

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

RURAL YOUTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION:
IMPLICATIONS ON LIVELIHOODS AND CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT

by
NOUR YEHYA ZEIDAN

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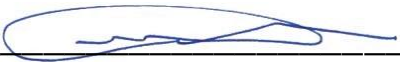
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ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

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While there is extensive literature discussing the impact of higher education on youth livelihoods highlighting the return to education, very few studies examine the sophisticated interlinkages between higher education and youth's livelihoods and civic engagement from the students' perspective. This study tries to analyse the impact of higher education on rural community development in two rural areas in Lebanon (Ras El Matn and Roueiset El Ballout) through conducting semi structured interviews and surveys with enrolled and graduated youth.

The results indicate that higher education is contributing to rural youth's lives in a different way compared to other youth. It was clear that although higher education didn't necessarily secure them a job or induce an increase in their income, it has equipped them with communication skills, and contributed to a new type of civic and political engagement as they have broken out of their narrow networks to wider type of engagement with bigger social networks. Moreover, the involvement of the political parties in rural youth's higher education was documented in several instances, especially through providing them with partial scholarships at some private universities. However, what was also noted was how youth's enrolment in higher education made them more aware and critical regarding their inherited political affiliation. These findings suggest that despite all the challenges rural youth face nowadays and their plans to leave the country, their involvement in higher education has an impact on rural community development. On one hand, youth are willing to make use of the technical and soft skills they acquired at university in their civic engagement and giving back to the community. On the other hand, they are complementing their university degrees with practical experience with an aim to secure employment and thereby improve their livelihoods.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABSTRACT	2
ILLUSTRATIONS	6
TABLES	7
ABBREVIATIONS	8
INTRODUCTION	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1. Human Capital Investment in Higher Education in Lebanon.....	11
2.2. Human Capital Theory and Economic Development	13
2.3 Youth, Higher Education and Social Development.....	16
2.4 Social Responsibility of Higher Education Institutions in Lebanon.....	19
2.4.1 Promoting Citizenship and Political Participation.....	20
2.4.2 Community Service and Voluntary Organizations	21
2.4.3 Academic Programs and Courses	23
2.5 Higher Education and 21 st Century Skills.....	24
METHODOLOGY	26
3.1 Conceptual Framework.....	26
3.2 Research Design	28

3.3 Sampling Techniques.....	29
3.4 Participants and Studied Area.....	30
3.5 Data Collection	32
3.6. Data Analysis.....	33
3.7. Limitations.....	33
FINDINGS.....	34
4.1 Participants' Demographics.....	34
4.2 University Experiences: Discrepancy Between LU and Private University Students.....	36
4.3 The Dilemma Between Certification and Employment.....	39
4.4 Absence of Community Development Considerations in Youth's University Choices.....	40
4.6 Rural Youth's Civic Engagement and Role in Community Development.....	44
4.5 Uncertainty Regarding the Near Future.....	46
DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION.....	51
5.1 Recommendations.....	56
APPENDIX A.....	59
APPENDIX B.....	70
APPENDIX C.....	82
APPENDIX D.....	84

REFERENCES86

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. General Overview of the Conceptual Framework	27
2. Detailed Conceptual Framework	27
3. Number of Participants Involved in Each University	35
4. The Socioecological Model	41
5. Payment of Tuition Fees by Students	43
6. Youth's Hope for a Change in the Coming 5 years.....	47

TABLES

Table

1. Summary of Demographics of the Studied Population 35

ABBREVIATIONS

CAS: Central Administration of Statistics

CEW: Center on Education and Workforce

ILO: International Labor Organization

LLMICs: Low- and Lower-Middle Income Countries

MEHE: Ministry of Education and Higher Education

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

UNDESA: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, decision makers agree that the higher education sector has a considerable contribution to community development. Nowadays, researchers argue that the effective investment in youth's human capital through higher education can lead to sustainable economic and social development (Appleton & Teal, 1998), given that the youth population makes up 16 percent of the global population with its bulk in developing countries (UNDESA, 2019). Many factors influence this relationship between higher education and development. However, most studies consider that investment in human capital through higher education affects the economic development by impacting youth's employment and income growth, while its effect on social development is linked to youth's civic engagement and building their social capital.

