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**The American University in Cairo**

**School of Global Affairs and Public Policy**

**VOLUNTEERING FOR DEVELOPMENT IN EGYPT: EXAMINING  
THE BENEFITS OF STUDENT VOLUNTEERING ON SKILLS  
DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY**

**A Thesis Submitted to the**

**Department of Public Policy and Administration**

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Public Policy and Administration**

**By**

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**The American University in Cairo**

**July 2012**

**The American University in Cairo**  
**School of Global Affairs and Public Policy**  
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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this empirical study is to investigate the extent to which volunteering at the university level in Egypt has an impact on skill development and employment opportunities for graduates. In the first part, the scope and nature of student volunteering in Egypt is identified as well as the motives, barriers and benefits of student volunteering. The perceived impact of student volunteering is assessed with regards to personal development, transferrable skills, and employability. In the second part of the study, the value of volunteering to Egyptian employers is examined to indicate the extent to which volunteering could increase graduates employability.

For the first part of the study, a total of 335 public and private university students were surveyed in the area of Greater Cairo. Student volunteers and non-volunteers responded to a questionnaire on the perceived motives, barriers, and benefits of student volunteering. The descriptive results indicate that volunteering has a positive impact on personal development, transferrable skills, and future employability.

For the second part of the study, a total of 50 employers in both the public and private sectors were surveyed to assess the value of volunteering and whether it increases future employability. The descriptive results indicate that volunteering equip students with the skills demanded by employers. The results indicate that the most important soft skills to Egyptian employers are communication skills, time management, teamwork, computer literacy, and flexibility. Out of the top five skills demanded by employers, volunteering has been found to improve competence at three important skills namely communication, teamwork, and flexibility. Also, volunteering was found to improve a candidates' image to employers and has a positive effect on employability. The findings reflect a need to encourage and promote student volunteering at the university level to improve graduates' skills and employment opportunities.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Volunteering is one of the mechanisms leading to participatory development. Many countries are now targeting student volunteering as a means to increase civic engagement and solidarity among youth by allowing them to participate in community development. As a result, many universities have increased volunteering opportunities and introduced service learning programs. The rationale is that volunteering will allow students to acquire valuable personal skills and enhance their academic development which in turn improve their employability after graduation. Most of the studies on student volunteering have been done in the United States even though the area has gained tremendous interest in the United Kingdom resulting in significant research (Smith et. al., 2010). Student volunteers and graduates recognize the value of volunteering for their personal growth, confidence, and increased knowledge. Students in the United Kingdom, for example, acknowledge the positive benefits volunteering has for enhancing their employability and increasing their skills (Brewis et. al., 2010). Volunteering can “teach students a great deal about the world of work and the voluntary sector ... many students welcome the opportunity to reflect upon their skills development and their role in the community” (Taylor, 2000, p.32).

Several examples indicate that Egypt’s tradition and culture call for and encourage civic participation. The first National Egyptian University, “Cairo University”, was founded by donations from Egyptian leaders and notables back in 1908 (Abdel Hamid et. al., 2010). The Egyptian Red Crescent was also established by donations in 1911 (Ramadan, 2010).

However, the volunteering rates in Egypt are far below those of other countries. The current volunteering rate among youth in Egypt in the age group of (10-29) is 2.2% which is extremely low when compared to volunteering rates in other countries.

This study aims to examine the benefits of student volunteering and the extent to which it impacts future employability. The study will investigate the motives, benefits, and barriers to student volunteering among Egyptian university students. The study also investigates the employability skills demanded by employers and whether volunteering equips students with enhanced skills. The research will identify whether employers consider volunteering in their hiring decision and which segment of volunteering they value most.

## **Key Points of Research**

### **Research Problem**

Egypt's educational reform efforts have successfully improved access to university education but this increased quantity has been achieved at the expense of quality (Egypt Human Development Report, 2010). Despite increased enrollments in universities and the massive number of graduates, the Egyptian workforce largely lacks the skills and expertise required by employers (Galal, 2002). This can also be attributed in part to the fact that university students in Egypt almost never work prior to graduation. There is no doubt that there is an urgent need to improve the quality of higher education in Egypt. However, the centralization of the education system and past experiences indicate that reforms will still take several years. There is a pressing need to develop alternative

methods and look for international best practices to improve students' skills and future employability. Encouraging, fostering, and integrating student volunteering during university years may be an important tool in improving the outcome of education and establishing links with the community.

## Research Objectives

1. Investigate the motives and barriers to volunteering among Egyptian university students
2. Establish the relationship between volunteering and employability to determine whether volunteering positively affects employability.
3. Document the current work done by some youth NGOs established by university students.
4. Propose a list of suggested reforms to increase formal volunteering among public university students

## Research Question

To what extent does volunteering at the university level in Egypt have an impact on skill development and employment opportunities for graduates?

Investigative questions

What are the perceived benefits, motives, and barriers of volunteering to university students?

What impact does volunteering has on personal development and social and cultural value to university students?

What are examples of NGOs that target and/or work with youth volunteers?

What are the international attempts to institutionalize student volunteering and service-learning? How do employers in different sectors value volunteering?

## **Background**

Young Egyptians are aware of the important role they play in the future development of Egypt. The January 2011 revolution brought to light the concealed capacities and talents of Egyptian youth. Volunteering rates across Egypt have dramatically increased following the revolution. The organization and awareness displayed is an important gift that the government needs to utilize in facing development challenges. Empowering Egyptian youth and engaging them in the development process should be a top concern for Egyptian policy makers in the near future. However, this would require a shift in how the Egyptian government perceives both the role of youth and the desired outcome from higher education.

The youth in Egypt represent a demographic gift and an opportunity for the country. Egyptian youth represent 60% of the total population of Egypt at a number of over 40 million people (World Bank, 2007). According to the constitution, education in Egypt is free and fully-financed by the government (Abdel Hamid et al., 2010). There has been a dramatic increase in enrollments in University Education. In 1991/1992 public universities admitted 74,310 students. By 1996, admissions more than tripled to a total of 237,873 (Abdel Hamid et al., 2010). According to the World Bank, enrollments increased by 42% between 1997/98 and 1998/99 resulting in a decline of 8% in per-student

spending (World Bank, 2002). Currently, the Higher Education system in Egypt is made up of more than 2.4 million students (Helal, 2008). As a result of increased enrollment the higher education budget increased dramatically amounting to about 6 billion Egyptian Pounds in 2003/2004 and the average share per student was around 6300 Egyptian Pounds (Khairi, et al. 2007). In the academic year of 2005/2006 the budget for universities alone was 6.9 billion Egyptian Pounds (Khairi, et al., 2007); and in 2007 total expenditure on higher education in Egypt has reached 10.1 billion Egyptian pounds (Abdel Hamid et. al., 2010). In 2007, expenditure on higher education as a proportion of GDP fell from 3.9% in 1991 to 1.2% reflecting the decreased share of higher education spending in the state budget (Abdel Hamid et al., 2010). This poses a legitimate concern on the government's ability to improve the quality of education with limited financial resources. It also indicates that with the projected increase in numbers of university students the government would have to increase spending on higher education just to maintain the system at its current inadequate level.

The higher Education system in Egypt is steered through a centralized system in which institutions have minimal control on the design of the curriculum, program development, and deployment of staff and faculty (Khairi, et al. 2007). The current system hinders the ability of making decisions at the university of department level and thus reduces the efficiency of higher education institutions (World Bank, 2008). Centralization also widens the gap between those responsible for delivering educational services and the group that benefits the most from education (Galal, 2002). Reform attempts cannot be executed at the local level and thus require a lot of time to go through the rigid bureaucratic cycle.

Besides Al-Azhar University there are 19 Public Egyptian Universities with 295 faculties and institutes of which 11 are located in Greater Cairo, Alexandria, and the Delta Regions and only 6 in Upper Egypt (Khairi, et al., 2007). There are also 18 Private Universities in Egypt and 2 private foreign institutions that don't receive government funding and rely on their own resources. However, the numbers attending private university are very small compared to enrollment in public universities. In 2006/2007 enrollment in public universities accounted for 79.9% of total enrollment and the number of students enrolled was 1,101,431 (Abdel Hamid et al., 2010). In 2008-2009 enrollments further increased in the 17 Public Universities alone to 1,428,872 (Egypt Human Development Report, 2010). The study term is four years in most faculties except for engineering, pharmacy, dentistry, and veterinary medicine where the study term is 5 years and in the faculty of medicine the study term extends to six years. University Students face a number of challenges including lack of adequate education and essential skills, unemployment and underemployment, and a struggle for identity.

As a result of increased enrollments in higher education, as well as rapid demographic growth, the labor force in turn has been growing rapidly at a rate of 2.8% per annum in recent years with the group entering the labor market for the first time growing at 3%. The youth in the age group 15-29 represented 38% of the labor force in 2005 (Hassan et al., 2008). The low quality of university education has reduced the outcomes for graduates and reduced the likelihood of formal employment and the quality and monetary gains of acquired jobs (Egypt Human Development Report, 2010). The education system has been providing the market with abundant quantity of workers with limited abilities (Galal, 2002). Youth unemployment is the dominant form of unemployment in Egypt

and rates are staggeringly high among educated youth (Egypt Human Development Report, 2010). About 90% of the unemployed are below 30 years of age with an unemployment rate of about 30-40% in the last decade (Hassan, et. al., 2008).

Employability is of top concern because it is the main reason students enroll in higher education. The financial crises and the decrease in spending on higher education indicate that universities need to develop new ways to improve their graduates' skills and prepare them for the job market. Volunteering can provide an opportunity for students to overcome most of these challenges while escalating community development for the government without entailing increased spending (Smith et. al., 2010).

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is divided into five main sections. In the first section, the main definitions and distinctions between volunteering and service learning are identified. The second section explains the importance and the benefits, barriers, and motives of student volunteering as identified in the literature. The third section examines several examples of student volunteering and service-learning initiatives in the United States, Europe, Australia and the Middle East. The fourth section covers the nature and scope of volunteering in Egypt. The fifth section examines the relationship between volunteering and future employability.

Around 55 references were consulted in the study including academic articles, reports published by research centers and international organizations, books, as well as articles published by volunteering organizations. Most of the cited references were published between the years 2000-2012, with only 12 sources published prior to the year 2000.

#### Definitions

There is no single agreed upon definition of volunteering (Carson, 1999). Volunteering research is also clearly biased towards formal volunteering excluding activities that may benefit the volunteer's family or friends (Carson, 1999). The United Nations definition of volunteering is the most inclusive of the different activities and opportunities of student volunteering. The U.N. states that, "There are three key characteristics to volunteering. First the activity should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward, although the

reimbursement of expenses and some token payment may be allowed. Second, the activity should be undertaken voluntarily, according to an individual's own free-will..., Third, the activity should be of benefit to someone other than the volunteer, or to society at large, although it is recognized that volunteering brings significant benefit to the volunteer as well" (United Nations Volunteers Report, 2004). For the purpose of this research student volunteering is analyzed based on the definition of the United Nations Volunteer Report as it is the most encompassing of all definitions. In this study, student volunteering is examined only at the university level in Greater Cairo and results reflect all volunteer work done inside or outside the academic institution.

Student volunteering that is done inside or encouraged by the student's academic institution is referred to as "Service Learning". It is defined by Eyler and Giles (1999) as, "a form of experimental education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems and, at the same time, reflecting upon their experience as they seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves" (p.3.).

There have been several approaches to defining student volunteering based on the affiliated organization (Owen, 2009). Reiley and Odds defines a student volunteer as, "a student who gives time to provide service to others in either the academic community or the local community" (Reiley & Odds, 2007). However, as Owen points out; this definition tends to exclude student volunteers in clubs and societies (Owen, 2009). On the other hand, Student Volunteering England defines volunteering students as, "students who volunteer in their time in their local communities through programmes organized

at/by their student's union or institution" (Student Volunteering England, 2004). This definition is very limiting and excludes several other volunteering roles. A different approach to defining volunteering has been identified as "Curriculum-linked volunteering" (Owen, 2009). According to this approach, student volunteering encompasses extra-curricular activities that benefit the community at large or the student community in particular. "If Student volunteering research is about understanding the skills and experiences gained in the process that help develop the graduate for the workplace and future volunteering: embracing rather than excluding activities is important for mapping skills and experiences" (Owen, 2009, p. 14). An inclusive summary of the different types of student volunteering has been developed by David Owen in his research on student volunteering in the United Kingdom (Table 1). For the purpose of this study, all the different types of student volunteering are included.

Table 1: Types of Student Volunteering

Types of Student Volunteering	Examples Characteristics
Working for the student community	Welcome teams for new students eg at stations; Advice and support for students; Student clubs and societies; Student media and entertainments;
Working for the university	New applicants' days; Student representatives; Widening participation, recruitment and ambassador schemes.
Student-led projects	These may be campaigning or lobbying activities or they may be community oriented interventions; Governance or coordinating position within volunteer centers
Staff facilitated community engagement but student developed projects	Some student volunteer centers describe themselves as there to support student developed projects
Brokered community engagement	Vetting and posting opportunities institutions websites or making use of

	external websites; Discussions with students on areas of interest
Learning linked volunteering	Science shops and the dedicated development of research style projects for community organizations; Service learning, students work on project for the community meeting community needs and extending their learning by applying their area of study University developed accredited modules where learning activities related to a subject area are linked to a voluntary placement; Working for externally validated accreditation
Non-CRB work	Environmental clean-ups, tree planting or similar activities which could be done quickly and without the need for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance
Short-term placements	Environmentally related or practical and shorter term opportunities were promoted as a way to get student involved
Group volunteering	Seen as a way to get more people experiencing volunteering and the shift to the base of opportunities to make it more inclusive for different types of students
Sandwich courses	The research found one university where the placement element of a business studies sandwich programme was considered to be volunteering
Core programmes	Tutoring/mentoring within schools; Year-long schemes with ongoing support and training
Response to requests for specific expertise	Community organizations identify specific needs and contact institution with their request
International volunteering	Brokered or student developed placements abroad

Source: Owen, D. (2009). Research Synthesis: Student Volunteering – background, policy, and context. Student Volunteering Initiative Research Synthesis, 01, Public Engagement. P. 16-17.

## Importance and Benefits of Student Volunteering

Student volunteering is important on many different levels for the students, their community, academic institutions, and future employers. As Baroness Neuberger writes, “something strange and wonderful is going on in the world of volunteering. It is this very elusiveness, the power of volunteering to act upon people in mysterious ways, that makes it so powerful as an intervention – for those who volunteer, those who are helped by volunteers and the community generally that benefits from the contribution of volunteers” (Ockenden, 2007).

### **Benefits to students**

For students, volunteering broadens their perspective by exposing them to different communities and problems. Volunteering also allows students to put theory into practice and thus enables students to get more out of their university experience and graduate with more than just a degree. Student volunteers develop communication and interpersonal skills which are demanded by employers (Owen, 2009). Furthermore, volunteering fosters the ties between the students and their communities and allows them to better understand the problems and challenges facing their communities (Brewis, et. al 2010). Students also bring with them a lot of enthusiasm and creativity and may come up with new ideas to existing problems. University Students in particular are the target of this research because studies have shown that people who volunteer while in school are more likely to continue volunteering in the future (Astin & Sax, 1998), and also because university students in Egypt constitute the main group struggling with unemployment.

### **Benefits to employers**

The most important benefit for an employer is that he hires a graduate who has workplace awareness as well as the essential skills to fit in. Communication, leadership and teamwork are among the top skills derived from volunteering and at the same time are highlighted by employers as essential skills for the workplace (Owen, 2009). Furthermore, students with volunteering background in Europe settled faster into the workplace and were more rapidly promoted (Bruce and Timbrell, 2006).

### **Benefits to academic institutions**

For Academic institutions, volunteering will create the life-study balance by allowing students to do something fun and enriching while studying (Owen, 2009). Volunteering will also provide hands-on experience and allow students to put academic theories into practice. Also, several studies indicate that student volunteering and service-learning enhance community relations with the academic institution (Driscoll et. al., 1996 & Gray et. al., 1998). Finally, volunteerism contributes to economic growth by cutting down the costs for the government and extending the services to a larger number of citizens.

### **Motivations**

Young volunteers have very different motives than older volunteers (Omoto, Snyder, & Martino, 2000). The desire to volunteer is usually an outcome of both altruistic and egoistic motivations (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991). According to the National Coordinating Center for Public Engagement (NCCPE), 95% of students who volunteer

are motivated by a desire to **improve their communities and help people** (Brewis, et. al. 2010).

Another important motivator for young people is that volunteering allows them to **gain work-related experience** and examine the work environment which in turn increases their employability (Eley, 2003). For example, in a survey conducted to assess the impacts of volunteering among university students in London, 80% felt confident in using their volunteering experience in job applications and interviews, 67% believed they have gained the skills potential employers require, and 63% said their general employability has increased (Braime & Minna Ruohonen, 2011). Over 50% of 15-19 years old volunteers in Canada said they volunteered to improve their job opportunities (Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, & Tryon, 2006). “Learning new skills” was the second most important reason for volunteering among young volunteers in the UK (Low, Butt, Ellis, Paine, & Davis Smith, 2007). Out of 200 students, in a survey conducted by the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) in the UK, 75% chose a career more related to their volunteering rather than their university degree course (Student Volunteering, 2003). In the UK, more than half of all volunteers state that their volunteering has positively impacted their chance of finding a suitable job (Hirst, 2000).

Employers equally believe that volunteering allows students to put technical skills into practice and prepares them to the workplace. The Higher Ambitions Report states, “It is a top concern for business that students should leave university better equipped with a wider range of employability skills. All universities should be expected to demonstrate how their institution prepares its students for employment” (Higher Ambitions Report, 2009, p.13).

## Barriers to Volunteering

Despite the several benefits of volunteering students face many barriers that limit their engagement. **Time** is always the main barrier to volunteering whether it is due to pressures of study, paid work or family commitments. Young people in particular find it much harder to volunteer or take on a leadership role that requires too much commitment (Ellis, 2004). The main barrier in the United States and Europe is the **rising cost of education** which means that students are more likely to apply for paid work (Evans & Saxton, 2005). The **perception of volunteering** is also a challenge since some young students view volunteering as “not cool”, “time-consuming” and “boring” (Commission on the Future of Volunteering, 2008; Davis Smith, 1999; Niyazi, 1996). Several reports emphasized the importance of redefining volunteering to young students and targeting the myths limiting volunteering to middle-aged citizens, often females who have no social life and are spending their time “serving tea to old people” (Morgan, 2008). As Virginia Hodgkinson and Murray Weitzman conclude in their book, “Giving; and Volunteering in the United States”, “It is clear from these findings that young people, single persons, persons from minority groups and people from lower-income households are not asked to volunteer in the same proportions as persons who are white, middle-aged, married, or from middle and upper-income households”(p.118). The Commission on the Future of Volunteering thus argues that there is a need for “volunteering literacy” that is, “fostering a widespread understanding of what a volunteer is; a realistic appreciation of the transformative impact it can have on people, be they individuals, groups or communities; and a resolute acceptance that it needs appropriate and sufficient resources in order to flourish” (2008, p.2).

