



The Educational Effects and Values of Voluntary Social Work on the Life of the Individual and Society from the Perspective of Islamic Legislation

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Abstract:

An Islam has placed great emphasis on voluntary social work, as both the Holy Quran and the Noble Sunnah abound with evidence underscoring its importance and necessity, as general frameworks and guidelines have been established for it, such as sincerity, adherence to Islamic rulings, and righteous intention.

In this regard, any voluntary social work a person wishes to undertake must comply with the provisions of Islamic law to earn a reward in this life and the hereafter, where the history of Muslims throughout the ages is rich with voluntary efforts that built a great Islamic civilization, as every achievement we study in Islamic history was fueled by the voluntary contributions and sacrifices of Muslims.

Keywords: Educational Values; Islamic Education; Voluntary Social Work; Volunteering

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I. INTRODUCTION

Voluntary work holds a high-level, positive value and is one of the fundamental pillars upon which modern societies are built. Indeed, it constitutes the third sector in community development and the promotion of social cohesion among individuals, as voluntary work is a humanitarian endeavor aimed at achieving goodness and cooperation for the benefit of both the individual and society, ultimately contributing to sustainable development.

The nature of voluntary work varies across societies in terms of its prevalence, scale, trends, motivations, and forms. It may manifest as individual efforts, driven by personal motives and a genuine desire to contribute, as these motivations may differ from one person to another, rooted in religious, ethical, social, or humanitarian considerations; alternatively, voluntary work may take an institutional and collective form, structured on a scientific methodology that emphasizes organization and coordination among various social institutions—whether governmental or civil society organizations.

Like any other endeavor, voluntary work faces numerous challenges—economic, social, cultural, or otherwise—that may hinder its potential benefits, however, when properly planned, executed, and practiced, it can significantly contribute to the development of both individuals and society.

In this regard, Islam, the eternal religion ordained by Allah for humanity's happiness in this life and the hereafter, encourages voluntary work, where this concept encompasses the giving of one's time, effort, wealth, abilities, and talents—all blessings granted by Allah—to bring happiness to oneself and others, as Islamic law (Sharia) calls for voluntary social work as a means of sustaining and developing the world, promoting virtues, values, and ethics that reflect an individual's deep-rooted inclinations toward people, causes, and principles.

These values, ethics, and virtues—when firmly established—guide a person's choices and judgments within a framework of moral standards; in essence, they represent a form of voluntary work advocated by Islamic teachings, shaping behavior in a way that aligns with intellectual and emotional maturity, driven by sincere internal motives.

Study Objectives:

- Clarifying the concept of voluntary social work from the perspective of Islamic education and demonstrating its impacts on individuals and society.
- Outlining the fields of voluntary social work in Islam.
- Highlighting the institutions of voluntary social work in society.
- Demonstrating the role of Islamic education in instilling the concept of voluntary social work.

Study Findings:

- Volunteering is an individual's self-initiated act without expectation of material or worldly compensation, seeking only Allah's pleasure and spiritual reward.
- The legitimacy of volunteering is established through texts from the Holy Quran and the Noble Sunnah.
- Islamic educational mediums play a significant role in nurturing the spirit of volunteering in young Muslims.

- Numerous incentives encourage engagement in voluntary work.

II. The Concept of Volunteering

1. Linguistic Definition:

Most Arabic lexicons agree that "volunteering" refers to an action undertaken by an individual voluntarily, without coercion (Ibn Manzur, n.d., p. 89).

"Munjid Al-Lugha wa Al-I'lam" defines it as: to make someone obey, and his soul inclined toward it, yielding willingly (Al-Lihyani, n.d., p. 189)

To volunteer implies undertaking an act of obedience willingly, as in the phrase; (he volunteered for military service).

Mukhtar Al-Sihah states that: means to submit willingly (e.g., his hands yielded), and it signifies donating or offering something freely (Al-Jaleel, 1998, p. 352).

The Quranic verse: "So his soul prompted him to kill his brother" (Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:30), conveys the meaning of "his soul persuaded him" (to kill his brother), indicating inner compliance.

Britannic Encyclopedia defines voluntary action as: "A metaphysical or psychological system of relinquishing ownership willingly, without compulsion".

The American Encyclopedia describes it as: "The transfer of ownership of something without regard to its value—for example, parents transferring a deed to their child as an expression of love and affection" (Al-Ali, 1996, p. 35).

In conclusion, The linguistic meaning of volunteering in Arabic dictionaries revolves around: Donation, Voluntary effort, Willingness, Compliance.