Limited research has been done to explore the role of higher education institutions in Lebanon in ensuring the social and economic development of the community especially in the case of rural youth. Therefore, to develop adequate future interventions, a deeper understanding of the complicated interlinkages between higher education and rural community development is essential. The current study aims at filling this gap by identifying the impact of higher education on social and economic development in two rural areas in Lebanon: Roueiset El Ballout and Ras El Matn, through investigating youth's livelihoods (particularly employment) and civic engagement. This study will do so by addressing these research questions from the perspectives of the youth themselves:

- 1) What are the implications of higher education on rural youth's livelihoods?
- 2) What is the impact of higher education on rural youth's civic engagement?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Human Capital Investment in Higher Education in Lebanon

Countries in the MENA region made major advances in improving the higher education sector but when it comes to Lebanon, the scenario is quite different. While the higher education sector in MENA is dominated by public universities, the Lebanese higher education sector has only one public university, the Lebanese University (LU). In 2016, the LU enrolled approximately 39% of the total number of university students in Lebanon with its tuition fees and total expenditures reaching a maximum of \$1000 per year (Nuffic, 2016). On the other hand, the past decade has witnessed a chaotic expansion of private tertiary education institutions¹ in Lebanon to reach 48 institutions recognized by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) with their tuition fees and total expenditures ranging between \$2000 and \$18000² per year. This proliferation was witnessed after the issuance of a decree in 1996 which included a set of new conditions and criteria for licensing private higher education while the main law that governs this sector was issued in 1961. People argue that this facilitated youth's access to higher education especially rural youth, others believe that the decree led to a drop in the quality of higher education and an excess of graduates that the local labor market cannot absorb (El Ghali, 2011).

¹ Tertiary education refers to formal educational institutions that 'build on secondary education' (UNESCO 2011), these institutions include universities, medical and business schools, polytechnics and technical colleges, teacher-training colleges.

² Based on the universities' websites and tuition fees.

Nevertheless, Lebanese youth, especially those living in rural areas, face numerous challenges in accessing higher education, and many more obstacles after their graduation (El Ghali, 2011). Students with disadvantaged backgrounds cannot cover the tuition fees of their higher education. The main reason why only a small proportion of the population gain access to prestigious universities in Lebanon (Nahas, 2009). Over the years, this marginalization, especially when talking about rural areas, has allowed for clientelism whereby affiliation to political parties is linked to youth's access to many services including higher education (Al Habbal, 2011). Other challenges that rural youth face are similar to those faced in other developing countries like distance from university, gender, parental and cultural opposition for enrolling in distant universities (Sánchez & Singh, 2018; Western et al, 1998). These challenges escalated in the past year amid the multiple crises Lebanon was facing; economic and political crisis, the devaluation of the Lebanese pound against the US dollars, and the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with a dramatic increase in tuition fees of some private universities (Akleh, 2020). Not to forget that many Lebanese families used to rely on loans or previous bank savings to pay the tuition fees, but given the conflicts related to the banking sector in Lebanon in the last year, this option is no longer available (Dhaybi, 2020). Despite all the mentioned challenges and based on the belief that having a university degree guarantees a better future, statistics show that Lebanese households invest substantially in youth higher education whereby 988,000 youth attained a university degree or above in 2018 which constitutes 21.4% of total population (22.1% women and 20.6% men) (CAS, 2019).

2.2. Human Capital Theory and Economic Development

Proponents of investment in human capital highlight the strong positive association between higher education and economic development³. Several studies validate that as the proportion of poorly educated people in a community increases, the greater is the 'drag' on the community's efforts to develop its economy (Beaulieu & Barfield, 2000). Additionally, it is predicted that in the near future, employees will need more qualifications to compete in the job market whereby in 2027, 70 percent of all jobs will require education beyond high school with only 30 percent of jobs still available to those without it (CEW, 2018). As for labor market indicators, unemployment figures for those with basic education is 7.5 %, while those with a tertiary education degree that is 6.5% (ILO, 2020). That's mainly because it is believed that higher education equips youth with the proper knowledge and skills which are key in preparing a high-quality labor force that can actively support the economic development and eradication of poverty (Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016).

Moreover, countless studies in the United States, Sub Saharan Africa, low- and lower-middle income countries (LLMICs) reveal that university graduates attain more earnings relative to less educated individuals and that the positive and sizable financial benefits from college generally outweigh the costs of the investment (Vedder, 2004; Fatima & Paulsen, 2004; Toutkoushian & Paulsen, 2016; Teal, 2011; Schultz 2004; Oketch et al, 2014). Yet, in the Lebanese context, the situation differs as the increase in wage based on the education attainment is not very high. A study conducted by Charbel Nahas (2009) states that on average a person with a university degree earns 140% more

³ In this study, the terms 'economic growth' and 'economic development' are used interchangeably, evidence of economic growth is assumed to be measurable through per-capita GDP.

than a person with no degree and only 52% more than an individual with only a secondary degree. Nahas concludes that the Lebanese high demand on higher education, specifically private higher education, cannot be interpreted on the basis of the laws of the domestic labor market.

Other researchers examine the effects of higher education on inducing positive economic impacts by reducing future social welfare costs or increasing levels of productivity and efficiency (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Goldin, 2003). Yet, this is not applicable in the Lebanese context since the low levels of investments in physical capital in sectors that demand skills tend to reduce the level of labor productivity and consequently reduce labor market outcomes (Nahas, 2009).