**Previous negative experiences** can also limit potential volunteers from trying again in the future. As indicated by the Russell Commission citing the National Youth Agency, “if early experiences are viewed as a waste of time there will be very little incentive to try again. Quality is therefore critical at every level”. Some students don’t volunteer because they simply have not been asked. In the findings of an international study, 28% of the respondents stated that they do not volunteer because they were not asked while 18% said they had never thought about it (Anheier & Salamon, 1999).

## **Volunteering and Service-Learning in International Universities**

There are many different forms in which students volunteer, both inside and outside the university premises. Student unions and activities benefiting the student community are the most widely recognized form of volunteering. Activities such as welcoming new students, organizing fairs, student clubs, and tutoring are some of the important roles played by students within their academic institution. Several universities have developed volunteering centers to create opportunities for students to volunteer both inside and outside campus. Other universities took a step forward and introduced Service Learning courses or modules that allow students to develop projects tailored to the needs of their community in an attempt to tackle some of the problems encountered. In the following section, some of these examples are examined.

### **Models of Student Volunteering and Service-Learning in the United Kingdom**

The Research Synthesis conducted by the National Co-ordinating Center for Public Engagement examines several practices of learning-linked volunteering in universities in the United Kingdom. London Metropolitan University developed the “Work Placement

for Professional Experience Module” by which placement opportunities are embedded into the curriculum. The module is open to all students and accounts for 15 credits and placement opportunities are determined by the department and the university’s Employability Unit. Students are required to complete a reflective paper along with other written and oral assignments. Both the student’s assignments and feedback from the organization are used in assessment. The university also offers other modules like the “Voluntary Action Learning in Communities, Studies in Citizenship and Rights, Social Justice and Diversity”. Each of these modules is worth 30 credits and to complete the module students need to work for 25 days within an organization. The main purpose of these modules is to offer students work experience that is relevant to their field of study, enhance their academic skills by tackling real problems, and increase awareness of the work environment. On average, 400 students participate in these modules every year (Owen, 2009).

The Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in the United Kingdom developed a volunteer scheme “CoMMUni” that serves as a gateway between the university and the voluntary sector. The main goal of the program is to develop a culture of volunteering within MMU, grant the voluntary sector access to MMU’s resources, and enable student volunteers to gain valuable skills. The program also offers training workshops for employability including project planning, child protection, and teaching techniques. The program is based on the belief that volunteering plays an important role in enhancing employability (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2012).

## **Models of Volunteering and Service-Learning in Scotland**

The University of Glasgow in Scotland created the “Student Volunteer Support Service” that serve as the volunteering organization linking students to volunteering opportunities both inside and outside campus. Before volunteering, students have to complete a disclosure to ensure that they are qualified to work with elderly and children. The center provides volunteers with the necessary training according to their desired project. Projects include classroom support for school children, empowering women and people with disabilities, teaching a second language to polish students, and teaching English to refugees and asylum seeking medical professions. One of the most interesting projects is “Find a Solution”. In this project, Students are required to work for 8 weeks in the summer with “LINKES” community organization in an attempt to find a solution for a problem that would allow them to be more efficient in their work. The project is coordinated and funded by the university and students can receive an award of 1,500 pounds (University of Glasgow, 2012)

## **A model of Volunteering and service-learning in the United States**

The University of Virginia in the United States offers both volunteering support and service-learning opportunities. The University developed a volunteer center that works closely with nonprofit organizations and encourages students to volunteer. The Nursing, Medical, and Law Schools have developed partnerships with non-profit health and social justice organizations. Students enroll in practicum and internships within NGOs to acquire the technical skills and serve the community (University of Virginia, 2012).

### **A model of Volunteering and service-learning in Australia**

The University of Melbourne also offers volunteering support and service-learning opportunities. The newly established Leadership, Involvement and Volunteer Experience (LIVE) Unit consists of 3 staff members. The unit coordinates and links student volunteers to opportunities in leadership, community engagement and volunteering. The University also started the “Community Development Project” in which Engineering Students undertake a service-learning project in a developing country (University of Melbourne, 2012).

### **A model of Volunteering in the Middle East**

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) at Qatar University launched a competition entitled “My Life is Volunteerism”. In the competition, Qatar University students and alumni submit new projects examining volunteer activities that they believe would be of benefit to their society. The aim of the competition is to inspire students to creatively present new ideas and promote civic responsibility as part of their academic studies. The winners of the competition receive cash rewards and their projects are distributed to civil society organizations in Qatar.

The University also organized a series of events through the “Student Development Unit” to encourage students to actively participate in activities both inside and outside campus. The events featured speakers from Qatar Volunteer Center in an attempt to develop linkages between the university and the center. The aim of these events is to establish a culture of volunteerism among students out of the belief that involvement in voluntary

work will increase their skills and help them in their future career (Qatar University, 2012).

### **General trends**

There are several organizational units in which student volunteering provision is based. These include, student unions, careers services centers, student services, independent specialized units, or academic departments. Universities also relied on different programs to integrate volunteering into the students' experience. Among the programs developed by universities are volunteer schemes, partnerships with NGOs, training to student volunteers, learning modules, and establishing service centers. The different volunteering programs are designed based on the defined scope and desired outcome of student volunteering. The rationale behind these attempts is to improve the quality of university graduates which in turn improves their future employability.

The research on student volunteering is relatively new however it is becoming an important area for policy makers for the benefits it presents to the community, student volunteers, academic institutions and employers. The benefits to the different groups can be easily identified in research done in several countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. The extent to which student volunteering can provide similar outcomes in Egypt is worth examining. The research on volunteering in general and student volunteering in particular is extremely limited in Egypt. Also, the applicability of the different programs; established by international universities, to the case of Egyptian higher education institutions still need to be examined. The following section examines the scope and nature of volunteering in Egypt, as identified in the literature, with special

attention to Youth NGOs in Egypt as it is perceived to be the most appealing volunteering outlet for student volunteers.

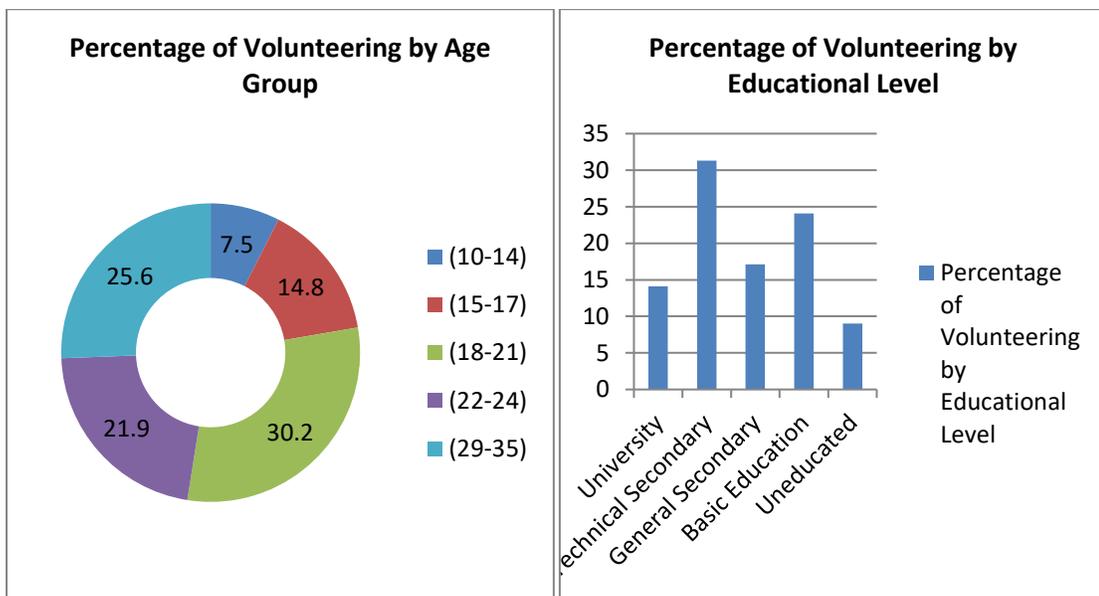
## **Volunteering in Egypt**

Philanthropy is an integral value in the Egyptian culture; however, the culture of volunteering has been very limited until recently. In the last decade there has been an increase in the number of youth volunteers and the number of NGOs in Egypt; however, it is still much below international averages (World Bank, 2007). A relevant study, based on a broad definition of volunteering, was conducted on volunteering and charitable giving by the Information and Decision Support Center in Egypt. The study defined volunteering as the “voluntary activities undertaken by an individual with no financial reward to serve a cause or a person other than the volunteer’s immediate family or relatives” (IDSC, 2010, P.5). The estimates for youth volunteerism in Egypt were no more than 2.2% with those in the age group of 18-21 comprising 30% of the volunteering rate (IDSC, 2010). In a survey on Student Volunteering in the United Kingdom, 63% of students have taken part in formal volunteering (Brewis et al., 2010). It is estimated that volunteering rates across Egypt have increased following the January Revolution. Youth have specifically been involved in numerous activities including clean-ups, awareness campaigns, and medical assistance. However, the impact of the revolution was increasingly felt in earlier months and have eventually decreased.

The demographic composition of youth volunteers is also different than that in the United Kingdom or the United States where females represent the majority of volunteers. In Egypt, males were more likely to volunteer than females where the number of male

volunteers amounted to 507.9 thousand at a rate of 3.3% while female volunteers were only 149.5 thousand at a rate of 1% (IDSC, 2010). Another surprising difference was that youth in rural areas were more likely to volunteer than urban youth (IDSC, 2010). Another study conducted by IDSC in 2009 found that 30.2% of youth volunteers are between the ages of 18 and 21 which is the age of university students (Figure 1). The study also identified that the largest block of volunteers, 31.3%, hold secondary technical degrees compared to only 14.1% who are university graduates (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Percentage of Volunteering by Age group      Figure 2: Percentage of Volunteering by Education Level



Source: Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC), Mapping of Youth in Egypt: 2009

## **Challenges to volunteering in Egypt**

Two important challenges to volunteering among youth in Egypt are the lack of initiative and support. In a study conducted by the United Nations Development program (UNDP) in Egypt young people stated that they have, “little faith that their own voices and their efforts might be appreciated, considered, or heard” (UNDP, 2007, P.5). A sample of 2,400 Egyptian youth, in all governorates, was surveyed to examine the level of participation among youth in Egypt. The findings indicated that 67 percent of youth were never involved in any school activities while only 13 percent did some kind of volunteer work (UNDP, 2006). Even though respondents reported having adequate amount of leisure time, only 1 percent of the sample indicated voluntary work is their preferred activity. Most of the respondents’ preferred to watch television, listen to music, or spend time with family and friends (UNDP, 2006, p.33).

Another important challenge to student volunteering lies in the definition within the Egyptian culture. So far, volunteering and civic participation have been linked and limited to charity work. Egyptians are very generous in giving out money but are not as generous with their time. For example, 4.5 billion Egyptian Pounds were donated by Egyptian households and 86% of all households participated in giving in 2009 (IDSC, 2010).

Engaging youth to actively participate in development will thus entail first redefining volunteering and community work. This points to the need to examine more closely whether universities, NGOs, and student volunteers should work together to move beyond charity towards sustainable development. A survey conducted by UNDP

indicated that limited outlets for civic participation is a restrictive factor to youth volunteering in Egypt (UNDP, 2007). Therefore, it is equally important to examine the nature and scope of NGOs in Egypt with special focus on youth NGOs that are more likely to attract the youth group.

### **Youth NGOs in Egypt**

The number of youth NGOs that are led by or target youth in Egypt is extremely small in relation to the general percentage of NGOs. Youth NGOs have been identified by the World Bank as:

1. NGOs in which youth in the board exceeds 60%,
2. The program and/or services of the organization targets youth or children
3. The number of employees below 35 years exceeds 75%, and
4. The organization relies on youth volunteers in the planning and implementation of activities and projects

NGOs meeting all four criteria are considered “Youth Organizations”, organizations meeting criteria 1 & 3 are “Youth-Led NGOs”, and organizations meeting criteria 2 & 4 are “Youth-Serving NGOs” (World Bank, 2007). In 1997, there were nearly 14,500 NGOs registered with the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs (Latowsky, 1997). According to the World Bank, the numbers of NGOs increased in 2007 to 18,000 in the 27 governorates of Egypt; around 30% of which are located in Greater Cairo and only about 0.5% constitute youth organizations (World Bank, 2007). The true figures are in reality much smaller considering that 25% of the registered NGOs are inactive, 3% are

less than three years old, and 7% are private member associations (Latowsky, 1997). Also, different organizations state different numbers for NGOs in Egypt.

Considering the demographic composition of Egypt and the fact that young people represent over 60% of the total population the number of volunteers and youth organizations should be much more than the current number. As stated in the World Bank Report on Youth Organizations in Egypt, “if we suppose that every 20 thousand youth can receive services and get involved in the activities of one youth NGO, which is actually a broad suggestion, then; with a simple calculation, there should be 2000 youth NGOs in Egypt which is far beyond the reality as we only have 12 youth NGOs” (World Bank, 2007, P.14).

The first Youth NGO in Egypt is the Youth Association for Population and Development (YAPD) established in 1994 (World Bank, 2007). YAPD was the first organization completely led by youth and set a model for the creation of other youth NGOs (World Bank, 2007). Following YAPD, many youth NGOs rapidly emerged with the majority being established between the years 2003-2006 (Kandil, 2007). One of the most important examples of other youth NGOs is “Resala Foundation”. Resala association started as a student movement in the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University in 1999. It was the outcome of the will of 60 students who were inspired and encouraged by their young professor to try and develop their community. On their website they identify their message as, “a message to the school teacher and the university professor, and is a confirmation on the effectiveness of his/her role in mobilizing students to play a positive social role in their communities” (Resala Foundation, 2012). Their activities were mainly blood donations and visits to orphanages, elderly, and hospitals. By 2009, Resala had

become one of the largest charity organizations in Egypt and had 50 branches all over Egypt with around 200,000 volunteers. Their activities now extends to blind care, poor family care, educational activities, persons with special needs and exhibitions of donated clothes and belongings. Another important aspect about Resala is their work on developing and empowering young unfortunate Egyptian calibers to prepare them for the job market (Rabie, 2006).

Nahdet El Mahrousa is another NGO that was established by Egyptian youth in 2002 to help young social entrepreneurs achieve their dreams. They provide office space, technical support, access to shared financial management services, legal advice, administrative support, training and capacity building, mentoring and access to the NGO's network of members and supporters. The mission of the NGO as stated in their website is "Engaging and activating Egyptian young professionals in the development and public arenas and in shaping Egypt's future" (Nahdet El Mahrouse, 2012).

Youth NGOs in general are seen as the outcome of four motivating factors. These factors are the establishment of YAPD as previously stated, the presence of youth leadership as highlighted in the case of "Resala Foundation", the involvement of youth in independent organizations that reflect their hopes in development and empowerment such as their role in Nahdet El Mahrousa, and finally the increased religious consciousness that was translated in the establishment of organizations such as "Sunaa' Al Hayah" or Life Makers (Ismail, 2011, p. 70). As these examples indicate, the role of Egyptian Public Universities in supporting youth organizations is indirectly accomplished through student unions, student clubs, or faculty members. However, there has not been a clear policy in promoting volunteerism or integrating service-learning by the universities.

The student unions in public universities carry out several activities that include organizing sports, arts, and literacy competitions, scouting activities, fundraising and charity activities (Khairi, et. al, 2007). However, the scope and nature of these activities have not been adequately studied. Also, the impact of volunteering on the personal development, academic performance, skills attainment, and employability needs to be analyzed to determine the impact of volunteering on the students, academic institutions and the community. The value that student volunteering represents to Egyptian employers is specifically important to analyze as it has been proved to be among the most important motivators to student volunteers. The following section examines the relationship between student volunteering and employability in the literature with special focus on the case of Egypt.

### **Relationship between volunteering and future employability**

Several studies have identified the positive relation between volunteering and future employability (Smith, et. al. (2009), Hirst (2000), Astin et. al. (1998), Braime et. al. (2011, Brewis et. al. (2010)). In these surveys students stated their belief that they gain the skills employers are looking for through volunteering and employers valued the volunteering experience acknowledging the impact it has on skills development and workplace familiarity. Student volunteers were also found to have better communication, leadership, teamwork and interpersonal skills which are highly demanded by employers (Astin & Sax, 1998). The findings also indicate that students acquired better critical-thinking skills and were allowed a chance to put learning into practice. Many studies also acknowledge the positive impact of service-learning on learning outcomes (Astin et. al (1998), Eyler & Giles (1999)). The findings also highlight that students engaged in

community service were more likely to graduate and had better grades (Astin & Sax, 1998) Student volunteers believe that the experience had improved their learning outcomes and prepared them to enter the workplace (Astin & Sax, 1998).

Most of the studies dealing with volunteering and/or service-learning and future employability have studied the issue in relation to the broader area of the benefits of student volunteering. One of these studies has been conducted by the Bonner Foundation to assess the Bonners Scholars Program (BSP) (Keen & Keen, 1998). The BSP is a program in which students in their second semester of their first year in university identify social issues they are eager to explore and commit to ten hours of community service per week. The researchers relied on a student survey, focus groups, and interviews for a total of 929 students and concluded that the program has strong impact on students' personal development (Eyler et. al., 2001). Most of the respondents confirmed that the program enhanced their career development process (Keen & Keen, 1998). A similar study was supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) in the United States (Tartter, 1996). The study was conducted over three years and relied on a self-reporting survey answered by 57 undergraduate students and 150 Elementary school students (Eyler et. al., 2001). Undergraduate students studying in City College in New York City mentored second graders in a Harlem Public School that was on the city's critical list. The researchers concluded that the program improved the children's scores enough to remove the school from the critical list. Also, undergraduates reported better academic performance and a clearer career choice (Tartter, 1996). The success of the program can be attributed, in a large part; to the training the students' received by their college in teaching and understanding of literacy

(Eyler et. al., 2001). Even though the FIPSE study had an advantage of analyzing the program over several years, the student sample was relatively small to indicate a general pattern. The study conducted by the Bonner Foundation included a larger sample, but was confined to a particular program. Whether these findings can be generalized to different programs and students remains unclear.

A similar study but with a larger sample was sponsored by The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) on “Comparing the Effects of Service-Learning and Community Service”. The analysis was based on a self-reported survey of more than 20,000 undergraduate students (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). The researchers found that both community service and service-learning positively impacted the academic performance and outcome as well as enhanced skills and was related to a better career choice. The findings indicated that service-learning was more likely to positively impact career choice and future employability (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000).

The relevance of these findings still needs to be applied to the Egyptian labor market by identifying the needs of Egyptian employers and how they value volunteering. Most of the research on the labor market in Egypt has worked to identify the nature and problems of the sectors with regards to job creation and tackling unemployment. Also, most of the studies on volunteering in Egypt have been conducted as part of a broader topic examination such as civil society or youth public policies (UNDP (2006), World Bank (2007), Egypt Human Development Report (2010), ILO (2009), IDSC (2009), Ismail (2011), Kandil (2007), Rabie (2006), and IDSC (2010)). However, many of these studies provide valuable information on the nature and scope of volunteering in Egypt. There is a

gap in the literature with regards to the impact of student volunteering in Egypt and how it affects future employability in particular.