2. The Legal (Sharia) Definition of Volunteering:

Volunteering in Islamic jurisprudence refers to non-mandatory acts of worship, where Al-Azhari defined it as:

"That which one offers voluntarily from oneself beyond obligatory religious duties (fard); it is termed 'voluntary' because the doer performs it willingly without being absolutely commanded to do so".

Some scholars further specified: "Voluntary acts are those not specifically mandated by explicit textual evidence from the purified Sunnah" (Al-Jaleel, 1998, p. 192).

2.1 Prophetic Evidence

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim - he neither wrongs him nor abandons him. Whoever fulfills the need of his brother, Allah will fulfill his need" (Sahih al-Bukhari 338).

3. Technical Definitions:

3.1 Jurisprudential Definition: A term denoting acts legislated beyond obligatory religious duties (fard and wajibat) (Al-Jaleel, 1998, p. 335).

3.2 Ethical Definition: The increase in righteous deeds after fulfilling obligations (Abdulaziz, 1985, p. 168).

3.3 Procedural Definition: The effort exerted by an individual without compensation, motivated by personal initiative to share in the responsibilities of institutions providing social welfare services (Mish'at, n.d.).

It is also defined as "the voluntary effort undertaken by an individual or a group of people voluntarily and by choice to provide services to society or certain segments of society, without expecting any material reward for their efforts, whether these efforts are moral or financial"; therefore, undertaking volunteer work stems from one's own will, without any external authority imposing it on the volunteer; however, they overlooked the fact that the goal of volunteering is to attain reward and recompense from Allah Almighty (Al-Jurjani, 1991). Based on the above, it can be said that voluntary social work is when an individual acts on their own accord, without any expectation of material or worldly reward, but rather to attain Allah's pleasure and earn reward and recompense, in social work that benefits others.

4. Its legitimacy in the Holy Quran: Allah Almighty says in Surat Al-Baqarah, "And whoever volunteers good - then indeed, Allah is appreciative and Knowing".

This verse indicates the legitimacy of volunteering in all good deeds in general, and that Allah rewards for it because He is All-Gracious and All-Knowing; also, Allah Almighty says in Surat Al-Hajj: "O you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good that you may succeed", Allah (Good) here is absolute and not specific, and the description of the command in Allah Almighty's saying "do good" indicates that it is recommended.

5. Its legitimacy according to the Sunnah of the Prophet: Many Prophetic hadiths have been narrated in this regard that indicates the legitimacy of volunteer services, including reconciling the rights of others, removing harmful things from the road, helping a man with his animal, providing interest-free loans, guiding the blind, teaching the disabled a trade that will protect them from the humiliation of need and begging, and many others .

Abou Hurairah reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever relieves a Muslim of a worldly hardship, Allah will relieve him of a hardship on the Day of Resurrection; whoever helps someone in difficulty, Allah will help him in this world and the Hereafter; whoever conceals a Muslim's faults in this world, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter; Allah helps His servant as long as the servant helps his brother".

6. Its religious legal ruling:

The ruling on voluntary work is a confirmed Sunnah, as evidenced by the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah that mention its permissibility, as Allah's statement, "And whoever volunteers good - then indeed, Allah is appreciative and Knowing", indicates that it is recommended, where the word "voluntary" in the language refers to exertion, obedience, or doing good, which is not obligatory or required, furthermore, the hadiths that encourage doing good and charity and explain the virtues of doing so (Al-Andalusi, 1401/1981).

III. The Virtues of Voluntary Service:

Numerous prophetic narrations elucidate the merits of charitable deeds and their practitioners:

- Abu Huraira (RA) reported the Messenger (PBUH) said: "The doers of good in this world will be the doers of good in the Hereafter, and the doers of evil in this world will be the doers of evil in the Hereafter".
- Ibn Umar (RA) narrated: "Acts of kindness shield against evil deaths, secret charity extinguishes the Lord's wrath, and maintaining kinship ties increases one's lifespan".
- Zaid ibn Thabit (RA) relayed: "Allah remains in the servant's need as long as the servant attends to his brother's need".
- Abu Darda (RA) observed: "Some people are keys to goodness and locks against evil - they receive rewards for this. Others are keys to evil and lock against goodness - they bear burdens for this; Indeed, an hour of reflection surpasses a night of prayer²".

1. Exemplars of Voluntary Service Among the Righteous Predecessors:

No one surpasses the voluntary contributions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who never accepted compensation, as the Quran attests: "Say: 'I ask no reward from you; my reward lies only with Allah, who witnesses all things'" (34:47); as the Prophet (PBUH) personally undertook numerous unpaid responsibilities, including: (Al-Tirmidhi, as cited in Al-Nawawi, n.d.)