Opponents of the human capital theory support the signaling and the credentialism theory. The signaling explanation states that education is associated with higher incomes because those with higher education signal more ability (Appleton & Teal, 1998). On the other hand, credentialism believes that institutional wage structures reward educational credentials rather than the skills they are meant to reflect. This helps in the process of elite formation in any society whether through the impact of education achievements on revenues or through the prestige attached to higher education diplomas (Nahas, 2009).

Other researchers in LLMIC refute the human capital claim that investment in higher education must be reflected in productivity and economic growth (Oketch et al, 2014). This is due to the highly imperfect labor markets that exist in Southern countries, which are highly influenced by large public and informal sectors and high levels of patronage. Mincer (1958) considers that the human capital- skills and knowledge- can be gained through everything that people do during the day and not just through higher

education. Others argue that the impact of primary and secondary education on economic growth is way more significant than that of higher education especially in lower income countries like India, Nigeria, and Guatemala (Oketch et al, 2014). These are suspicious about the benefits of investing in higher education especially when governments subsidize higher education or provide merit scholarships.

In the case of Lebanon, the relationship between higher education and economic development is complicated because the livelihood of young people is highly affected by their surroundings and their employment is vulnerable to fluctuations in the economy (El Ghali, 2011). So, when employment is supposed to be the vehicle through which education is translated into growth, there exist many challenges that Lebanese youth face that leave them unemployed. For instance, 30% of unemployed people in Lebanon are university degree holders (Jalakh, 2019). University graduates in Lebanon have the highest rate of unemployment due to the unproductivity of the Lebanese Economy and the limited number of job opportunities found in the private and public sector (Nahas, 2009). Commenting on this point, Jalakh (2019) believes that it is wrong to regard this as a failure for higher education institutions. Jalakh (2019) explains that universities are not the only authorities responsible for economic planning for the labor market and even if they know the solution, they still need the capacity to mobilize the political will in the correct direction.

Finally, given the high cost of higher education and its low levels of employment, higher education attainment mostly makes sense as it increases the probability of finding a job abroad for youth (Nahas, 2009). Empirical evidence indicates that the tendency to emigrate increases among university graduates coming from non-wealthy backgrounds living in smaller dwellings, unemployed males, and

residents of poor rural regions (Dibeh et al, 2018). This phenomenon of youth migration is considered as a real economic and social threat as it adds to the imbalance between the “production” of skills and the inability to benefit from them (Jalakh, 2019). It is known as the brain drain whereby Lebanon loses the workforce capable of developing sustainable solutions for it (Dibeh et al, 2018).

Therefore, the relationship between investing in human capital through higher education and economic development is sophisticated because of the complex interlinkages between the two. This urges us to further explore and understand these interlinkages in different contexts like that of rural areas in Lebanon.

2.3 Youth, Higher Education and Social Development

Many researchers acknowledge that higher education influences social development through preparing its graduates to be civically engaged community members. Others refer to the social development by the social non-market benefits of higher education on its graduates. In their opinion these social non-market benefits are democratization, rule of law, human rights, reduced crime rates, environmental improvements, community volunteering, increased literacy among citizens, along with greater knowledge of their community (Oketch et al, 2014). The belief that higher education increases university students awareness of their community needs is also assured by Beaulieu and Barfield (2000) whose study reveals that university students’ civic engagement is more compared to that of high school dropouts. Other studies discuss the benefits educated citizens bring to civil society (Larreguy & Marshall, 2017; Campbell, 2006). The latter concluded that these social benefits of higher education in developing countries are much higher than the materialistic benefits and are estimated

to reach about 80 percent of the earning benefits (Appleton & Teal, 1998; McMahon, 2009).

According to Michelsen et al (2002), civic engagement is defined as the community service activities, environmentalism, and political activism. It can take many forms: starting with volunteering in a community service project; being involved in organizations, clubs, societies, campaigns, humanitarian initiatives working on social issues (poverty, corruption, gender inequalities, etc.); and political engagement like voting, running for elections or raising awareness with others through protesting (Mercy Corps, 2012). Michelsen et al (2002) focus solely on the relationship between liberal higher education and civic engagement and its role in building socially responsible citizens in a democratic vision of society. In their opinion, liberal higher education emphasizes the role of citizens as critical thinkers and civic engagement is more of experienced based community and political activities. Other studies highlight the importance of civic engagement at university by noting that its effect persists for a long-term after students graduate (Perrin & Gillis, 2019; Sax et al, 1999). Also, it is believed that involvement of youth in civic engagement can increase chances of employment and success at the workforce in several areas like leadership, communication, life skills teamwork, research, planning, social awareness, development of personal network and many others (United Nations, 2016; Burgess, 2018).