Such a study can help to meet the pressing need to examine alternative methods to improve students' employability apart from the evident need to improve the educational quality. Also, research has shown that effective higher education reform would entail limiting the number of enrollments by making admissions more competitive (Holmes, 2008). This change would challenge the constitutional right to free education in Egypt. Therefore, examining different methods to improve the educational outcome especially with regards to workforce development may be more feasible. The extent to which student volunteering and service-learning can equip students with important skills is thus important to examine. This study aims to provide an overview of student volunteering in Egypt and the perceived impact it has on academic skills, transferrable skills, and employability. The value of volunteering to Egyptian employers is also examined to determine the skills demanded by employers and the aspects they appreciate in the students' volunteering experience. The following chapter explains the methodology by which these goals were approached.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Design and Plan

Two survey methods are used to answer the research questions. The first survey is a self-administered questionnaire answered by student volunteers and non-volunteers at the university level. This questionnaire is modified from the United Nations Volunteers and Independent Sector toolkit on measuring volunteering (Dingle, Sokolowski, et. al., 2001), and a similar survey administered in London (Briame & Ruohonen, 2011) that measured the impact of volunteering on students in eight London-based universities. The questionnaire evaluates the impact of student volunteering on personal development, transferable skills, and future employability. It also identifies the main benefits and barriers to student volunteering by targeting both volunteers and non-volunteers. The data is used to indicate the extent of volunteering and serve the goals of the study.

The advantage of a questionnaire is that it facilitates wider coverage that improves the data's statistical significance. The standardized questions of the questionnaire allows for better analysis and evaluation of the data collected. Also, the questions were general enough and mostly close-ended to ensure data can be interpreted comparatively.

To answer the second part of the research question, the study relies on a standardized questionnaire that was answered by Egyptian employers in different fields in both the private and public sectors. The main goal of the questionnaire was

to examine the relationship between student volunteering and future employability. The questions covered the skills required by employers in the Egyptian market, whether employers believe students' acquire the required skills through university education, and how they view student volunteering and the perceived benefits associated with it.

## **The First Method: Modified Questionnaire on “Student Volunteering”**

The main goals of the questionnaire are to:

1. Define the scope and nature of volunteering among university students
2. Compile a list of motives and barriers to student volunteering
3. Document the perceived benefits -if any- from volunteering by students

### **1. Population Sample**

The number of University students in Egypt is estimated at over 2 million. The population sample included 335 university students in Greater Cairo. The population sample calculator at [www.surveysystem.com](http://www.surveysystem.com) was used to determine the sample size. At a population of 2 million, the 335 respondents would reflect a 95% confidence level. The sample takes into consideration gender balance and demographic representation through targeting both male and female students in Greater Cairo and students at both public and private universities in the different years of study. The sample is limited to students in Greater Cairo because of inability to travel to other governorates and the associated limitations such as time and cost.

## 2. Data Collection

The questionnaire was managed online using [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and distributed by email among university students and volunteers in different NGOs that are in the age group 16-22. Half of the questionnaire was distributed among university students who do volunteer work by targeting NGOs with purposive sampling; and the second part was answered by students who do not do any volunteer work by going to several public and private universities. The website allowed users to answer the questionnaire quickly and made collecting responses simple. The data was collected on two stages during April 2012. The first stage collected responses from student volunteers by going to NGOs and collecting half of the sample to ensure the sample has an adequate number of volunteers. Targeted NGOs included Resala Foundation and Nahdet El Mahrousa, which were examined in the study, as well as the Egyptian Food Bank as it also has a large number of student volunteers. The second stage started with distributing the questionnaire randomly among university students both volunteers and non-volunteers. The questionnaire was sent to teaching assistants at Ain Shams University, Cairo University, Helwan University, The American University in Cairo, The German University in Cairo, and The Arab Academy for Science and Technology. The link to the online survey was distributed among students in the universities.

## 3. Design

The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part is designed to develop a profile for the respondents including age, gender, field of study, rate and nature of volunteering. The second part is an attempt to measure the perceived benefits to the

student on several levels including personal development, transferrable skills, future employability, and social and cultural impacts. The third and final part is intended to identify the challenges and barriers to volunteering as well as the desired incentives to create a culture of student volunteerism.

#### **4. Instrument**

The questionnaire is modified from similar studies measuring the impact of student volunteering. The questionnaire is based on variables identified in the literature and consists of three main parts (see Appendix A).

##### **Part I**

The questionnaire solicits basic information about the student's personal and academic characteristics. The characteristics include age, gender, academic institution, and undergraduate course year. The first part also distinguishes between student volunteers and non-volunteers and collect data to indicate the sources of support and motives to student volunteering.

##### **Part II**

The data is collected to assess the perceived benefits of volunteering by university students. The impact of volunteering is assessed in relation to four distinct aspects; personal development, transferable skills, future employability, and social and cultural impacts. The data is measured on a five point scale with the following choices: 1 = no impact, 2=slight impact, 3=moderate impact, 4=strong impact and 5=very strong impact.

### Part III

The data collected examines the challenges and barriers to student volunteering. Volunteers were asked to identify the most challenging part of their experience. Non-volunteers were asked to state the factors that prevented them from volunteering.

## 5. Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed through a qualitative approach. The questionnaire was presented to a sample of six students as a pilot test prior to data collection to ensure the clarity and reliability of the data. Prior to analyzing the data, screening was performed to avoid incomplete results. Descriptive statistics were used to compile a profile for the survey respondents and assess the impact of volunteering on different aspects.

## 6. Scoring Interpretation

The impact of volunteering on the personal development, skill attainment, employability, and social and cultural awareness had been measured through a 5 point scale. The results were quantitatively analyzed as Likert results and the 5 point scale was transformed into binominal. The top two scales (very strong impact and strong impact) were grouped together to indicate a “positive impact” while the lower three scales (moderate to no impact) were grouped together to indicate “no impact”. The scale percentage is used to indicate the number of students in each scale as a percentage of the total response to indicate the impact of volunteering on the different aspects studied.

Percentage was also used to identify the frequency of volunteering and distinguish between regular and irregular volunteers. I used Likert results to convert the 5 point scale

into binominal. The top three scales (weekly, every other week, and monthly) were grouped together to describe a regular volunteering rate and the bottom two scales (occasionally and rarely) were grouped together to describe an irregular volunteering rate. The scale percentage is used to indicate the number of student in each scale as a percentage of the total response to distinguish between regular and irregular volunteers.

## **7. Response Rate**

The total response rate to complete the questionnaire was very high about 98.5 percent. The survey was taken by 335 students and 330 of them completed the survey. However, the exact number of students to which the questionnaire was presented could not be tracked because it was distributed by the teaching assistants in the designated universities. Most of the population sample are undergraduate students in different study years and only 1.2 percent were graduate students. The population sample included both public and private universities and covered different faculties and departments.

## **8. Limitations**

The number of university students in Egypt is estimated at over 2 million and therefore representation was challenging. The sample is only limited to Greater Cairo area because of inability to travel to other governorates and the associated limitations such as time and cost.

The impact of volunteering is likely biased towards the students since the survey measures self-reported impacts. The answers were based on the students' reflection on their experience and therefore the answers could be influenced by their expectations,

culture, and background. It is possible that students indicate an exaggerated impact thus the benefits are defined as perceived.

It is possible that people who are active volunteers were more likely to fill out the questionnaire. Also, the sample included a larger number of volunteers since half of the questionnaire was distributed among student volunteers by targeting NGOs. This should be taken into consideration when analyzing the volunteering rate.

The survey sample was determined by purposive sampling and the questionnaire was distributed to specific universities and NGOs in Greater Cairo. The data findings are therefore specific to the sample group and only indicative to the population at large; thus generalizations about the total population of university students cannot be made.

## **The Second Method: Standardized Questionnaire on “Student Volunteering and Employability”**

The main goals of the questionnaire are to:

1. Identify the skills required by Egyptian employers
2. Document employers’ view on student volunteering and whether it adds to applicants' skills
3. Understand how employers in different fields rate volunteering and which aspect of volunteering they appreciate the most
4. Identify the hiring criteria and how volunteering and extracurricular activities rank in it

## 1. Population Sample

The population sample included 50 human resources directors both in the private and the public sector. The sample includes different industries in an attempt to cover most employment fields. Based on a study on economic and employment growth in Egypt (Hassan, M. et. al. 2008); the main sectors with employment growth in the Egyptian economy include trade, tourism, communications, construction, agriculture, banking and insurance. The sample targets employers in these main sectors, excluding agriculture, in addition to academic institutions, civil society organizations, and international agencies that are directly linked to student volunteering. Table 2 compares between the population and study sample.

Table 2: Comparison of Population & Study Sample

<b>Population (Sectors with employment growth in Egypt)</b>	<b>Sample (Sectors covered)</b>
Trade	Trade & Manufacturing
Tourism	Tourism
Communication	Communication
Construction	Construction
Banking & Insurance	Banking & Insurance
Agriculture	Research & Development, Education, and Civil Society.

## 2. Data Collection

The questionnaire was managed online using [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and circulated through the human resources committee at the American Chamber of Commerce (Amcham) to reach organizations in recruitment, training, and education. Purposive sampling was also considered and the questionnaire was sent by email to human resources directors in different sectors in an attempt to cover the above mentioned fields. The link to survey was sent by email to human resources directors in private banks, insurance companies, major communication companies, as well as organizations in construction, trade and manufacturing. Special attention was given to major companies and multinationals that are appealing to new university graduates.

## 3. Design

The questions are designed in a way that enables employers to elaborate on their personal views and experiences of student volunteering. The diversity of employment fields is intended to produce reliable data that reflects the accurate requirements of the job market. Based on the literature review the top skills demanded by employers were identified from international studies. The skills were grouped into broader categories to identify the ones demanded by Egyptian employers. For instance, “Self-awareness” includes personal sense of achievement, knowledge of strengths and weaknesses, and having a defined vision. The questions are designed to assess how employers rate these skills and whether they consider student volunteers to be better equipped to fit the work environment.

## 4. The Instrument

The questionnaire is based on variables identified in the literature and consists of three main parts (see Appendix B).

### Part I

The first part solicits information to develop a profile of the survey respondents including sector, workforce, and nature of work.

### Part II

The second part identifies the skills evaluation for university graduates and identifies the top skills demanded by Egyptian employers. The skills assessed includes communication skills, analytical and research skills, computer literacy, teamwork, reasoning and creativity, flexibility and adaptability, time management, leadership and management, self awareness of achievements, strength and weaknesses, planning and organization, and multicultural sensitivity and awareness. Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of these skills in a potential employee and based on their experience if they have found students with volunteering experience to be better in any of these skills.

### Part III

The third part examines the hiring criteria for Egyptian employers and how volunteering and extracurricular activities rate in it. Employers were also asked to identify the part of student volunteering they value the most.

## 5. Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire is intended to identify the top skills required by Egyptian employers, and to establish a relationship between volunteering and employability. The data will also be used to describe how employers view student volunteering and its impact as a training method.

## 6. Response Rate

The questionnaire was sent by email to 50 employers in addition to the 14 members of the Human Resources Committee at the American Chamber in Cairo. In total the survey was sent to 64 Human Resources Director of which 50 completed the survey at a response rate of 78 percent.

## 7. Scoring Interpretation

The required skills by employers have been measured using a 5 point scale. The results were quantitatively analyzed as Likert results and the 5 point scale was transformed into binominal. The top two scales (essential and very important) were grouped together and measured as “Essential” while the lower three scales (important, neutral, and not important) were grouped together to indicate “Not Essential”. The scale percentage is used in each scale as a percentage of the total response to indicate the importance of the skill in a future candidate.

## 8. Limitations

Even though the agricultural sector captures an important share of employment in the Egyptian economy; the specific nature of the sector would not allow for interviews to be conducted.

Another limitation is the size of the job market. The job market in Egypt is extremely large and the representative sample is intended to give an overview of the most important employers. The sample will be limited to Greater Cairo area as a result of cost and time limitations.

The size of the organization was determined based on the number of employees. There are other means by which an organization size is determined; such as, market share, sales turnover, value of business or capital. However, the other methods would require an extensive research of the different organizations in the sample which is out of the researchers' capacity. Even though the number of employees is not a true indication to the size of the organization it nevertheless serves the purpose of the study in giving an overview about the employers surveyed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EMPIRICAL STUDY FINDINGS

#### First Stage: Questionnaire on the perceived motives, benefits, and barriers of student volunteering.

The purpose of the first stage of the study is to define the scope and nature of student volunteering as well as the motives, barriers, and benefits for university students. The questionnaire was answered by 335 public and private university students both volunteers and non-volunteers. The profile of the survey respondents is illustrated in table 3.

The main goals of the questionnaire are to:

1. Define the scope and nature of volunteering among university students
2. Compile a list of motives and barriers to student volunteering
3. Document the perceived benefits -if any- from volunteering by students

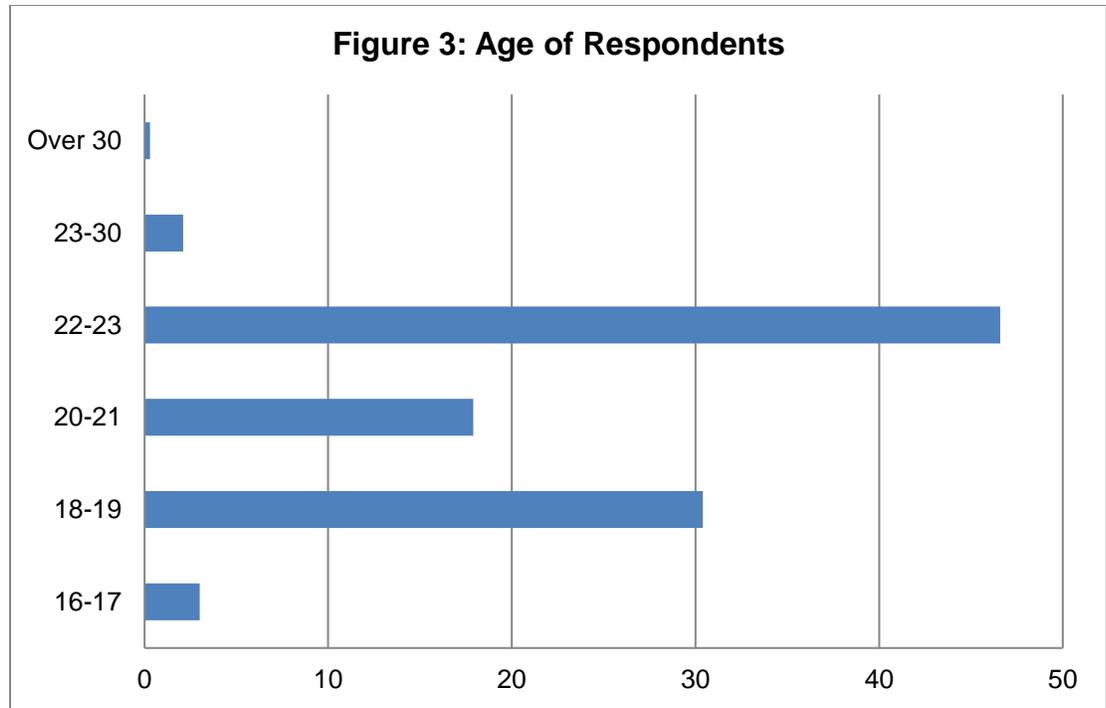
**Table 3: Profile of Survey Respondents**

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
1. 16-17	10	2.9
2. 18-19	102	30.4
3. 20-21	60	17.9
4. 22-23	156	46.5
5. 23-30	7	2
6. Over 30	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	335	
<b>Gender</b>		
1. Male	171	51
2. Female	164	49

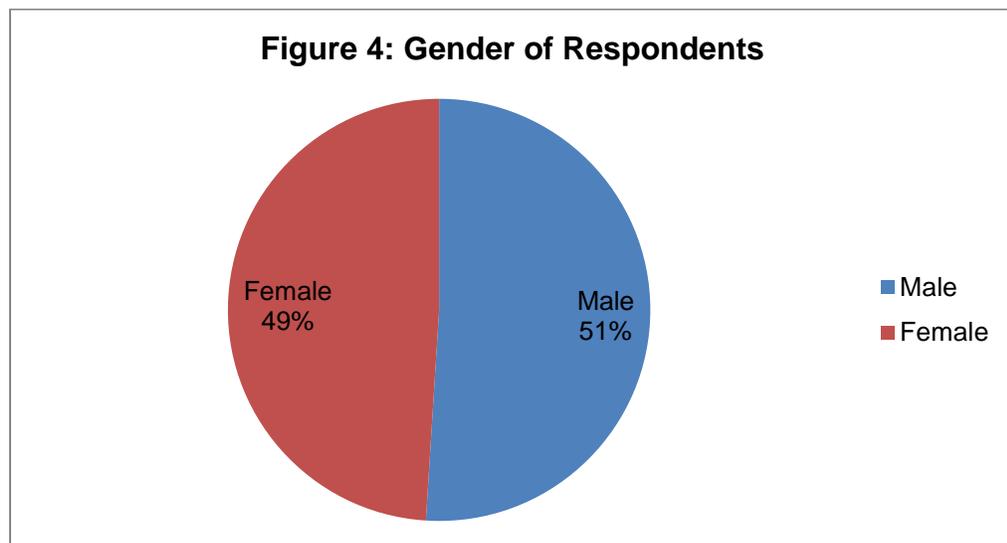
<b>Total</b>	335	
<b>Academic Institution</b>		
1. Public University	201	60
2. Private University	134	40
<b>Total</b>	335	
<b>Course Year</b>		
1. First Year	11	3.3
2. Second Year	160	47.7
3. Third Year	104	31
4. Fourth Year	53	16
5. Fifth Year	3	0.8
6. Sixth Year	0	0.0
7. Graduate	4	1.2
<b>Total</b>	335	

The data in table 3 shows the following information about the 335 respondents:

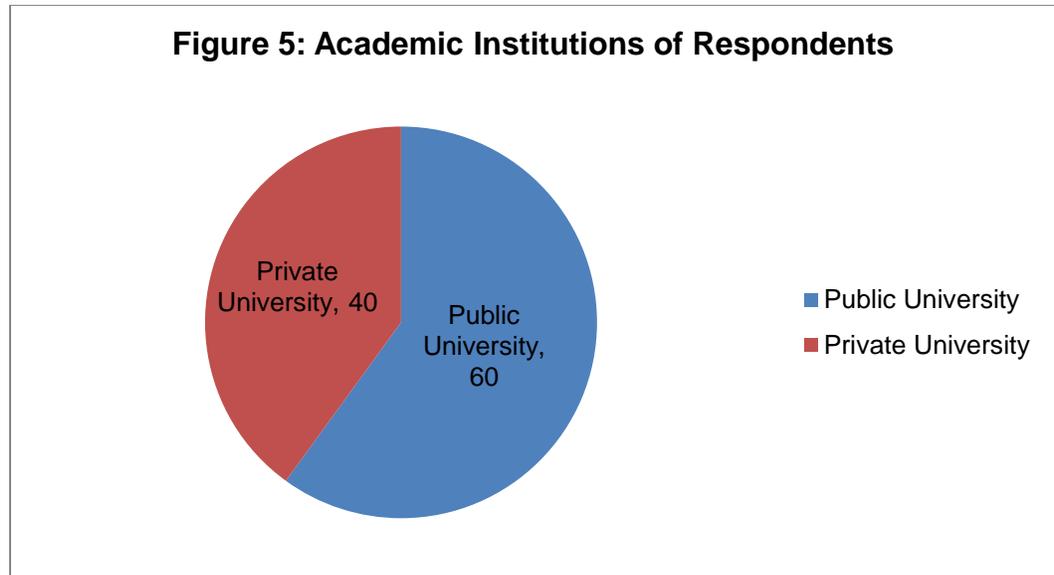
1. The age of the respondents was divided into 6 categories (16-17, 18-19, 20-21, 22-23, 23-30, & over 30). Three percent of the respondents are 16 to 17 years of age, 30.4 percent are 18 to 19 years of age, 17.9 are 20 to 21 years of age, 46.6 are 22 to 23 years of age, 2.1 percent are between 23 and 30 years of age, and 0.3 percent is over 30 years of age.



