

The Impact of Volunteer Work in Protecting Youth from Delinquency

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Abstract

Young people possess tremendous energy, which requires societies to harness it in practical activities so that it is not wasted on useless activities. Taking care of young people's energy through volunteer work has two benefits: First, it provides valuable services to societies through this idle energy, much of which is wasted on social media screens; and second, it protects these young people from falling into the clutches of immoral behaviors and addiction to behaviors that lead them to destruction, or these people fall into the traps of deviant groups and movements that spread on social media, destroying societies before the destruction of these young people themselves. Therefore, Islam has taken care of the energies of young people and directed them toward volunteer work to protect them and utilize these energies in the service of society and religion. In this research paper, we attempt to shed light on these meanings.

Keywords: Volunteer Work, Youth, Deviance, Impact, Protection

Introduction

Volunteering is a non-profit, non-remunerated activity undertaken by individuals to help and improve the standard of living of others, whether their neighbors or human communities. Many forms and practices encompass volunteer work, from traditional participation to assisting others in times of hardship and during natural and social disasters without being asked, but rather as a natural response, without expecting any financial reward. Instead, the reward is the happiness and satisfaction of alleviating suffering from the afflicted, reuniting the afflicted, and warding off hunger and disease from the poor and needy.

Definition of volunteering: "It is an effort based on a specific skill or experience, voluntarily and willingly undertaken to fulfill a social duty, without necessarily expecting financial reward" (Arabroluntee, 2024).

Volunteer work is an effort based on a specific skill or experience, where the volunteer works in their field, such as a doctor, engineer, or teacher. On the other hand, a patient needs treatment and does not have enough money. Here comes the role of the volunteer doctor in treating this patient for free or at a symbolic price. Some want to learn computer skills, and some do not know how to read or write. Here comes the role of the computer engineer and the teacher to help each other in their field of specialization, even with a bit of time, in serving the community so that societies become more advanced.

The Importance of Volunteer Work

Volunteer work is one of the most critical activities to which a person should devote his time, as indicated by the legal texts from the Book of God Almighty and the Sunnah of His Messenger. May God bless him and grant him peace, which calls for doing good deeds, righteousness, and giving and offering in the way of God with all available energies. God Almighty says: ﴿وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾ (Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:2)

This time is full of voluntary charitable work, including charitable works, Quran memorization centers, and caring for the poor, needy, disabled, and those in need, as God Almighty said in His Noble Book:

﴿وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا* إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا﴾ (Surah Al-Insan, 76:8–9)

Charity work has a wide scope, as every society has someone in need of assistance in the form of food, drink, clothing, and shelter. The important thing is that this work be done purely for the sake of God, and that its doer be characterised by honesty and altruism. God Almighty says:

﴿وَيُؤْتُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۗ وَمَن يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾ (Surah Al-Hashr, 59:9)

The story of Al-Khidr with our master Moses, peace be upon him, is an example of voluntary work for which one was not paid, and some of which involved hardship, such as building a wall.

The Sunnah's Interest in Volunteer Work

Numerous hadiths in the Prophetic Sunnah highlight the importance of volunteer work and how the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) encouraged it. Among these hadiths are:

The Virtue of Helping a Muslim, Relieving his Distress, and Concealing his Condition

The Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "A Muslim is a brother to another Muslim. He does not wrong him, nor does he hand him over. Whoever attends to his brother's need, Allah, the Almighty, will attend to his need. Whoever relieves a Muslim of a hardship, Allah, the Almighty, will relieve him of a hardship on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever covers up a Muslim, Allah will cover him up on the Day of Resurrection (Ahmad, n.d.).

Muslims are Like one Body

The Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "The example of the believers in their mutual love, compassion, and mercy is that of one body. When one part of it is ill, the rest of the body responds with wakefulness and fever" (Ahmad, n.d.).

Helping a Muslim, Whether He is an Oppressor or an Oppressed

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed." It was said, "O Messenger of Allah, we help him when he is oppressed, but how do we help him when he is an oppressor?" He said, "Prevent him from oppression" (Ahmad, n.d.).