- Appointing and instructing deputies.
- Leading prayers and delivering sermons.
- Arbitrating disputes and administering justice.
- Commanding armies and issuing fatwas.
- Teaching Quran, jurisprudence, and moral guidance.

The Rightly-Guided Caliphs emulated this tradition, as some passed from this world leaving no worldly possessions, performing their duties while accepting only minimal sustenance, and even women participated in voluntary service, exemplified by Rufayda Al-Aslamiyya, who treated the wounded, as during the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet (PBUH) instructed: "Place Sa'd ibn Mu'adh in Rufayda's tent so I may visit him", where the pious predecessors volunteered as judges, educators, and mosque custodians, establishing an enduring legacy of selfless service.

VI. Forms of Voluntary Work in Islam:

Islam possesses distinctive characteristics that manifest in its approach to voluntary service across three primary domains: acts of worship (*ʿibādāt*), social transactions (*muʿāmalāt*), and humanitarian relations.

1. Voluntary Acts of Worship:

These encompass supplementary devotional practices that compensate for potential deficiencies in obligatory worship:

- Supererogatory prayers (*ṣalāt al-nawāfil*) serve as protective measures for obligatory prayers.
- Voluntary fasting (*ṣawm al-tatawwuʿ*) beyond Ramadan observances.

² Al-Tirmidhi (Hadith classified as Hasan), mentioned by Al-Nawawi in *Riyad al-Salihin*, Book of Jihad - Chapter on the Obligation of Jihad.

- Discretionary charity (ṣadaqat al-tatawwu'), including:
- Monetary donations.
- Non-material assistance (e.g., helping carry burdens).
- Removing public hazards.
- Voluntary participation in defensive jihad (when not individually obligatory), including non-combat roles for those physically limited.

2. Voluntary Social Transactions:

As Ibn Khaldūn said in *Al-Muqaddimah*: "Man is by nature social" (Ibn Khaldun, 1415, p. 46)- indicating an innate propensity for mutual aid, which finds expression in:

- Charitable endowments (awqāf) to supporting community welfare
- Voluntary gifts (hibah) fostering social bonds
- Interest-free loans (ʿāriyah) for temporary needs
- Posthumous bequests (waṣiyyah) generating ongoing reward

3. Humanitarian and Social Services:

Islam's compassionate ethos promotes extensive voluntary engagement in:

- Care for vulnerable populations (orphans, widows, the disabled)
- Visiting the sick
- Community safety initiatives
- Various other charitable works performed by people of goodwill

This comprehensive framework reflects Islam's integrated approach to voluntary service, combining spiritual refinement with tangible social impact, where the tradition emphasizes both institutionalized mechanisms (e.g., endowments) and personal initiatives to address communal needs (Al-Qathami, 2002, p. 17).

4. Categories of Voluntary Social Work:

Voluntary work is divided into two categories:

4.1 Work whose benefits are limited to the worker himself: such as prayer, fasting, reading the Qur'an, and various forms of remembrance (dhikr), such as glorifying Allah, praising Allah, seeking forgiveness, and sending blessings upon the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

4.2 Work whose benefits extend to others: such as leading prayers, the call to prayer, serving the mosque, teaching the Qur'an and other knowledge, teaching a craft to the disabled, giving charity and giving alms, bringing about reconciliation between people, enjoining good and forbidding evil, assisting those in need, and helping those in distress.

Some define a volunteer as: "A person with a specific skill or experience who uses this skill or experience to perform social work voluntarily and by choice, without necessarily expecting financial reward in return".

In short, volunteer social work has many diverse practices and meanings, encompassing a range of good human practices; In every circumstance, it requires a shunning of selfishness to be

sincere to Allah Almighty, as volunteer work, in its general concept, is altruism and giving for the happiness of everyone, everywhere, whether within a neighborhood, village, city, or even extending to the entire nation.