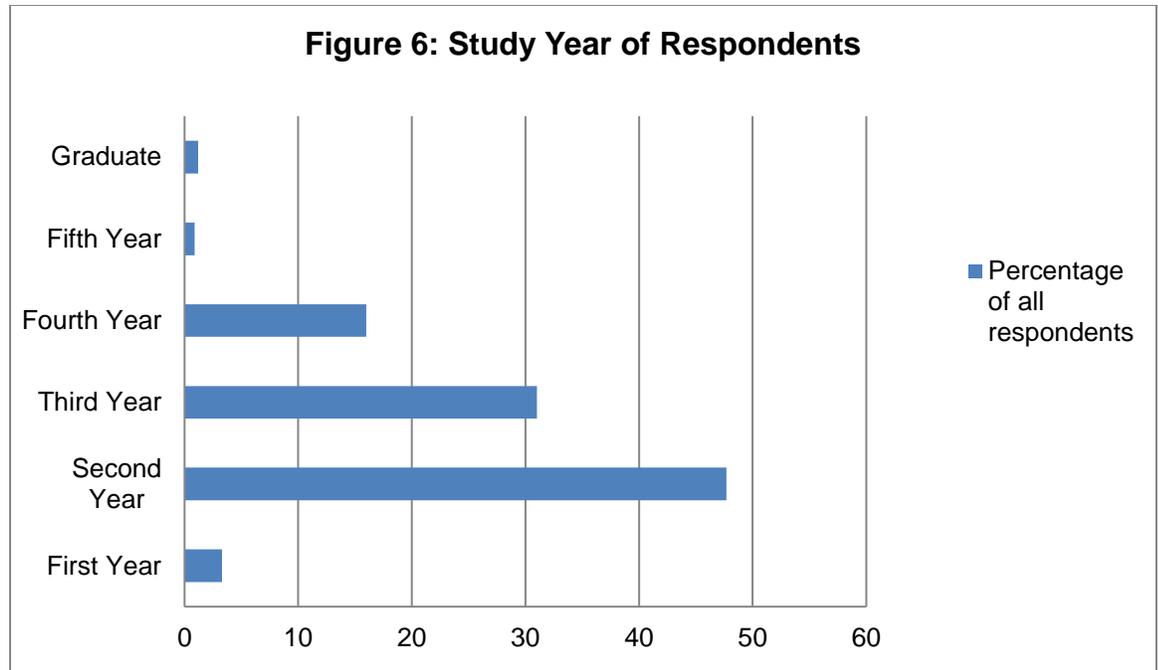
2. Gender balance was an important consideration in the sample. Fifty-one percent of the respondents were male and forty-nine percent were female. The findings are used in a later part of the study to assess if female and male students benefit from volunteering differently. Figure 4 illustrate these findings.



3. Sixty percent of respondents attend or have attended public universities while forty percent attend or have attended private universities. The sample was initially targeting public university students since they represent the majority of university students in Egypt. Figure 5 illustrate these findings.



4. Undergraduate course year was also assessed as a mean for evaluation. 3.3 percent of respondents are in their first year of study, 47.7 percent are in their second year of study, 31 percent are in their third year of study, 16 percent are in their fourth year of study, 0.9 percent are in their fifth year of study, and 1.2 percent of the respondents are graduate students. Figure 6 illustrate these findings.



## 1. Findings associated with the first goal

The first goal of the questionnaire was to identify the scope and nature of student volunteering at the university level. In the first part it was important to distinguish between volunteers and non-volunteers for further analysis. The frequency of volunteering is also analyzed. In the second part the sources for support for student volunteering are analyzed and the method of finding out about the volunteer service.

### a. Scope of Student Volunteering

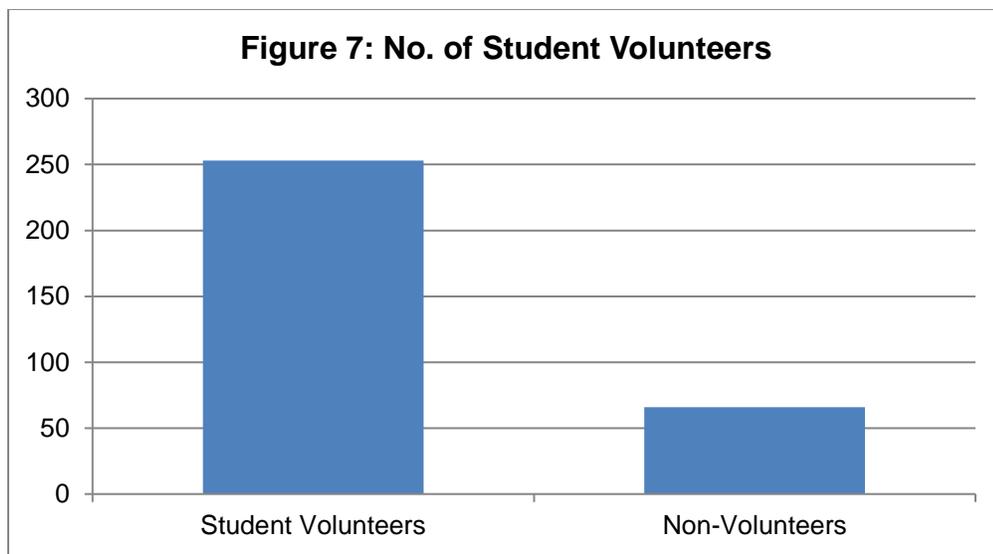
#### 1. Percentage of Student Volunteers and non-volunteers

To distinguish between volunteers and non-volunteers; Students were asked if they have given unpaid help to any groups, clubs, organizations, or individuals in the past 12 months. 79.3% of the survey respondents said they have given unpaid help to groups, clubs, organizations, or individuals and constitute the volunteer sample of the study.

20.7% of the survey respondents said they have not given unpaid help to any groups, clubs, organizations, or individuals and constitute the non-volunteer sample of the study.

Figure 7 illustrates the findings on the number of volunteers and non-volunteers.

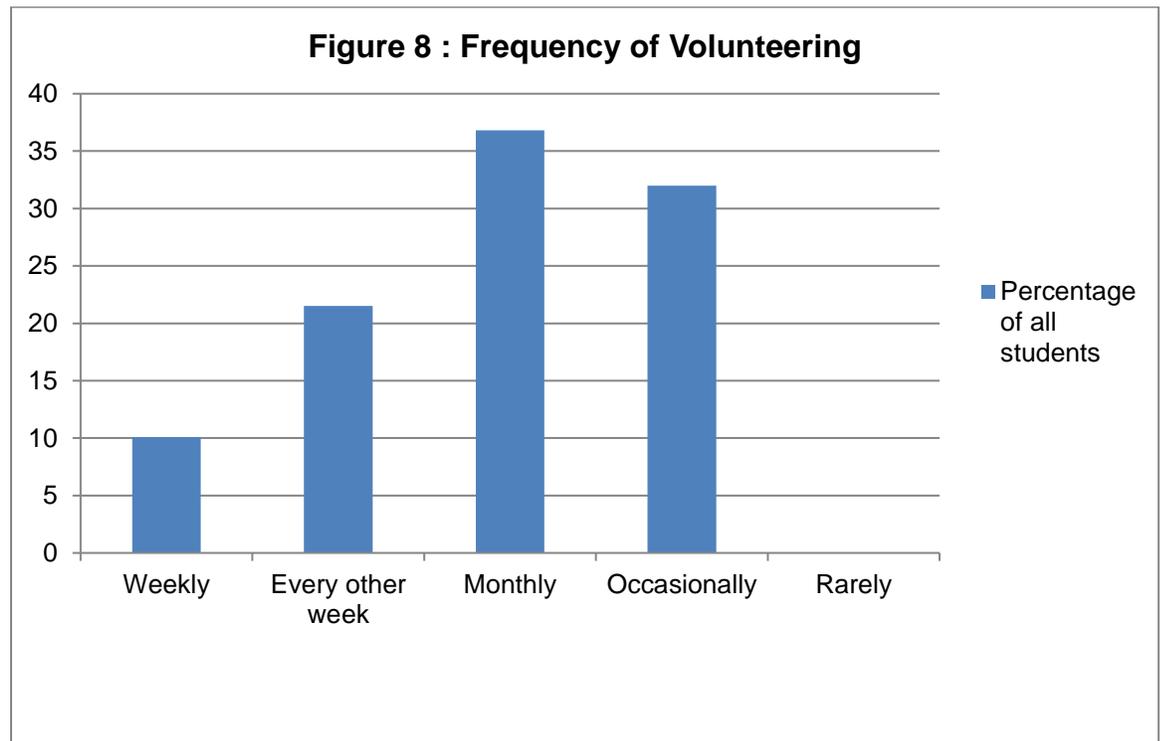
There has not been a distinct variation between male and female volunteers. 80 percent of Female students reported volunteering in the past 12 months as well as 78.6 percent of male students.



## 2. Frequency of Volunteering

Students were asked to indicate how frequently they volunteer. 10.1% of respondents volunteer weekly, 21.5% volunteer every other week, 36.8% volunteer monthly, and 32% volunteer occasionally. Students who volunteer weekly, every other week, or monthly were considered regular volunteers and compromise a total of 68.4 percent of all volunteers. Figure 8 illustrate the findings.

There was no difference in the frequency of volunteering between male and female students. 58 percent of male students were regular volunteers and 59.4 percent of female student were regular volunteers.

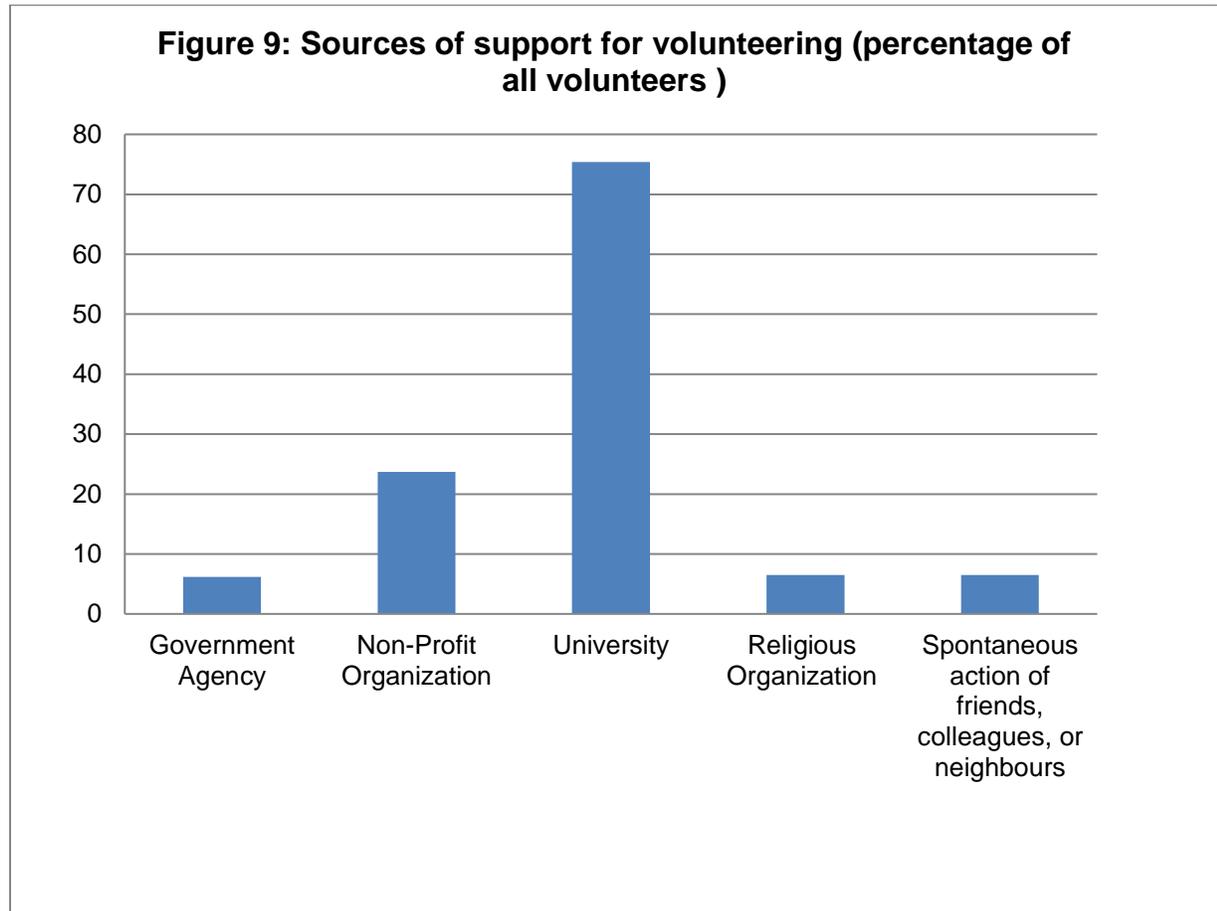


## b. Nature of Student Volunteering

### Sources of support for Student Volunteering

Students were asked to indicate who sponsored their volunteering activity. The choices included government agency, Non-profit organization, religious organization, or a spontaneous action of friends, colleagues or neighbors. 75.4 percent of respondents volunteered through their university, 23.7 percent through non-profit organizations, 6.5 percent volunteered through a religious organization, 6.2 percent volunteered through a

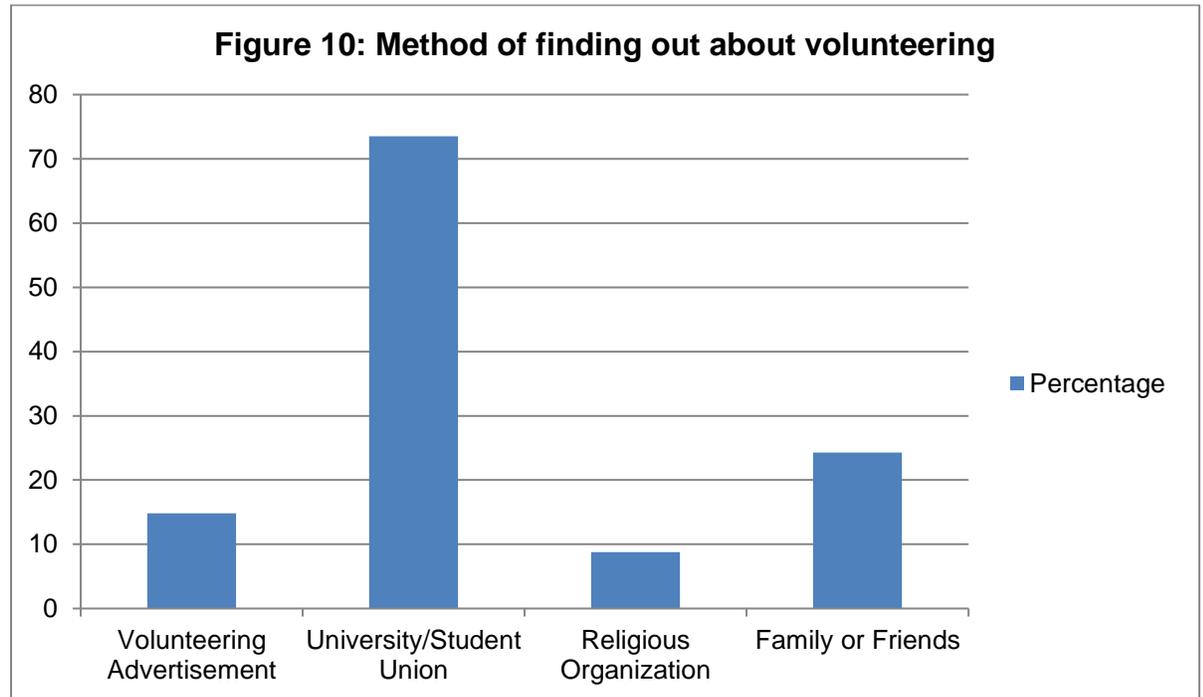
government agency and 6.5 percent indicated their volunteering was a spontaneous action of friends, colleagues or neighbors. Figure 9 illustrates these findings.



#### Method of finding out about volunteering

Students were asked to indicate how they heard about the volunteer service. The choices were student union or university, volunteering advertisement, friend or family, or a religious organization. The routes into volunteering were diverse. 73.5 percent of respondent said they heard about the volunteer service through their student union or

university, 24.3 percent through family and/or friends, 14.8 percent through volunteering advertisement, and 8.8 percent through a religious organization. Figure 10 illustrates these findings.



## 2. Findings associated with the second goal

The second goal of the questionnaire is to identify the motivations and barriers to student volunteering.