Helping the Needy

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Every Muslim is required to give charity." The narrator asked, "What if he cannot afford it?" He said, "He should work with his hands, benefit himself, and give charity." The narrator asked, "What if he cannot do so?" He said, "He should help the needy and the oppressed." The narrator asked, "What if he cannot do so?" He said, "He should enjoin good or justice." The narrator asked, "What if he cannot do so?" He said, "He should refrain from evil, for that is charity for him" (Ahmad, n.d.).

The Reward for Doing Good Deeds

On the authority of Abu Dharr, who said: The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, was asked: "What do you think of a man who does a good deed and people praise him for it?" He said: "That is the immediate good news for the believer." (Muslim, 1991).

Kindness to the Poor and the Downtrodden and Being Kind to Them

The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: "He who strives on behalf of the widow and the needy is like one who strives in the cause of God, or like one who prays at night and fasts during the day" (Ahmad, n.d.). In these hadiths, the great Prophet encourages volunteer work by encouraging Muslims to help others, including the poor, the weak, those in need, and those in distress.

A Quick Look at the History of Volunteer Work

Volunteer work began in all ancient societies as a social phenomenon linked to charity and aid provided to people experiencing poverty by those with financial means and rulers in the form of feudalism. These groups were considered "a threat to the society in which they lived, for fear of their straying and rebelling against authority" (Social Work: A Historical Perspective - Approaches to Practice and Trends, 41).

In Europe and America, volunteer work emerged amid societal conditions characterized by contradiction, where "capitalism and socialism traded accusations on the one hand, and on the other, social Darwinism, which advocates the survival of the fittest, and the iron law of wages, advocated that increasing the income of a worker's family leads to increased offspring. This encouraged employers to adopt a policy of no wages and argued that individuals were responsible for increasing their offspring and should bear the consequences of their labor" (Introduction to Social Work, p. 4).

In light of these changes that accompanied the emergence of volunteer work in Western societies during the eighteenth century, volunteer work began to emerge as a modern profession through several steps taken in this field: "such as the establishment of schools for training in the profession. This began with some charitable organizations, such as the Boston Charity Foundation in 1898, under the supervision of the New York Charity Organization Society, through a training program" (Introduction to Social Work with Models for Teaching and Practicing the Profession in Arab Countries, 32). The second step was establishing "the social welfare organization founded by Johan Griscom in 1820, the Society for the Combat of Extreme Poverty. The objectives of this society were to study the conditions and circumstances of the poor and develop plans to assist and encourage them to save" (Social Work: Foundations of Theory and Practice, 7).

Egypt is considered one of the first Arab countries to focus on organized volunteer work. "In 1835 AD, the Ministry of Endowments was established, marking the state's first attempt to organize charitable affairs and care for the needy in society. The Ministry of Endowments played a major role in social welfare, targeting spending on one or more needy groups in society. The ministry was notable in caring for low-income families" (Social Service: A Historical Perspective - Methods of Practice and Trends, 97). Then came a succession of charitable and community organizations, which have enjoyed special care and attention since the beginning of the twenty-first century, both within Egypt and in all governorates. Youth have played a leading role in these organizations.

"As for the Gulf states, the 1950s and 1960s witnessed the emergence of civil society organizations in Bahrain and Kuwait. Between 1968 and 1985, most civil society organizations emerged in the United Arab Emirates, such as women's associations, religious reform and guidance associations, cultural associations, professional associations, associations for the care of older adults, and the Marriage Fund for Youth Care. Similar associations also emerged in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, and the State of Qatar" (Voluntary Social Work in the Arab and Gulf States: Its Components and Role, 16).