V. The Muslim community is a compassionate, cohesive, and cooperative society.

Islamic law calls for the practice of voluntary social work in all areas of life, which achieves comprehensive and vital development for every human society, as the needs of every human being are numerous and the desires are ever-increasing, while resources are incapable of satisfying these human needs and desires, as to achieve development and human stewardship on this earth, voluntary social work must be practiced in all aspects of human life on the face of the earth because humans cannot do without their fellow human beings, who support, assist, and stand by them for the sake of Allah Almighty, where we find them volunteering themselves, striving for the sake of Allah Almighty, sacrificing their lives and wealth to provide for all the needs of their fellow human beings, and even animals have received great care and attention (Muhammad, 1420/1999 , p. 164); therefore, we find that social instances of volunteer work are numerous, and they are practiced whenever the need arises, including volunteering in jihad for the sake of Allah, volunteering to spend in the cause of Allah, volunteering to spread knowledge, building mosques, digging wells, donating blood, donating vital organs, removing harmful objects from roads, removing graffiti and inappropriate graffiti, cleaning beaches and seas, paving and lighting roads, and many other volunteer social practices, some of which we will mention below.

1. Orphan Care:

Islam has paid great attention to orphans, urging people to support and care for them, preserving their conditions, and warning against violating their rights.

In Islamic jurisprudence, an orphan is defined as: "A child who has lost their father before reaching puberty and mental maturity, whether male or female"(Al-Halabi, 1414, p. 403), where the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "I and the guardian of an orphan will be in Paradise like this", and he gestured with his index and middle fingers, slightly separating them (Sahih al-Bukhari) (Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith No. 5304, p. 189).

Islam fosters a cohesive and cooperative Muslim society by continuously urging individuals to serve one another, relieve the distress of fellow Muslims, bring joy to others, and protect others from harm.

Narrated by Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him): The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was asked, "Which deed is best?" He replied: "The best deed is to bring happiness to your believing brother, settle his debt, or feed him bread"(Al-Maliki, n.d., vol. 9, p. 189). Every Act of Kindness is Charity, as Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The human body has 360 joints, and for each one, a charitable act is due every day. Every good word is charity, and helping one's brother is charity". (Al-Maliki, n.d., vol. 9, p. 219)

2. Ihsan (Excellence in Goodness):

Islamic law calls for Ihsan, which means treating others with kindness, offering assistance, compassion, and mercy, as this principle encourages Muslims to go beyond mere obligation, embodying generosity and selflessness in all interactions.

Allah Almighty says, "And spend in the cause of Allah, and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction [by refraining]. And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good". (Surat Al-Baqarah, 195), means "Believers, continue to spend your wealth to support the religion of Allah Almighty and to strive in His cause; do not expose yourselves to destruction by abandoning jihad in the cause of Allah and not spending in it; be good in spending and obedience, and make all your work purely for the sake of Allah Almighty, for Allah loves those who are sincere and do good".

In this regard, Allah Almighty says: "Indeed, Allah commands justice and doing good and liberality to kith and kin and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He instructs you that perhaps you will be reminded" (An-Nahl, verse 90)

Doing good is an authentic Islamic characteristic called for by Islamic law, it is, in essence, a voluntary act performed by a person out of kindness, as Allah Almighty says: "And worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, And the neighbor who is a relative and the neighbor who is a stranger and the companion by your side and the traveler and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like the arrogant and boastful (Surat An-Nisaa' 36).

3. Cooperation:

Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, says, "...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression" (Surat Al-Ma'idah 36); as Islamic religion is not limited to strengthening the Muslim's relationship with his Lord, the Almighty, but rather it works to strengthen the Muslim's relationship with his Muslim brother, through what is Between them is harmonious cooperation, as the command from Allah Almighty to believers to cooperate—which is a form of voluntary work—indicates that a person cannot do without his fellow human beings in doing good. Allah Almighty has promised those who cooperate and volunteer a great reward, as He, the Most High, says: "Indeed, As-Safa and Al-Marwah are among the symbols of Allah. So whoever makes Hajj to the House or performs 'Umrah - there is no blame upon him for walking between them. And whoever volunteers good - then indeed, Allah is appreciative and Knowing" (Surat Al-Baqarah, 158).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the comprehensive nature of voluntary service through his timeless teachings, as narrated by Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari, the Prophet established that every Muslim is required to perform acts of charity (sadaqah), with the concept extending far beyond monetary donations to including productive labor that benefits oneself and others, assisting those in dire need, and even abstaining from harmful actions as a form of social contribution (Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith No. 6022, p. 1292), which holistic approach is further elaborated in the hadith narrated by Abu Huraira, where the Prophet identified multiple daily opportunities for voluntary service - from mediating conflicts and helping with transportation to offering kind words and removing public hazards, where these teachings collectively demonstrate Islam's integrated view of voluntary work as both an individual spiritual practice and a communal responsibility, where every positive action,

whether physical, verbal, or passive, contributes to social welfare and earns divine reward (Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith No. 2989).