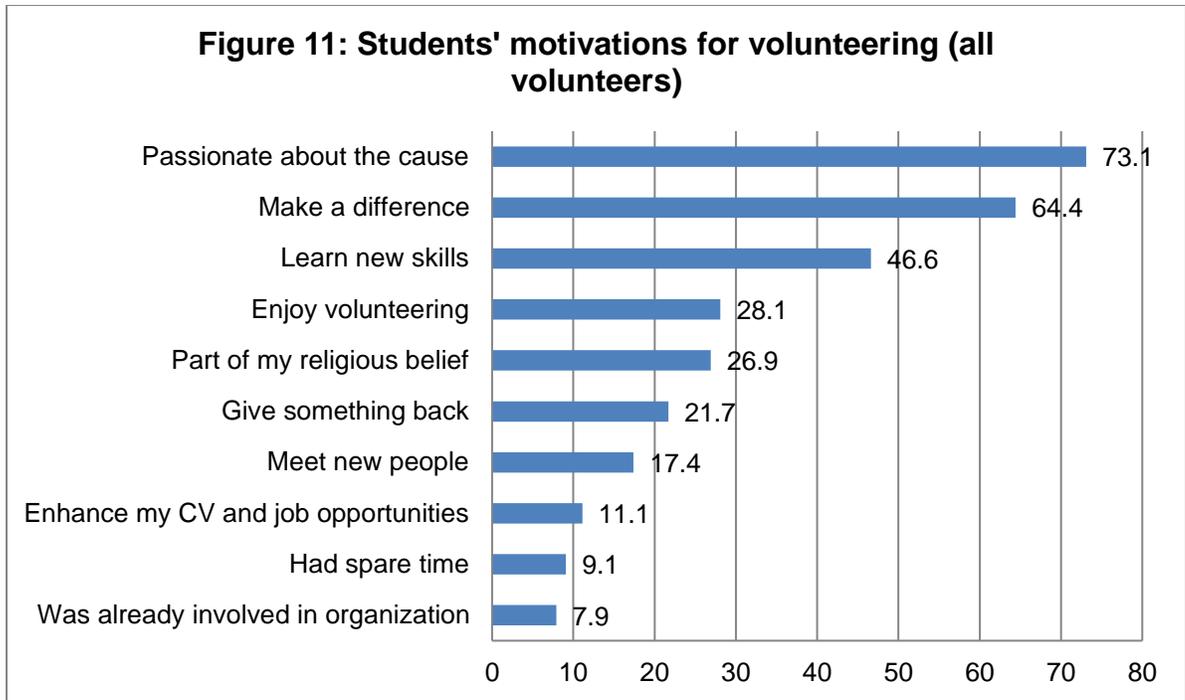
### a. Students' motivations for volunteering

Students were asked to choose from the following motivating factors:

1. To make a difference

2. To learn new skills
3. To enhance my CV and job opportunities
4. To give something back
5. To meet new people/make friends
6. I enjoy volunteering
7. I had spare time
8. Passionate about the cause
9. Part of my religious belief
10. Was already involved with the organization

The survey found that altruistic motivations are most commonly cited as reasons to volunteer: 73.1 percent of students who volunteer are passionate about the cause and 64.4 percent are motivated by a desire to make a difference. Female students were also more likely to cite altruistic motives than male students. Developing new skills is also an important motivator with 46.6 percent citing learning new skills as their main motivating factor to volunteer. The detailed findings are illustrated in Figure 11.

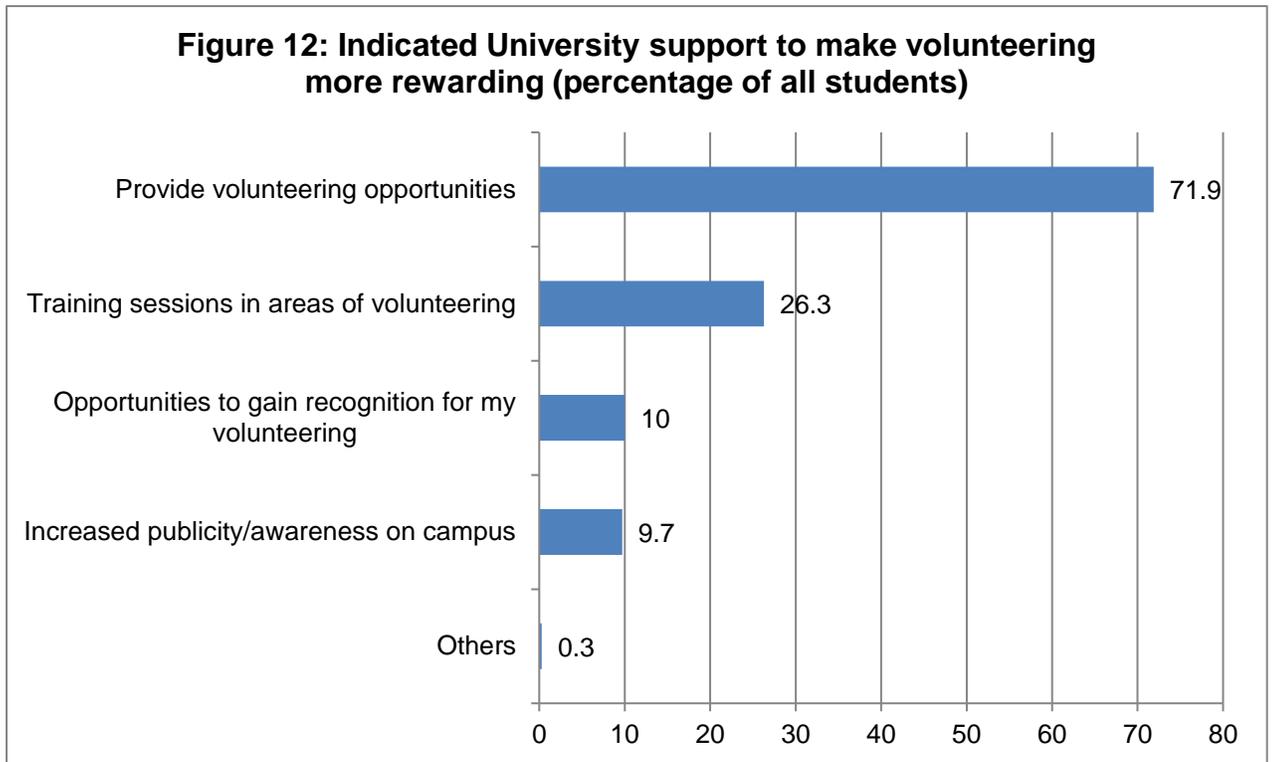


### b. Desired role of Universities

In an attempt to identify other motivating factors, students were asked to indicate how universities can support in making volunteering more rewarding. The choices include provide volunteering opportunities, offer training sessions in areas of volunteering, provide opportunities to gain recognition for volunteering, increase publicity and awareness on campus, provide incentives, or other factors. 71.9 percent of respondents wanted their universities to provide volunteering opportunities 26.3 percent believed universities should offer training sessions in areas of volunteering. Figure 12 illustrate the findings.

Volunteers were more likely to choose factors directly related to the volunteering experience such as providing volunteering opportunities (74.5%) and offer training session in areas of volunteering (28.3%). Non-volunteers were more likely to state factors

directly related to recognition and incentives compared to student volunteers. Also, regular volunteers were more interested in volunteering opportunities (80%) while irregular volunteers stated recognition of their volunteering would motivate them to participate more (50%).



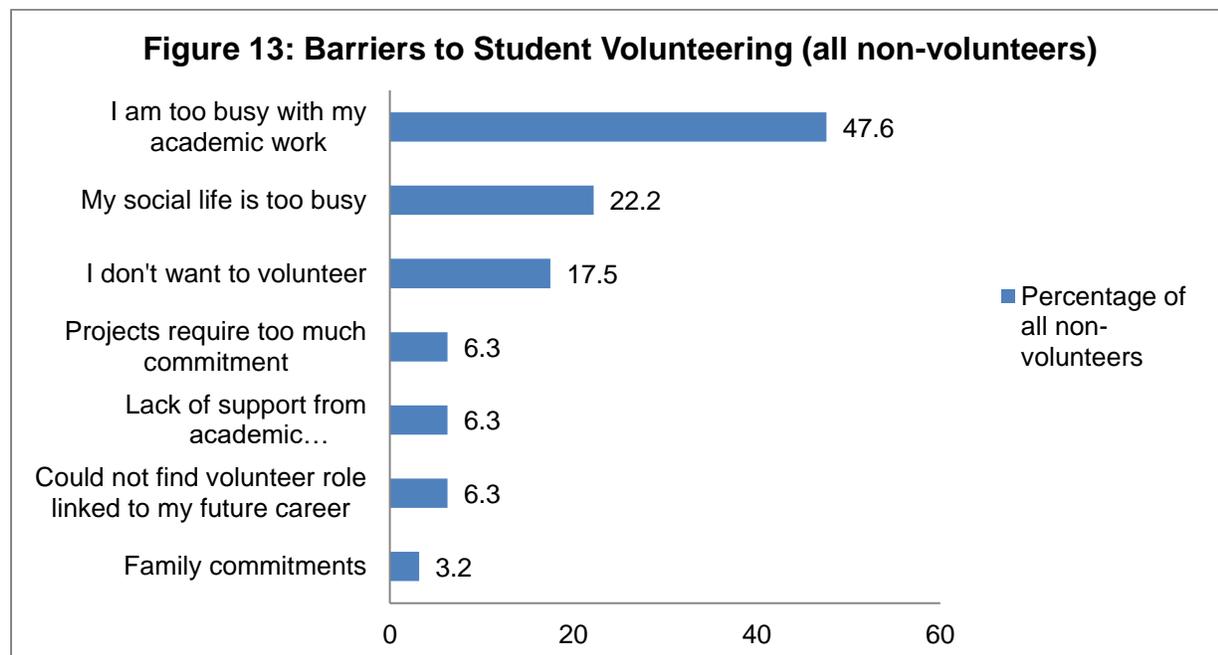
### c. Barriers & Challenges to student volunteering

#### 1. Barriers

Non-volunteers were asked to indicate the reasons for not volunteering. The choices included lack of support from academic department, family commitments, my social life is too busy, projects require too much time, could not find a volunteering role linked to my future career, I am too busy with my academic work, or I don't want to volunteer.

The major barrier to volunteering reported by students is the lack of time because of

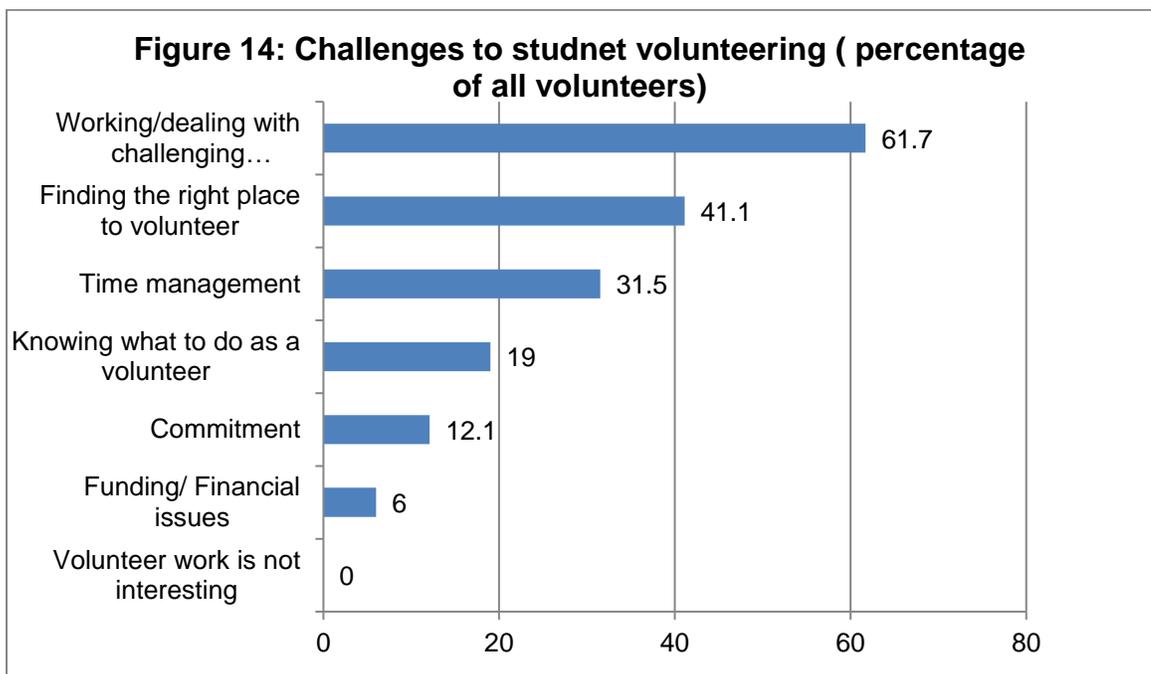
study pressures or social commitments with 47.6 percent reporting being busy with their academic work and 22.2 percent saying their social life is too busy. Female students were more likely to state being busy with academic work (72%) than male students (46%). Respondents attending public universities were more likely to cite academic workload as a barrier than private university students. The reasons students give for not volunteering are highlighted in figure 13 below.



## 2. Challenges

Student volunteers were asked to indicate the most challenging part of their volunteering experience. The choices included knowing what to do as a volunteer, working/dealing with challenging population or people from different backgrounds, finding the right place to volunteer; funding/financial issues, commitment, time management, or volunteer work is not interesting. 61.7 percent of all volunteers stated that dealing with challenging

population or people from a different background was the most challenging aspect of their volunteering experience. 41.1 percent reported that they could not decide on the right place to volunteer. None of the respondents reported that volunteer work is not interesting which reflects that student volunteers tend to enjoy the activities. The challenges volunteers encounter are presented in figure 14.



### 3. Findings associated with the third goal:

The third goal of the questionnaire was to identify the perceived benefits –if any- of student volunteering.

## **a. Perceived benefits from volunteering**

The impact of volunteering on university students was assessed in four distinct areas. The questions evaluate the impact of volunteering on personal development, transferrable skills, future employability, and the social and cultural impacts. The impact was evaluated using a 5 point scale (5 very strong impact to 1 no impact).

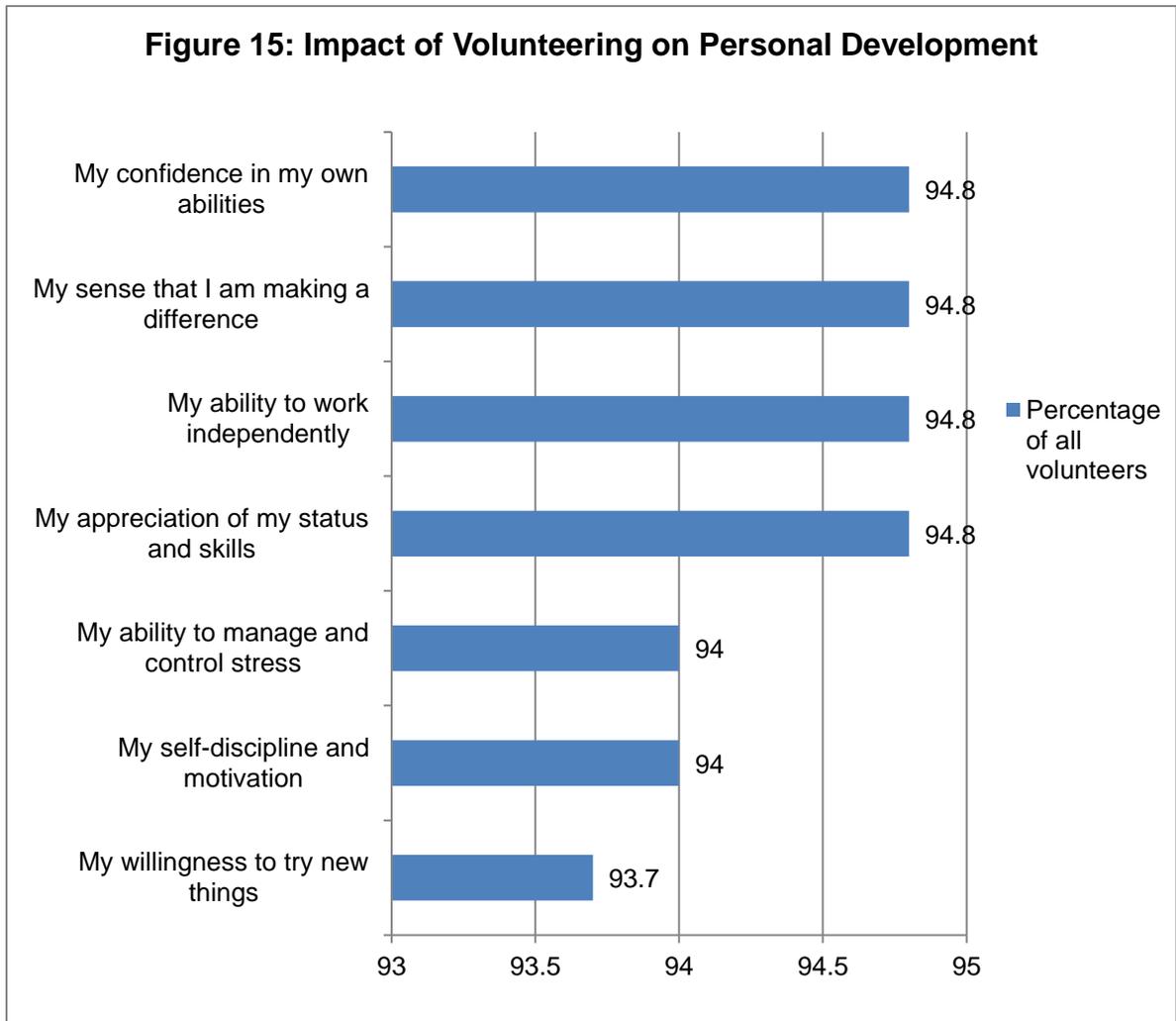
### **1. Impact on Personal Development**

To study the impact on personal development, students were asked to evaluate the impact in relation to seven aspects. Each Student was asked to evaluate the impact of volunteering on the following statements.

1. My confidence in my own abilities
2. My sense that I am making a difference
3. My self-discipline and motivation
4. My ability to work independently
5. My appreciation of my status and skills
6. My ability to manage and control stress
7. My willingness to try new things

More than 93 percent of students have indicated that volunteering strongly impacted the different aspects of their personal development. Students in their first and final years of study were more likely to report an increased impact from student volunteering. 100 percent of respondents in their first and fifth year of study have reported volunteering increased their confidence in their own abilities and their sense of making a difference

compared to an average of 75 percent in other study years. 90 percent of students in their first year of study and 100 percent of students in their fifth year of study reported volunteering improved their self-discipline, motivation, and ability to work independently. Figure 15 illustrate the impact of volunteering on personal development.



## 2. Impact on Transferrable skills

To study the impact on transferrable skills, students were asked to evaluate the impact in relation to seven skills.

