing that glorifies this concept and urges to practice it. Furthermore, television, as the most prominent means of media, can introduce examples of volunteers to talk about their own experiences and the success of their humble contributions in serving their society; this, in itself, represents a moral support for volunteers.
- 7) Few of the members understand voluntary work as aiding people with disabilities, orphans, the impoverished, the elderly, juvenile delinquents and the ill. Actually, the concept of voluntary work is wider and more comprehensive than that. In addition to those services, it includes activities related to protecting the environment (i.e. its cleanliness), maintaining the heritage, teaching students having difficulties in their study, raising health awareness through distributing leaflets and pamphlets serving this aim, urging people to blood donation, etc.

Recommendations

Suggestions for developing voluntary work:

1. Providing children with a healthy upbringing by the collaboration of different upbringing institutions i.e. the family, school and media to implant the values of sacrifice, altruism and the spirit of team work in children starting with their early childhood.
2. Urging youths to participate in voluntary work of whatever size, form or kind; and honoring youth volunteers, and praising any kind of voluntary activity they carry out by announcing it through different means of media.
3. School, university and religious institutions should play a more efficient role in urging youths to join, especially in summer holidays.
4. The curriculum in all educational stages should contain courses about social voluntary work and its importance and developmental role, and these must be aided by practical courses such as school cleaning campaigns, taking care of school trees or environment protection campaigns. That should implant the concept of voluntary work in the pupils' minds. As for the academic curriculum within the concerned departments like the Department of Sociology, voluntary work must be dealt with by a specific part of a certain course, or as an independent course in itself. This course should not be limited to theoretical aspects; but also field activities should form the backbone of it.
5. Media should take a greater part in calling people for participating in voluntary work, and introducing them to the various voluntary activities organized by the government institutions and private societies. The noblest deeds are those which do not expect a reward; rather they come out from the heart and man's will to give and sacrifice. Voluntary work exemplifies these deeds; it is a domain with multiple forms including all domains of life: society, health, environment, education, politics, military and others. through this free service, the volunteer works out of responsibility toward the ones and things around him: human and object surroundings; this responsibility expands to cover all fields of life showing the most sublime aspect of human integration.
6. The government should support voluntary work on the official level, frequently and constantly, by providing material, organizational and legislative support; and offer the biggest prize for that who gives a positive example of voluntary work, like appointing him or her in a proper position in the public sector.