The above demonstrates how social work emerged in Western countries, as well as in Arab countries, in the form of specialized social institutions that play a prominent role in awareness-raising and relief work. Scientific Characteristics of Volunteer Work: Volunteer work is characterized by several scientific characteristics, some of which we can point out:

1. **Comprehensiveness:** By this, we mean that volunteer work encompasses all segments of society without being limited to the poor, the needy, and the destitute. Instead, it includes the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the sick, the educated and the ignorant. "Comprehensiveness also means that volunteer work encompasses all fields and is not limited to one area over another. All fields, whether religious, scientific, cultural, health, security, military, or advocacy, require volunteer work" (Annual of the Center for Islamic Research and Studies, No. 35, 653).
2. **Balance:** By this, the volunteer should not be unfair to one side or the other, i.e., "Voluntary work must be balanced in its giving and meet the material and moral needs of individuals, and not focus on one side without another. This balance makes it closer to identifying the needs of the members of society, as volunteer work is not work that

focuses on material things only, but rather work that combines the material and moral aspects" (Annual of the Center for Islamic Research and Studies, No. 35, 654).

3. **Sustainability:** One of the most essential characteristics of volunteer work is that it requires continuity. Without continuity, no charitable project can bear fruit. Sustainability also means that societal problems are ongoing and cannot cease. Volunteer work must address these problems and find solutions for them (Annual of the Center for Islamic Research and Studies, No. 35, 654).
4. **Organization:** There is no doubt that organization is essential for the success of any work. "In volunteer work, it means establishing clear frameworks, standards, and conditions that regulate volunteer work and distance it from randomness. The organization enables volunteers to use the best means and methods that serve volunteer work and enable it to carry out its tasks, achieve its goals, and increase its effectiveness and productivity" (Annual of the Center for Islamic Research and Studies, No. 35, 654).
- 5- **Growth:** When we observe the institutions engaged in volunteer work, we see one of the most prominent characteristics: "The capacity for volunteer work to grow. Volunteer work grows yearly, which can be observed and measured in quantitative and qualitative ways" (Annual of the Center for Islamic Research and Studies, Issue 35, 655). Many other characteristics exist, but we will limit ourselves to these five, given their utmost presence and importance in volunteer work.

Youth and Volunteering

Before we discuss the role of youth and their importance in volunteering, we can ask and then answer an important question: Why should youth participate and contribute to volunteering? There are many reasons why youth volunteer, including:

1. **Promoting human values:** Volunteering promotes human values such as giving, cooperation, and dedication to serving others among youth.
2. **Developing skills:** Volunteering allows youth to learn and develop new skills in various areas, such as communication, leadership, and time management.
3. **Building social networks:** Volunteering allows youth to meet new people and build strong and beneficial social networks for the future.
4. **Improving employment opportunities:** Volunteering is a valuable experience that youth can add to their resumes and enhance their chances of obtaining a job.
5. **Positive impact on society:** Youth volunteering can positively impact society and improve the living conditions of individuals and local communities.
6. **Fulfilling the desire to contribute and make a difference:** Young people volunteer to contribute to positive change in the world and help those in need. The above demonstrates the importance and necessity of volunteer work for young people, given its numerous benefits for both the volunteer and society.

Obstacles that Prevent Youth from Volunteering

Several factors hinder youth from fulfilling their role and participating socially in volunteer work, the most important of which are:

1. The prevailing economic conditions and the limited financial resources of volunteer organizations.
2. Lack of awareness of the concept and benefits of participating in volunteer social work.
3. Lack of awareness of volunteer programs and activities implemented by governmental and civil society organizations.

4. Not allowing youth to participate in decision-making within these organizations.
5. Certain cultural stereotypes are prevalent in society, such as belittling youth and discrimination between men and women.
6. Lack of training programs designed to develop a new generation of volunteers or hone the skills of existing volunteers.
7. Lack of encouragement for volunteer work.

Youth and Deviance through Modern Media

There is no doubt that we are suffering from successive waves of deviation within Muslim societies, especially among youth. By deviation, we mean straying from the straight path and departing from what is familiar within Muslim societies. This deviation manifests itself in the adoption of specific false ideas related to faith and Sharia, as well as behaviors related to others, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Behind this are organizations and institutions that do not want these youth to direct their energies in the right direction.

Upon closer examination, we find that these ideas that drive youth to deviance infiltrate them through social media and other channels created by evildoers to spread their poison within Muslim societies and influence youth.