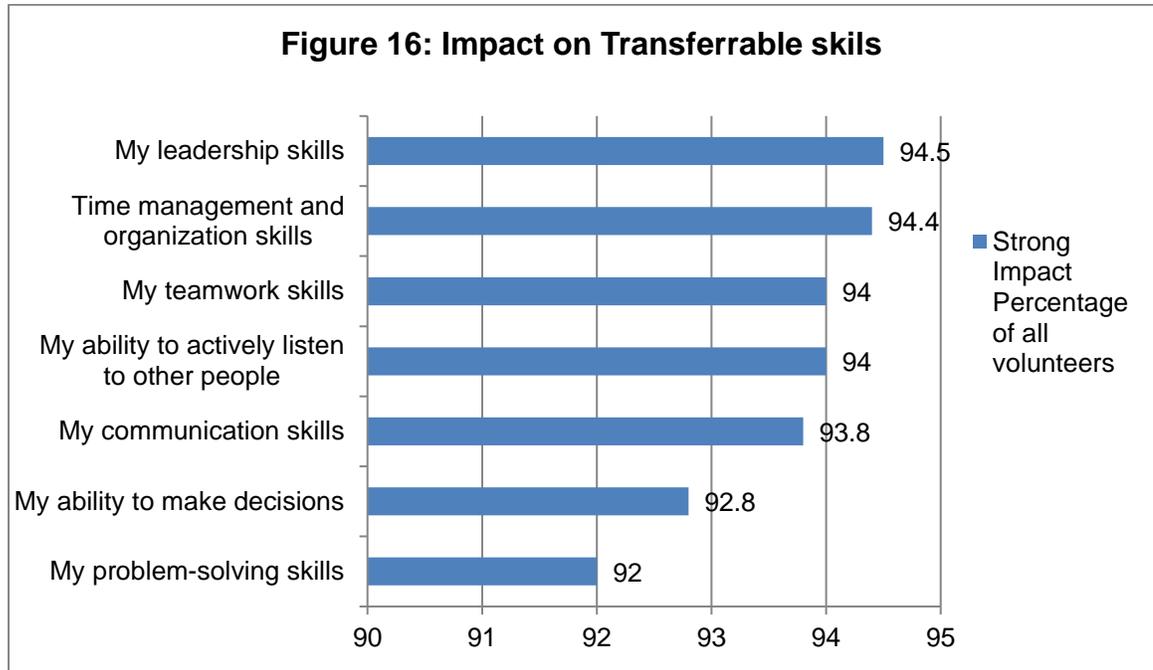
Each Student was asked to evaluate the impact of volunteering on the following skills

1. Communication skills
2. Ability to listen to other people
3. Leadership skills
4. Teamwork skills
5. Time management and organization skills
6. Ability to make decisions
7. Problem-solving skills

Out of all respondents, 94.5 percent indicate that volunteering had a strong impact on their leadership skills, 94.4 percent state volunteering strongly impacted time management, organization, and teamwork skills, 92 percent believe volunteering had a strong impact on their problem-solving skills and improved their ability to make decisions. The impact of volunteering has been indicated at over 90 percent on the different skills evaluated with no statistical significance. Figure 16 illustrates the impact of volunteering on transferable skills.

Students In their final year of study have stated the strongest impact of volunteering on transferrable skills. 100 percent of Students in their fifth year of study reported that volunteering strongly impacted their problem-solving, time management, and teamwork

skills. This is understandable since soft skills tend to be accumulated over time and also because students in their final years had volunteered for the longest time.



### 3. Impact on future employability

To study the impact on future employability, students were asked to evaluate the impact in relation to seven aspects.

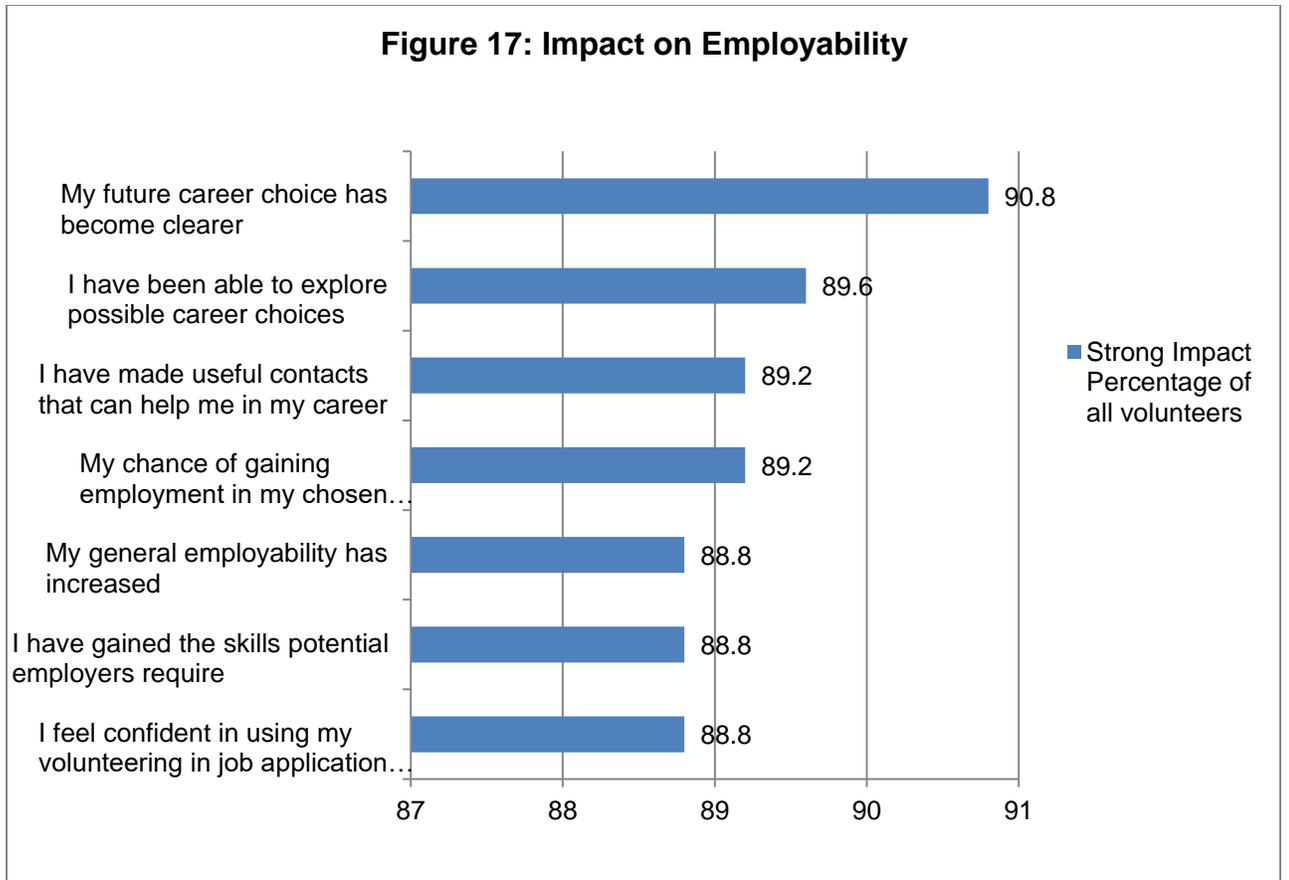
Each Student was asked to evaluate the impact of volunteering on the following statements:

1. I feel confident in using my volunteering in job applications or interviews
2. I have gained the skills potential employers require
3. My general employability has increased
4. My chance of gaining employment in my chosen field has improved
5. I have made useful contacts that can help in my career

6. I have been able to explore possible career choices
7. My future career choice has become clearer

Of all respondents, 90.8 percent state that volunteering made their future career choice clearer, 89.6 percent said they were able to explore possible career choices, 89.2 percent indicate they made useful contacts that can help them in their career and believe volunteering improved their chance of gaining employment in their chosen field. Of all the respondents 88.8 percent believe their general employability has increased. Figure 17 illustrates the impact of volunteering on future employability.

Students in their final year of study have reported the strongest impact of volunteering on their employability skills. 100 percent of respondents in their fifth year of study believed they have gained the skills potential employers require compared to 36.4 percent of student in their first year of study. All respondents in their final year of study also felt confident in using their volunteering in job application and interviews and believe their general employability has increased. Respondents in their final year of study were also more likely to link volunteering to direct career-related benefits like making useful contacts and clarity of future career options. All respondents in their fifth year of study also stated that volunteering allowed them to explore different career choices.



#### 4. Social and Cultural Impacts

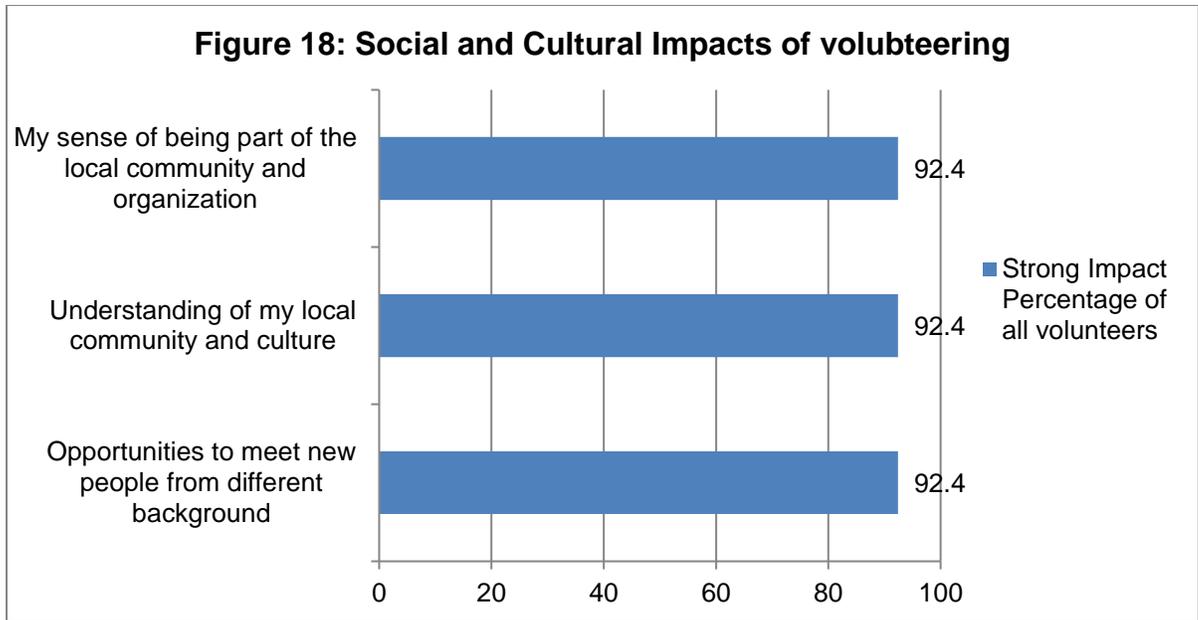
To study the social and cultural impacts of volunteering, students were asked to evaluate the impact in relation to three aspects.

Each Student was asked to evaluate the impact of volunteering on the following statements

1. Opportunities to meet people from different backgrounds
2. Understanding my local community and culture
3. My sense of being part of the local community and organization

Of all respondents, 92.4 percent state volunteering gave them the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds. 92.4 percent say volunteering improved their understanding of their local community and culture and indicate volunteering made them feel part of their local community and organization.

The year of study was directly related to the perceived social and cultural impacts of volunteering. With every additional year of study students reported a stronger impact of volunteering on the understanding of their local community and culture as well as their sense of being part of the community or organization. All respondents in their fifth year of study believed volunteering improved their understanding of their local community and culture compared to 45.5 percent of respondents in their first year and 78 percent of respondents in their third year. All respondents in their fifth year of study indicated that volunteering increase their opportunities to meet new people from different background compared to 68 and 54 percent of respondents in their second and first years of study respectively. Respondents attending private universities have reported a stronger impact of volunteering on understanding their local community and meeting people from different backgrounds. The social and cultural impact of volunteering on students is illustrated in figure 18.



## Second Stage: Questionnaire on Student volunteering and employability.

The questionnaire was sent to human resources directors in several organizations by email. The questionnaire was also circulated through the Human Resources Committee at the American Chamber of Commerce (Amcham) among their committee members. 50 human resources directors answered the questionnaire.

The Following goals are addressed in the first part of this study:

1. Identify the skills required by Egyptian employers
2. Document employers' view on student volunteering and whether it adds to applicants' skills
3. Understand how employers in different fields rate volunteering and which aspect of volunteering they appreciate the most

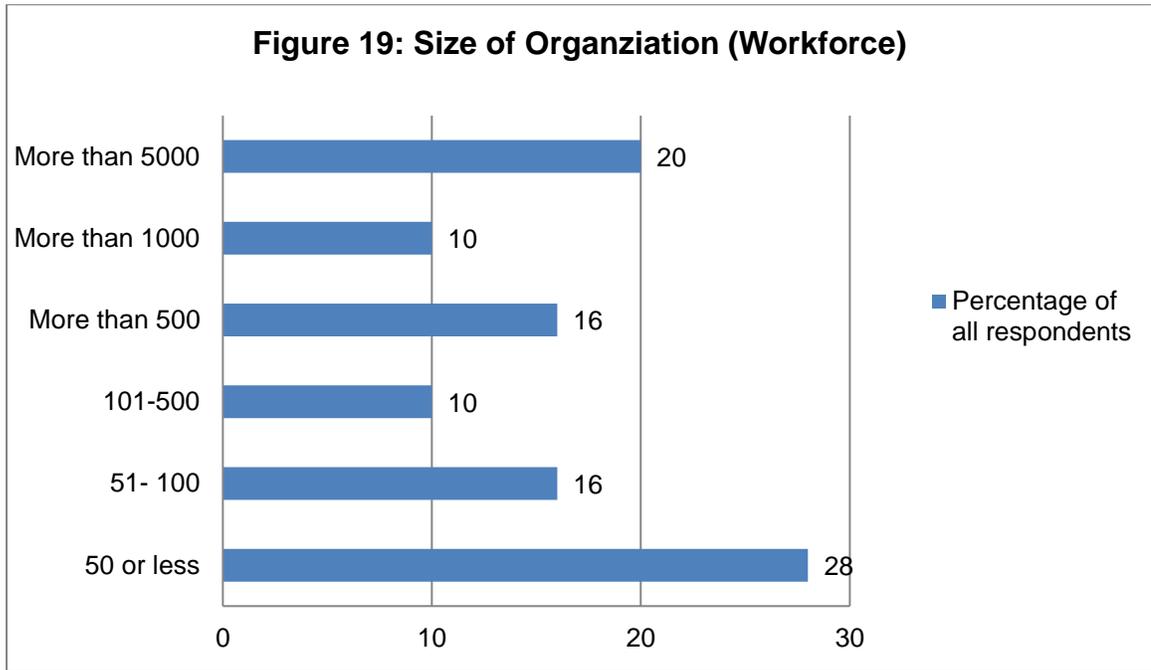
4. Identify the hiring criteria and how volunteering and extracurricular activities rank in it

**Table 4: Profile of survey respondents:**

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
<b>Workforce (No. of employees)</b>		
1. 1-50	14	28
2. 51-100	8	16
3. 101-500	5	10
4. More than 500	8	16
5. More than 1000	5	10
6. More than 5000	10	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	
<b>Sector</b>		
1. Private	43	86
2. Public	7	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	
<b>Fields</b>		
1. Tourism	2	4
2. Development	4	8
3. Education	3	6
4. Business Development	5	10
5. Trading & Manufacturing	10	20
6. Communication	3	6
7. Banking	5	10
8. Construction	15	30
9. Other		
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	

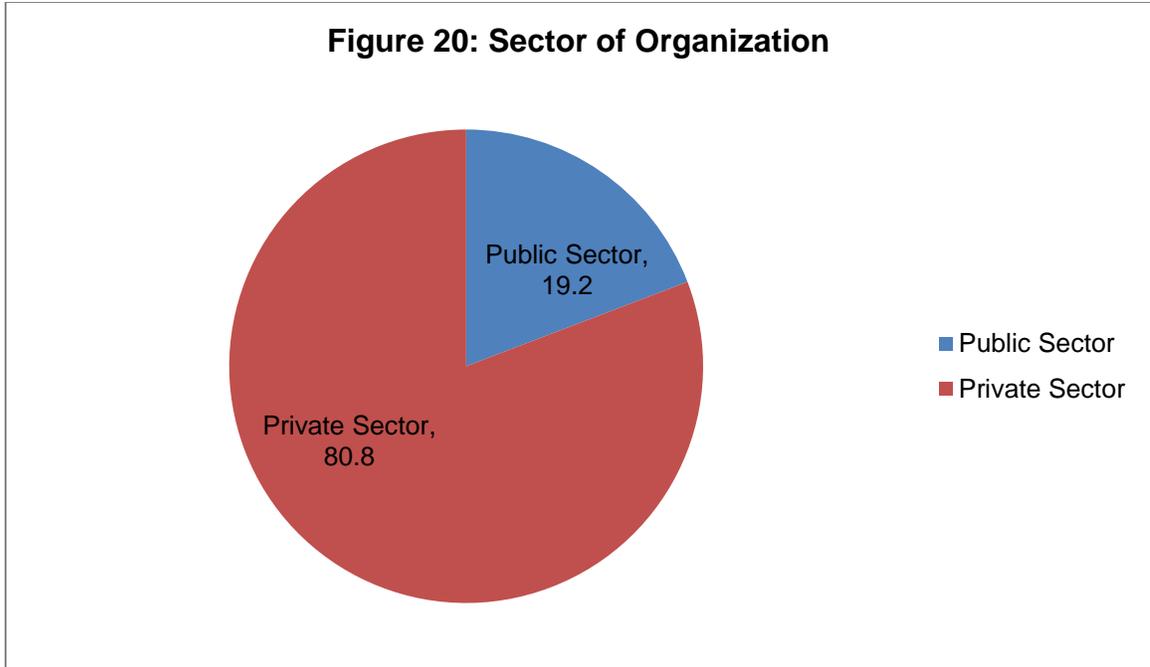
The data in Table 4 shows the following information about the 50 respondents:

1. The workforce was used as an indicator to the size of the organization. The workforce was divided into six categories (1-50, 51-100, 101-500, more than 500, more than 1000, more than 5000). 28 percent of respondents have 1 to 50 employee, 16 percent have 51 to 100 employee, 10 percent have 101 to 500 employee, 16 percent have more than 500, 10 percent have more than 1000 employee, and 20 percent had more than 5000. However, several multinationals indicated the workforce number for the organization at large in all countries.

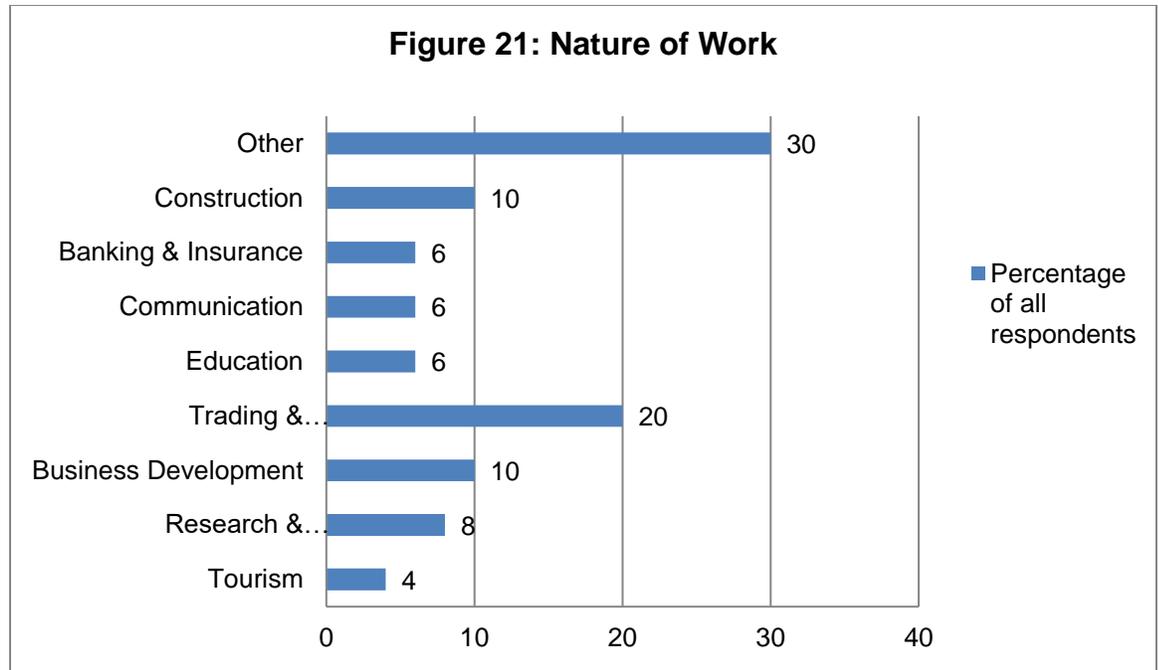


2. 80.8 percent of the respondents are in the private sector and 14 percent of respondents are in the public sector.