VI. The Importance of Volunteer Work and Its Positive Effects from an Islamic Perspective:

Volunteer work is closely linked to the urgent needs of society, such as crises and disasters, or to activities that require continuity, such as charitable work, as humans, by nature, are inclined to love doing good and helping others. We see them extending a helping hand to those in need, aiding the distressed, and assisting the miserable, where people have been helping one another since the beginning of life, and since human societies have become established and established.

Throughout the ages and generations, religious motivation has had a clear impact on people helping each other, and on the ability and wealth of those who can help the weak and the poor, as the true Islamic religion is full of Islamic directives regarding relieving the distressed and assisting the needy, which falls under voluntary work, where a person voluntarily and by choice searches for those who need help and offers it to them .

The importance of voluntary work and the need for it becomes clear as society advances and social and human relations become more complex, which means that the more simple and direct the social relationship in society is, the more voluntary efforts are individual and direct and are linked to the same situation, and are one of the characteristics of social and human relations (Mashaat, 1418/1997, p. 159).

VII. The Impacts of Voluntary Work:

First: Effects on the Individual

The individual earns great reward and magnificent recompense from Allah Almighty, bringing them closer to Him, this results in feelings of happiness and contentment, as when one helps brothers in need during times of hardship, working to alleviate their pain and suffering, they experience happiness and psychological comfort as a result of their contribution.

Moreover, the individual can occupy their free time with voluntary works and activities that develop their personality and achieve self-fulfillment. These effects can be summarized as follows:

- The individual feels psychological comfort when performing any voluntary work.
- The individual feels they have gained religious benefit through Allah's reward and recompense.
- The individual recognizes the importance of social cohesion and strives to participate.
- The individual becomes convinced that their service is a national and humanitarian duty for their society members.
- It enhances and strengthens national belonging among individuals.
- It eliminates idle time by providing meaningful engagement.
- It fulfills the desire for recognition and status that some individuals seek.
- It increases the individual's sense of self-worth and importance in society, creating a desire to reciprocate kindness.

- Personal experiences of receiving aid and assistance motivate participation.
- It directly and indirectly influences family members and friends to participate in such works.

Second: Effects on Society

When voluntary work exists among Muslims, it fosters affection and love between them, which leads to the emergence of a harmonious, integrated society where love, brotherhood and cooperation spread among its members; such a compassionate, united and cohesive society becomes capable of confronting enemies.

Voluntary work also contributes to developing fraternal relations that strengthen the pillars of Islamic society and its cohesion, making it a single human unit where parts support each other like solid bricks; these effects manifest in (Mashaat, 1418/1997, p. 204):

- Strengthening social bonds and solidarity among community members.
- The group's awareness of the individual's needs and the individual's awareness of society's needs.
- The spontaneous formation of groups providing immediate assistance.
- Developing a spirit of competition among volunteer groups that reflects service quality.
- Increasing service provision locations and their availability in every city.
- Saving financial amounts spent on human resources and redirecting them to other fields.

VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations

Voluntary work, referred to in modern development literature as "social capital," constitutes a public good that cannot be monopolized, which represents those bonds founded on virtuous social values such as trust, honesty, cooperation, compassion, and solidarity, as there are connections through which citizens - as individuals and groups - seek self-realization and the fulfillment of interests aligned with those of their communities, where the fundamental challenge lies in harnessing this social capital in a scientific revolution - a revolution of technical/behavioral competence - without which we cannot implement policies based on scientific research or execute projects serving public interests.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations may illuminate the path forward:

- Develop educational curricula that emphasize voluntary work, promoting its culture and practice within and beyond educational institutions.
- Conduct field studies examining obstacles to voluntary work.
- Emphasize sincere intention (ikhlas) for Allah's sake when engaging in voluntary work.
- Enhance public awareness about voluntary work through various media channels.
- Ensure the continuity of voluntary services for those in need, with necessary improvements to meet urgent societal demands.
- Foster positive attitudes toward voluntary work among community members through media and press campaigns.

- Urge the Ministry of Education to incorporate voluntary work culture in national education curricula across all academic levels, while creating opportunities for practical application.
- Socialize younger generations to voluntary work through:
- Awareness programs about its individual and collective benefits
- Practical engagement in voluntary activities
- Highlighting its role in social development

Voluntary work is inherently non-profit, non-professional, and non-occupational, as individuals or groups undertake it to provide assistance to any segment of humanity and improve living standards, regardless of location, where this concept aligns with and enriches charitable organizations, as volunteering saves funds that would otherwise be spent on paid staff - leading some to characterize it as "investment in social capital".

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