"One researcher stated that research and studies have proven that some students in Arab countries, upon graduating from high school, have spent 15,000 hours in front of the television, while they spend only 10,800 hours in classrooms" (Time and Its Importance in the Life of a Muslim, 137).

This study demonstrates the amount of time students spend in front of television screens, which makes us realize the danger facing young people, which impacts their behavior, personality, and thoughts. While this was the case with television screens years ago, the situation has worsened in the age of social media and the internet. Recent studies in Egypt have shown an intense desire among young people to use the internet. For example, the basic indicators for measuring the information society in 2022 indicated that the percentage of young people using the internet reached 89% in the age group "18-29" (<https://www.almasdar.com/131003>).

So young people spend a lot of time in front of the television and on mobile phone screens watching the internet. This impacts their thinking and behavior, hinders societies from fulfilling their mission, and may even lead to the spread of crime. The way out of all this is to engage young people within organizations that undertake volunteer work so that these young people can benefit from the values achieved by volunteer work, which were previously discussed.

Causes of Deviance through Modern Media

The primary cause of intellectual and behavioral deviation, as well as of violence within societies among young people, is the unconscious adoption of others' ideas: "Man is distinguished from all other living beings in that his thoughts and beliefs guide his voluntary movements and actions. Man is always led by a correct or corrupt idea" (Al-Din, 99).

Young people acquire incorrect ideas through the internet and other modern means. Acquiring these corrupt ideas is fraught with many negative consequences, including:

1. A flaw in the method of indoctrination: Young people are taught by a group of extremists who lack knowledge through these means or by themselves through YouTube. They do not follow the teachings of established scholars, and instead, they criticize and slander them.
2. Taking texts literally without understanding Islamic jurisprudence or the rules of reasoning: A phenomenon prevalent on social media leads many young people to destruction and deviation. This is the widespread dissemination of religious texts, which are taken literally by those unaware, without considering the established tools of understanding among scholars, including combining evidence, considering the knowledge of previous scholars from the four major schools of thought, and examining people's excuses. Failure to do so results in numerous forms of intellectual and behavioral deviation.
3. Ignorance of the objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid): Islamic law has objectives (Maqasid), which are the goals it was revealed to achieve, as well as the wisdom, meanings, and interests for which its provisions were legislated. Considering the audience following social media pages and other modern means, many are unaware of these objectives and do not understand their rules and importance. This is also a cause of deviation, as they read texts on social media and other modern means and then interpret them in contexts other than their intended meanings without considering the objectives of Islamic law.

Volunteer Work and Protection from Delinquency

We previously discussed volunteer work and what youth gain through volunteering. This can be achieved by recognizing the value of time through awareness-raising efforts from families, schools, and mosques. This helps motivate youth to fill their time with practical activities, as time is life. We also emphasize the importance of volunteer work and encourage children to engage in it from an early age.

Governments and civil society organizations, especially those engaged in volunteer work in Arab and Islamic countries, must remove obstacles facing youth and harness their energies in community work. This will help integrate youth into society safely, free from intellectual and behavioral deviance, and enhance social belonging and intellectual security.

Protecting youth from deviance also manifests in the ability to provide sources of ideas through useful platforms while nurturing these sources through institutions that represent moderation and balance, such as Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and other universities and educational institutions that follow its example.

Conclusion

This discussion highlights the significance and urgency of youth participation in volunteer work as a means to channel their energies constructively, preventing them from being misdirected into actions that contradict religious, moral, and societal values. The findings reveal that youth engagement in volunteer work is not only essential but also plays a vital role in the development and advancement of youth skills. It has been observed that idleness, on the other hand, is a major factor contributing to intellectual and behavioral deviations among the youth.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are made to ensure effective youth participation in volunteer activities. First, it is crucial that families and schools fulfill their responsibility in guiding youth towards productive and positive pursuits. Furthermore, institutions and governments must take proactive steps to remove any barriers that hinder youth involvement in volunteer work. Lastly, community institutions must actively monitor social media platforms, ensuring that any content detrimental to society is restricted and prevented from spreading. These efforts will collectively help in shaping a generation of youth that contribute positively to their communities and society as a whole.

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