**Figure 20: Sector of Organization**



3. The nature of work was identified in the questionnaire. 4 percent of respondents are in the tourism sector, 8 percent in research and development, 6 percent in education, 10 percent in business development, 20 percent in trading and manufacturing, 6 percent in communication, 6 percent in banking and insurance, 10 percent in construction, and 30 percent in other fields of work.



## 1. Findings associated with the first goal

### a. The Main skills demanded by Egyptian employers

Employers were asked to rate different skills according to how important they are in future employees. A list of soft skills was presented based on the literature and the skills were grouped into broader categories as previously stated. The categories are:

1. Communication skills
2. Analytical & research skills
3. Computer Literacy
4. Teamwork
5. Reasoning & creativity
6. Flexibility
7. Time management
8. Leadership

9. Self-awareness (of achievements, strength & weaknesses)

10. Planning & organization

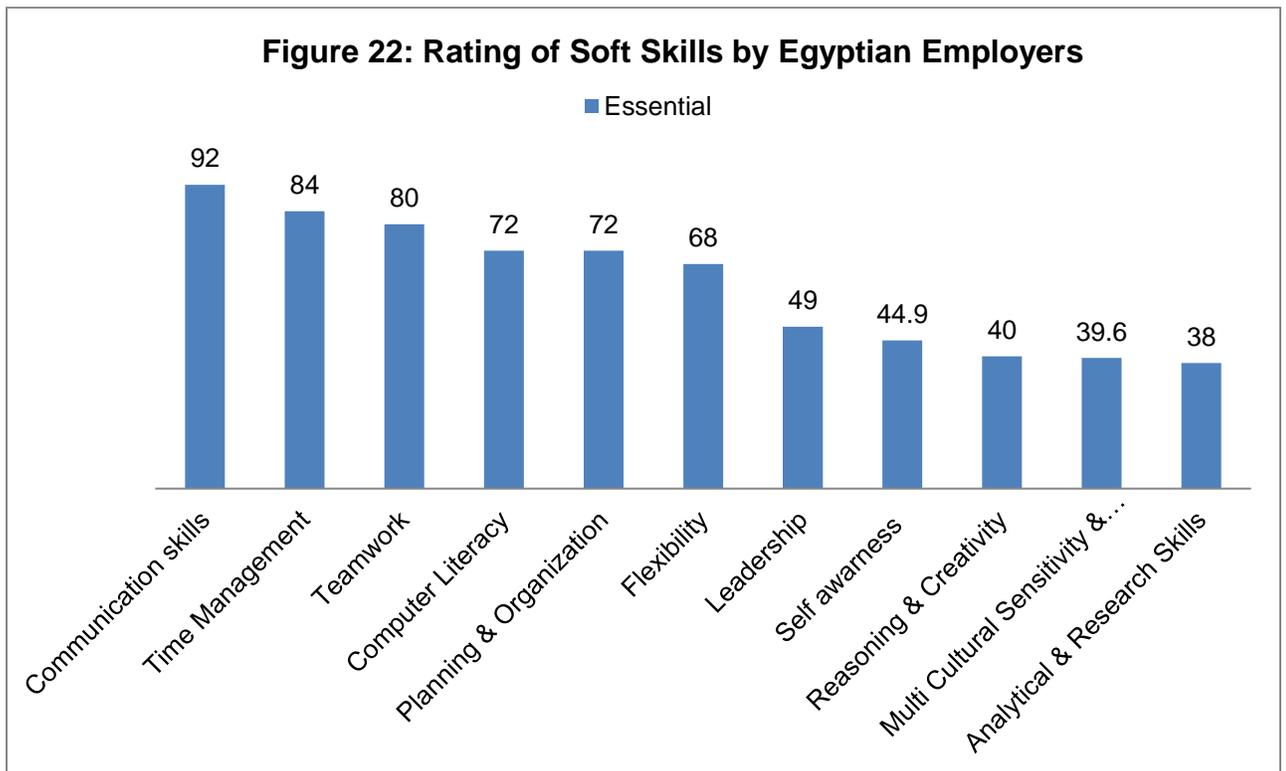
11. Multi-cultural sensitivity & awareness

Of all employers, 92 percent indicate communication skills is essential, 84 state time management and organization skills are essential and 80 percent say teamwork is essential. According to their input; employers have ranked the indicated soft skills as follows. The most important skills would be communication skills, time management, teamwork, computer literacy, planning & organization, flexibility, leadership & management, self awareness (of achievements, strengths, & weaknesses), reasoning & creativity, analytical and research skills, and finally multicultural sensitivity and awareness. These findings are stated in Table 5 and illustrated in Figure 22.

Table 5: Rating of soft skills by employers

<b>Skill / Rating</b>	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Not Essential</b>
<b>Communication Skills</b>	92%	8%
<b>Analytical &amp; Research</b>	38%	62%
<b>Computer Literacy</b>	72%	28%
<b>Teamwork</b>	80%	20%
<b>Reasoning &amp; Creativity</b>	40%	60%
<b>Flexibility</b>	68%	32%
<b>Time Management</b>	84%	16%
<b>Leadership</b>	49%	51%

<b>Self awareness</b>	44.9%	55.1%
<b>Planning &amp; Organization</b>	72%	28%
<b>Multi Cultural sensitivity &amp; awareness</b>	39.6%	60.4%



## 2. Findings associated with the second goal

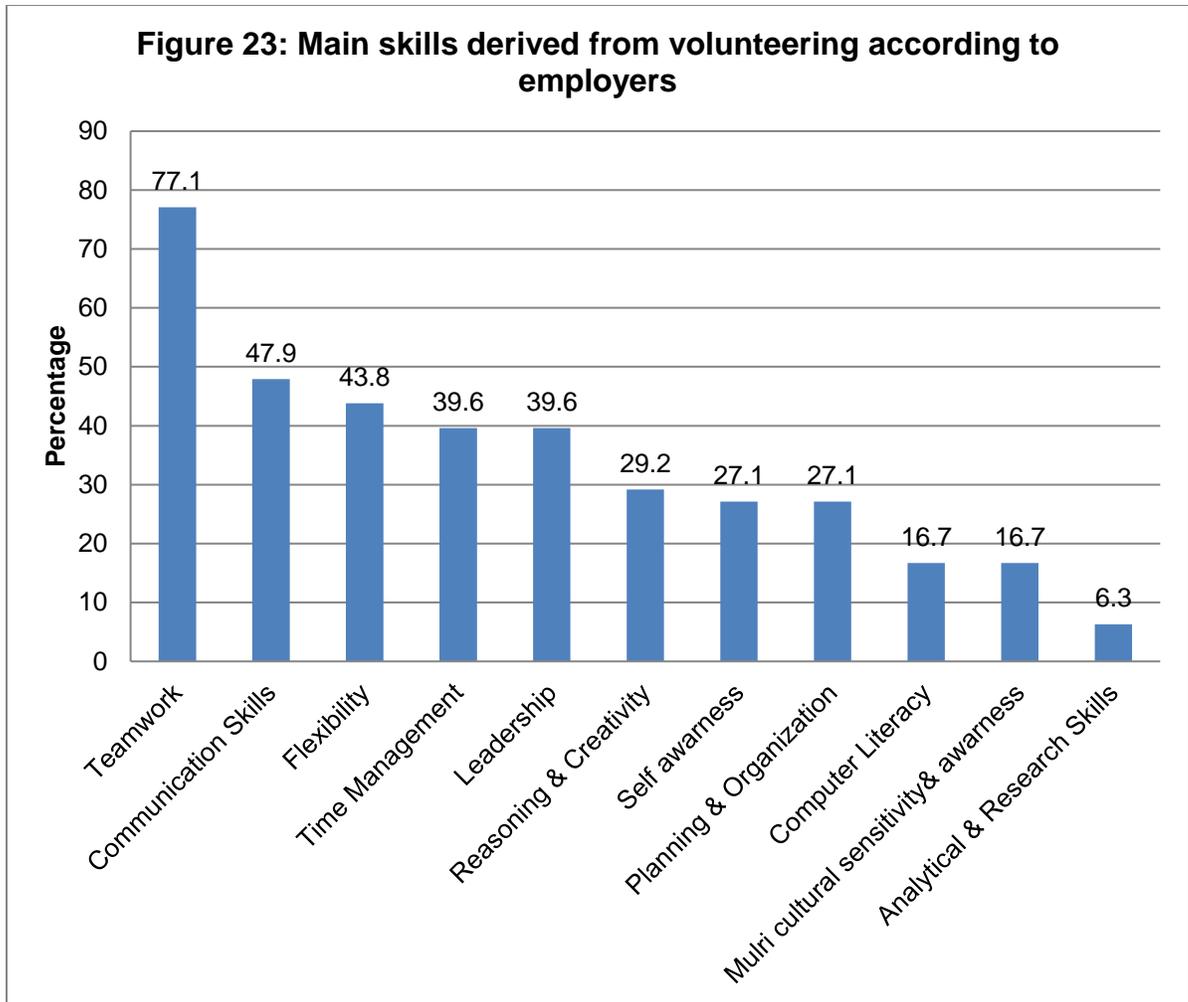
### a. Skills evaluation for public university graduates

Employers were asked if they agree that public university graduates have the required skills to fit into the workplace. 50% of employers said they strongly agree, 18.8% agreed, 16.7% were neutral, and 16.7% disagreed. Employers in the public sector cited better

evaluation of students' skills. 80 percent of employers in the public sector strongly agree students have the required skills to fit into the work place compared to 48 percent of private sector employers.

#### **b. Skills derived from volunteering**

Employers were also asked if they have found students with volunteering experience to be better in any of the identified skills. The same list of soft skills was presented to ensure accuracy and ease of analysis. Human resources directors in the sample have determined teamwork, communication skills, and flexibility & adaptability as the top skills derived from volunteering. Most employers indicated that volunteering had a limited effect on analytical & research skills, computer literacy, and reasoning and creativity. The findings are illustrated in figure 23.



### 3. Findings associated with the third goal

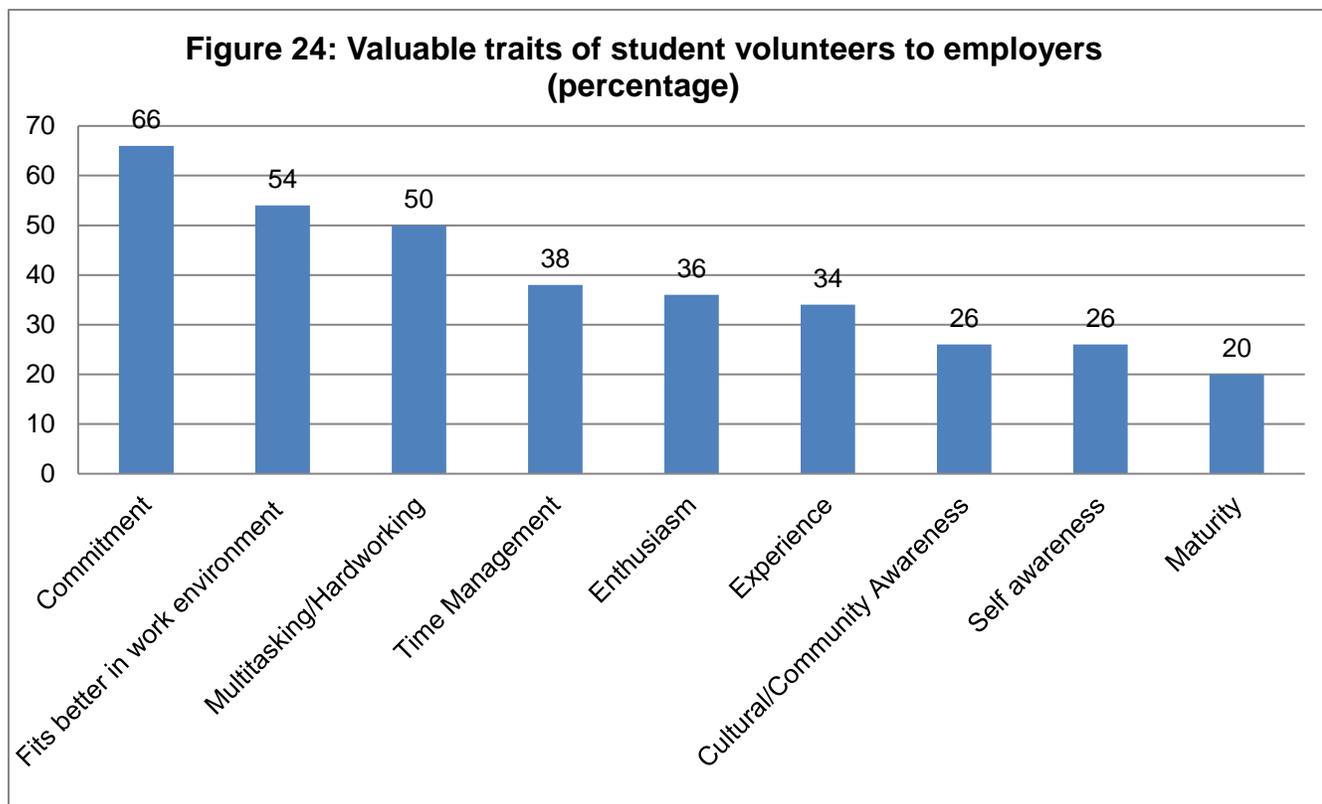
#### a. Volunteering and Employability

Employers were asked if they prefer to employ students with volunteering experience. 48% of employers indicated that they prefer to hire students with volunteering experience, 50% of employers were neutral, and 2% of employers said that student volunteering does not necessarily affect their decision. The percentages are slightly different when each sector is analyzed independently. In the private sector, 53.3% of employers' prefer to hire students with volunteering experience, 2.3% don't, and 44.2%

were neutral. In the public sector, 16.7% of employers prefer to hire students with volunteering experience and 83.3% were neutral. This indicates that volunteering experience has more value to employers in the private sector compared to employers in the public sector. I believe this is essentially a result of the differences in the hiring procedures in both sector and the red tape of the public sector.

### b. Valuable aspects of volunteering

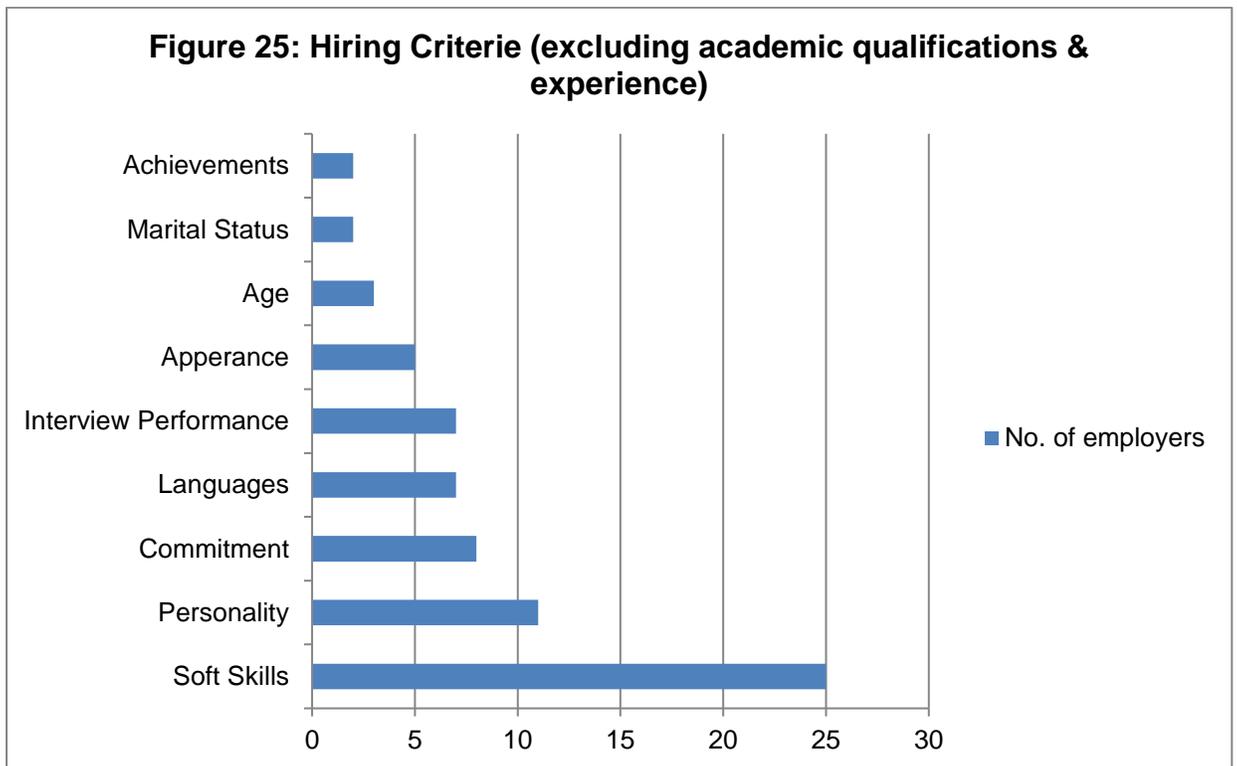
Employers were asked to choose the parts of student volunteering they value the most. 66 percent of employers indicated that they value the commitment associated with student volunteering and 54 percent of employers said that student volunteers fit better into the work environment. 50 percent of employers believe student volunteers are better at multitasking & are hardworking. Detailed findings are illustrated in figure 24.



## 4. Findings associated with the Fourth Goal

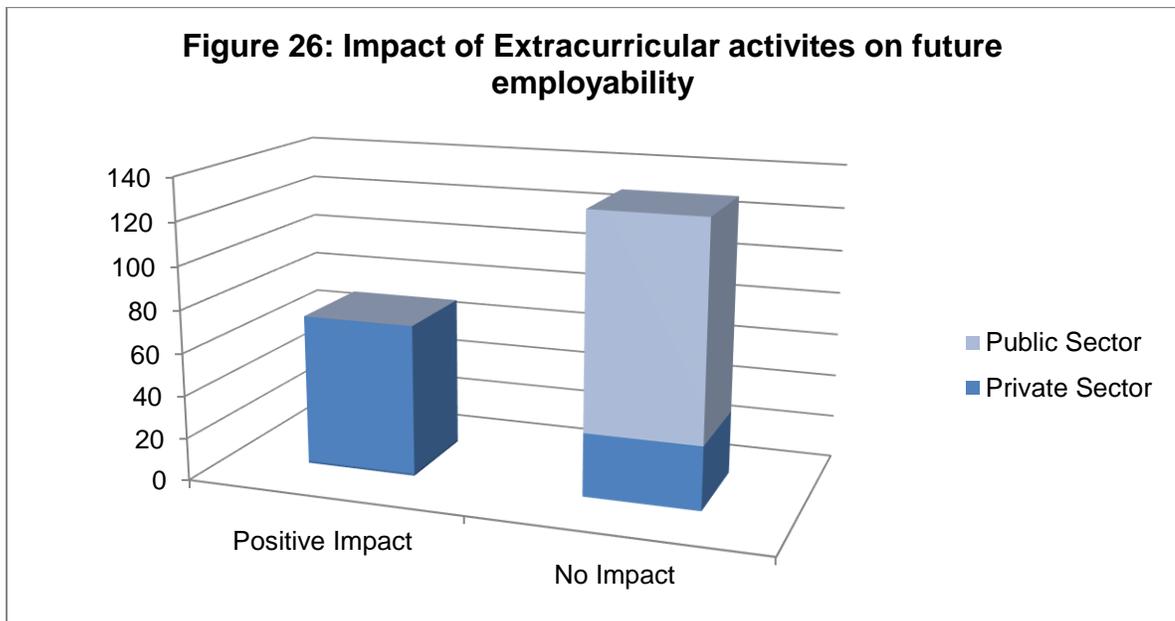
### a. Hiring Criteria

Employers were asked to identify the factors that influence the hiring decision besides education & experience. Several factors were identified including soft skills, interview performance, personality traits, commitment, languages, achievements, appearance, marital status, and age. Most employers indicated that the applicants' competencies and fit to the job is even more important than education and experience. 50 percent of employers indicated soft skills is an important factor in their hiring decision. The findings are illustrated in Figure 25.



## b. Extracurricular activities and employability

Employers were asked if they prefer to employ candidates with more extracurricular activities. 64.3 percent of employers said that when choosing between two candidates with similar qualifications; they would rather employ the one with more extracurricular activities. 35.7 percent of employers said they won't necessarily hire the candidate with more extracurricular activities. The figures change when we consider public & private sectors independently. In the private sector, 70.3 percent of employers said they would rather employ the candidate with more extracurricular activities. In the public sector, 100 percent of respondents said they won't necessarily hire the candidate with more extracurricular activities. This is essentially linked to the differences in the hiring procedures in both the private and public sectors. Figure 26 illustrates these findings.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was divided into two stages: the first stage was an attempt to define the scope and nature of student volunteering in Egypt and identify the motives, barriers and perceived benefits of student volunteering. The second stage identified the skills most demanded by Egyptian employers and whether volunteering improves the skills and employability of university graduates. The hiring process was examined and the importance of volunteering identified. The aspects of volunteering most valued by employers were also examined.

#### A. Goals of the First stage:

1. Define the scope and nature of volunteering among university students
2. Compile a list of motives and barriers to student volunteering
3. Document the perceived benefits -if any- from volunteering by students

#### Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

**The rate of student volunteering maybe underrated** - The scope of student volunteering in Egypt maybe underestimated. In the sample, 79.3 percent of respondents have cited they volunteered sometime over the past 12 months. Even though the sample was only limited to Greater Cairo; it maybe an indication that the actual volunteering rate may be more than the documented 2.2 percent. The difference could also be attributed to the January revolution that surged volunteering rates in Egypt. Whether the surge in volunteerism post the revolution is a short-term spike will take some time before it can be

evaluated. It is true however that the number of frequent or regular volunteers is relatively limited compared to the total number of volunteers. In the sample, 68.4 percent of the respondents volunteer at least monthly.

**Student unions play a key role in extending volunteering opportunities** - The role of universities and academic institutions in encouraging volunteering is underestimated. Of the respondents, 75.4 percent have volunteered through their university compared to 23.7 percent who volunteered through an NGO. However, most of the university led volunteering, has been done through clubs or student groups rather than an initiative from the institution. Of respondents, 73.5 percent also indicated that they first heard about the volunteer service through their student union/ or university. The findings indicate that student unions at the university level play an important role in encouraging and linking students to volunteering opportunities.

**Underutilized capacities** – The literature reviewed indicated that most student volunteers are motivated by altruistic motives (Brewis, et. al., 2010). The findings of this study also support this finding. In the survey altruistic motivations were most commonly indicated as reasons to volunteer: 73.1 percent of students who volunteer are passionate about the cause they volunteer to and 64.4 percent volunteer to make a difference. Skills development is also an important motivating factor as indicated by 46.6 percent. Most students have indicated that they would be more willing to volunteer through their universities (71.9%). Several students highlighted the importance of training sessions in areas of volunteering (26.3%) so they are more aware of their role as volunteers and the challenges they may encounter. The fact that most students have freely chosen to volunteer reflect an important aspect about the nature and capacities of the students. It

also implies that there is an important potential among students that can be utilized to benefit the students, academic institutions, and local communities.

**Study Life Balance** - Most of the non-volunteers sample has indicated that being too busy with their academic work is the main barrier to volunteering which is synonymous with findings of other studies that indicated lack of time as a result of study pressures, paid work, or family commitments is the main barrier to volunteering (Ellis, 2004). In the sample, female students and students attending public universities were more likely to cite study commitments as the main barrier. This may imply that the system at private universities allows students more time to participate in different activities or the study load at public universities is demanding. It is important that curriculum and courses be designed in a way that enable students to put enough effort into their academic work while taking the time to enjoy the different social and cultural aspects of being a student.

**Volunteers need adequate training and guidance** - The main challenges identified by student volunteers were working or dealing with challenging population and people from different backgrounds (61.7%) and finding the right place to volunteer (41.1%). To increase formal volunteering and the benefits to the different partners, adequate training should be given to volunteers either by their academic institutions or the organizations at which they choose to volunteer. Training will ensure that students are more capable to extend support to their local communities and are confident of their accomplishments.

**Volunteering has a positive impact on personal development; transferrable skills, employability and social and cultural understanding-** More than 90 percent of the students have indicated that volunteering strongly impacted their personal development,

skills attainment, future employability, and their understanding of their community. Students in their first and final years of study reported the strongest impact of volunteering on their personal development. Students in their final year of study also reported the strongest impact on the level of skills attainment, employability, and social and cultural understanding. This is understandable as skills and understanding tend to be accumulated over time and this would increase with every additional year of practice. The benefits identified by student volunteers indicate that indeed volunteering can complement their learning and enrich their university experience. It also implies that volunteering based on their perception makes them more equipped to the workplace.

## **B. Goals of the second stage**

1. Identify the skills required by Egyptian employers
2. Document employers' view on student volunteering and whether it adds to applicants' skills.
3. Understand how employers in different fields rate volunteering and which aspect of volunteering they appreciate the most
4. Identify the hiring criteria and how volunteering and extracurricular activities rank in it.

**Skills required by Egyptian employers-** the survey has identified the top skills demanded by Egyptian employers as communications skills, time management, teamwork, computer literacy, Planning and organization and flexibility. Academic institutions should ensure graduates are competent at those skills to improve students' employability.

**Employers mostly believe graduates have adequate skills to fit into the workplace but there is room for improvement-** Most employers agreed to some extent that university graduates have the required skills to fit into the workplace. However, many stated that further training would better equip students to the work environment. Private sector employers stated a lower level of competence than public sector employers. The skills demanded by each sector should be studied in detail and curriculum and course design should be adapted to integrate the identified skills.

**Volunteering equip students with the skills demanded by employers –** Human resources directors reflected on their experience and stated that student volunteers have proved to possess better skills. Specifically, students with volunteering experience have better communication, teamwork, flexibility and adaptability skills. The findings are synonymous with the skills stated earlier as essential to employers. Out of the top five skills demanded by Egyptian employers, volunteering has been found to improve competence at the three top skills namely communication, teamwork and flexibility. The findings are also in line with the literature reviewed in which communication, leadership, and teamwork skills were identified as top skills derived from volunteering and at the same time highlighted by employers as essential to the workplace (Owen, 2009).

**Private sector Employers prefer to hire candidates with extracurricular activities-** 70 percent of human resources directors in the private sector stated that when choosing between two candidates with similar qualifications; they would rather employ the one with more extracurricular activities. Also, 48 percent of employers indicated that they would prefer to hire candidates with volunteering experience. The different extracurricular activities at the university level need to be examined to indicate the ones

most valued by employers. They higher value to extracurricular activities indicates that employers prefer activities performed as part of a formal organization. This could be because formal activities can be analyzed and benefits assessed.

**Public sector employers are indifferent with regards to extracurricular activities -**

All respondents from the public sector indicated that they won't necessarily hire a candidate with more extracurricular activity. The findings do not indicate much about the true value of volunteering and extracurricular activities to employers in the public sector; as much as it points out to the centralization of the public sector itself. As a result, the private sector is more reflective to the true demands of employers in Egypt.

**Volunteering improves a candidates' image to employers-**

Several studies have identified the positive relation between volunteering and future employability (Smith, et. al. (2009), Hirst (2000), Astin et. al. (1998), Braime et. al. (2011, Brewis et. al. (2010)). In the survey, human resources directors (66 percent) stated that volunteering experience indicates a candidate has a higher level of commitment and is hardworking. Also, 50 percent indicated that students with volunteering experience fit better into the workplace. This indicates that employers generally value volunteering and it improves the candidates' image.

**Further Research** – the research has highlighted several areas for further research, specifically:

The study findings indicate that students need training and support from their academic institution to increase and promote volunteerism. The ways in which universities and NGOs can best address that need to be further examined.

Student volunteers believe that volunteering has a huge impact on their employability and future career choice. The extent to which this is truly reflected in the workplace needs be examined on a wider scale.

The benefits and impact of volunteering on the long-term for example; the impact student volunteering has on community development, need to be further examined. A longitudinal study needs to be conducted on a national level to attain that goal.

Further study on volunteerism as social capital and the comparative impact it has on a national level.

### **Final Recommendations**

- Establishing means to increase formal volunteering among university students would improve skills attainments and future employability. Universities can establish linkages and develop partnerships with NGOs in relevant fields to the students' area of study; to encourage students to explore different career options and good practice among their institutions.
- Universities can establish volunteer training centers to increase the benefits of volunteering to students and be able to document and assess the advantages. Trainers can be volunteers from the faculty members and affiliated NGOs to improve the understating of local communities and increase the benefits to the students'. Best practices from other countries can be used as models to the reform process.
- Increase the number of active Youth NGOs in Egypt to provide adequate civic participation outlets for student volunteers. NGOs in general, and youth NGOs in

particular, should be given adequate attention and support to extend their services to the communities and ensure efficiency.

- The study highlighted several best practices at international universities that encouraged student volunteering and/or institutionalized service-learning. The detailed approaches and models should be further examined to determine the best models that fit the Egyptian context.
- A study on the exact role of student unions and the opportunities they offer to the student body would reflect on an important part of the indirect benefits of the educational process. Also, the reasons why many students are willing to volunteer or have previously volunteered but do not continue into the activity needs to be further examined. The different examples reviewed from international universities highlight the important role student unions play in promoting volunteering opportunities to the student body.
- The skills demanded by employers should be constantly studied and updated to ensure graduates have the required skills to fit into the workplace and are placed according to their specializations. Curriculums and courses should be designed to incorporate those needs and ensure graduates have the right balance of education and training to prepare them to the workplace.
- Many employers have indicated they would prefer to hire candidates with volunteering experience and/or extracurricular activities. The benefits of both should be examined in detail on a national level to enhance efforts to increase volunteering and extracurricular activities among Egyptian universities.

- The findings of the study and the literature reviewed indicated that some employers believe volunteering equip students with valuable experience that help them fit better into the workplace. The extent to which student volunteering can be a substitute to internships or job training needs to be further examined.

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## APPENDIX I

### Student Volunteering Benefits, Barriers, and Motives Questionnaire For Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Thank you for your willingness to answer this questionnaire which focuses on the perceived benefits, barriers, and motives of student volunteering. The information you provide in this questionnaire will be reported in my study that will be available at the American University in Cairo. The main goal of this study is to identify the main benefits of student volunteering and whether it improves future employability. The data collected from this questionnaire will help identify if student volunteering improves skills and future employability and should be part of higher education reform efforts. Your answers are confidential and your personal information will not be displayed in any part of the study. The whole questionnaire should take about 20 minutes to complete. I appreciate your participation and valuable input. If you have any comments or concerns, please state them at the end of the questionnaire.

#### Part 1: Profile of Survey Respondents

1. How old are you?
  - a. 16-17
  - b. 18-19
  - c. 20-21
  - d. 22-23
  - e. 23-30
  - f. Over 30
  
2. Gender: (Male/Female)
  
3. What Institution do you attend?
  - a. Public University
  - b. Private University
  - c. Higher Institutes
  - d. Private Higher Institutes
  
4. What faculty do you study in?
  
5. What is your undergraduate course year?
  - a. First Year
  - b. Second Year
  - c. Third Year

- d. Fourth Year
  - e. Fifth Year
  - f. Sixth Year
  - g. Graduate
6. In the past 12 months have you given unpaid help to any groups, clubs, organizations, or individuals? (Yes/No)
7. Who sponsored your volunteering activity? (Mark all that apply)
- a. Government Agency
  - b. Non-profit organization
  - c. University
  - d. Religious Organization
  - e. Spontaneous action of friends, colleagues, neighbors.
  - f. Other, Please Specify .....
8. How regularly do you volunteer?
- a. Weekly
  - b. Every other week
  - c. Monthly
  - d. Occasionally
  - e. Rarely
9. Where did you hear about your volunteer service?
- a. Student Union / University
  - b. Volunteering advertisement (poster/website/newsletter)
  - c. Friends or family
  - d. Religious Organization
  - e. Other, Please Specify .....
10. Why did you volunteer? (Mark all that apply)
- a. To make a difference
  - b. To learn new skills
  - c. To enhance my CV and job opportunities
  - d. To give something back
  - e. To meet new people/ make friends
  - f. I enjoy volunteering
  - g. I had spare time
  - h. Passionate about the cause
  - i. Part of my religious belief

- j. Was already involved in organization

## Part 2: Impact of Volunteering

Using the 5 point scale (1 strongly impact to 5 no impact) please indicate how strongly volunteering has impacted each of the following skills. Record your answer in the space next to each item.

<b>Personal Development</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
My confidence in my own abilities					
My sense that I am making a difference					
My self-discipline and motivation					
My ability to work independently					
My appreciation of my status and skills					
My ability to manage and control stress					
My willingness to try new things					
<b>Transferrable skills</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
My communication skills					
My ability to actively listen to other people					
My leadership skills					
My teamwork skills					
Time management and organization skills					
My ability to make decisions					
My problem-solving skills					
<b>Employability</b>					
I feel confident in using my volunteering in job applications or interviews					
I have gained the skills potential employers require					
My general employability has increased					
My chance of gaining employment in my chosen field has improved					
I have made useful contacts that can help in my career					
I have been able to explore possible career choices					
My future career choice has become clearer					
<b>Social and Cultural Impacts</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Opportunities to meet people from different backgrounds					
Understanding my local community and culture					
My sense of being part of the local community and organization					

## Part three: Challenges

**What has been the most challenging part of your volunteering?**

- a. Time management
- b. Working/ dealing with challenging population or people from different background
- c. Commitment
- d. Funding/ financial issues
- e. Finding the right place to volunteer
- f. Knowing what to do as a volunteer
- g. Volunteer work is not interesting

**Which of these factors have prevented you from volunteering?**

- a. I am too busy with my academic work
- b. Could not find volunteer role linked to my future career
- c. Projects require too much commitment
- d. My social life is too busy
- e. Family commitments
- f. Lack of support from academic department/Institution
- g. I don't want to volunteer

**How could your university support in making volunteering more rewarding?**

- a. Provide volunteering opportunities
- b. Training sessions in areas of volunteering
- c. Opportunities to gain recognition for my volunteering
- d. Increased publicity/awareness on campus
- e. Incentives
- f. Other (please specify) .....

**With enough incentives, how frequently will you volunteer?**

- 1. 1 hour per day
- 2. 1 hours per week
- 3. 1 hour per month
- 4. 1 hour per 3 months
- 5. 1 hours per year

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. Questions in this survey have been adapted from Braime, J., & Minna Ruohonen. (2011) Exploring Impacts of Volunteering on University Students in London.

## APPENDIX II

### Questionnaire on Student Volunteering and Employability

Thank you for your willingness to answer these questions, which focus on your experience as Human Resources Director. The information you provide me will be reported in a study that will be available at the American University in Cairo. The main goal of this study is to investigate the main benefits of student volunteering and whether it improves future employability. The data collected will help identify whether study volunteering improves skills and future employability and should be part of higher education reform efforts. Your answers are confidential and your personal information will not be displayed in any part of the study. The questionnaire should take about 10 minutes. I appreciate your participation and valuable input. If you have any comments or concerns, please state them at the end of the questionnaire.

1. Name of organization:
2. Workforce (No. of employees):
3. Sector: Private / Public
4. Nature of work:
  
5. Do Public University graduates have the required skills to fit into the workplace?
  1. Strongly agree
  2. Agree
  3. Neutral
  4. Disagree
  5. Strongly disagree
  
6. Apart from academic qualifications and experience, what other factors influence your hiring decision?
  
7. When choosing between two applicants with similar qualifications, will you rather employ the candidate with more extracurricular activities?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not necessarily, please explain.
  
8. Please rank the following skills according to how important they are in a potential employee:

Skill	Essential	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important
Communication Skills (written & verbal)					
Analytical & Research Skills					
Computer Literacy					
Teamwork					
Reasoning and creativity					
Flexibility & Adaptability					
Time Management					
Leadership & Management					
Self awareness ( achievements, strengths, & weaknesses)					
Planning & organizing					
Multicultural sensitivity & awareness					

9. From your experience, have you found students with volunteering experience to be better in any of the following? (Mark all that apply)

- Communication skills (verbal & written)
- Analytical & Research skills
- Computer Literacy
- Teamwork (work effectively within a group)
- Multicultural sensitivity & awareness
- Flexibility & Adaptability
- Time management
- Leadership
- Self awareness (awareness of achievement, strengths, and weaknesses)
- Planning & organizing
- Reasoning & Creativity

10. Would you prefer to employ students with volunteering experience?

- Yes
- No
- Neutral

11. Which part of student volunteering do you value the most as an employer? (Mark all that apply)

- Commitment
- Cultural/ Community awareness
- Time management
- Multitasking/ hardworking
- Enthusiasm

- f. Maturity
- g. Self awareness
- h. Experience
- i. Fits better into the work environment
- j. Other, please specify

Thank You

We appreciate your participation.