In the Arab world, the level of education, socio-economic status and gender can predict the level of civic engagement among youth; for instance, low educational attainment, unemployment, and rurality decrease the tendency to be civically engaged. This explains why, according to a report done by Mercy Corps (2012), the voices of the previous mentioned categories are underrepresented in public debates and decisions,

contributing to their further marginalization. This also explains why educated youth in the MENA region were the heart of many recent uprisings that aimed for political change in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Algeria, and Bahrain. Their participation in protests and demonstrations have been largely induced by their frustration with the existing institutions and norms that have denied them political voice, economic and social opportunities (Mercy Corps, 2012).

In the local context, since Lebanon has a long history of conflict and political instability, university students face these challenges through their civic and political participation. This was revealed in past revolutions including gender-justice work, trash related protests, environmental activism and recently, the October 17 uprising whereby youth in unprecedented numbers rose up against their leaders, demanding accountability, and political change (Osseiran, 2019). The latter uprising was triggered by the difficult living conditions, increase in unemployment rate, discontent from the development strategies followed by the regimes. University students' inability to convert their educational credentials and resources into employment opportunities urged them to protest (Osseiran, 2019). It is worth noting that this uprising proliferated in all the regions in Lebanon even in rural areas that are far from Beirut which allowed for a wider participation of people. Aside from revolutions, youth's political activism can be through their affiliation to political parties that are divided along sectarian lines and this is prevalent in Lebanon. Also, youth can be involved in national and municipal elections by helping in campaigns, voting (starting the age of 21) or running for municipal or mukhtar council or parliament elections (starting the age of 25). As for university elections which are usually dominated by political parties, youth are also active and during the 2020-21 academic year, independent candidates were able to win

the highest number of votes in several private universities and many independent clubs further establish higher education at private and the only public university (Rose, 2020).

2.4 Social Responsibility of Higher Education Institutions in Lebanon

Up till now, there exist two declarations that are concerned with increasing the social responsibility of universities. On the international level, there is the “Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibility of Higher Education” (2005); which involves 304 international universities. On a regional level, the “Arab University Alliance for Civic Engagement- Ma’an” was established in 2008 (Jouny, 2017). In Lebanon, only five universities signed the mentioned declarations. Nevertheless, these universities show their commitment to graduate civically engaged youth capable of building societies through their missions, visions, and values (IFI, 2016). Moreover, they identify several methods to achieve their mission. However, the stated ideals do not reflect reality in one way or another and higher education institutions face many challenges to bridge this gap (Saddiki, 2016). The biggest challenges lie in finding a mechanism to motivate, recognize and reward service by faculty and students where such rewards matter most (Myntti, 2013). On the other hand, MEHE does not have an affirmative policy that urges higher education institutions to be civically engaged; neither does it recognize or give incentives for those who are more committed to their social responsibility (Saddiki, 2016).

The literature on the social responsibility of higher education and its ways to foster students’ civic engagement is classified into three lines of research; promoting citizenship and political participation, community service through voluntary organizations, academic programs, and courses (Saddiki, 2016; Myntti, 2013).

2.4.1 Promoting Citizenship and Political Participation

Many studies tried to investigate the role of higher education in promoting citizenship and students' political participation. In this regard, it was found that students enrolled in higher education tend to have better access to political information and are more critical of the political system (Oketch et al, 2014). The widely known example of political participation is when university campuses erupt in protests that links provincial student issues with local community conflicts. This is mainly induced by student leadership and on-campus activities which are considered as the most effective way of enhancing civic participation. Besides, higher education institutions enhance citizenship by preparing concerned citizens that can engage in public debate as well as through resembling a space for students to express their opinion about community issues. The importance of this approach in higher education institutions lies in how it helps to prepare liberal students who can benefit their community and respond to crisis. Incidentally, the task force on higher education and civic engagement emphasizes the public benefits that are said to flow from higher education including a wider appreciation of democratic values, and also by highlighting the significance of general and liberal higher education (Tilak, 2000). Having said that, youth's active involvement in the decisions that affect their lives has many advantages that were emphasized by Udensi et al, (2013). In their opinion, youth have experience, knowledge, and ideas that are unique to their situation, enabling them to offer key insights and perspectives on development that adults cannot. Furthermore, youth make up most of the population; as a result, their voices can be crucial expressions of overall community needs and a resemblance of its future. This participation can be also nurtured in youth's involvement in university clubs and political activism at universities.

However, contradictory views were revealed by Mattes and Mughogho (2009) whose study on 18 countries in Africa noticed that higher education students showed few differences from high school graduates when it comes to enhancing political awareness when other levels of formal education are generally seen to make major differences. This can be explained by the potential “hothouse effect”, which means that citizenship involvement might disappear when students graduate from university (Oketch et al, 2014).

In the Lebanese context, Michel Jalakh (2019) criticizes the high expectations of the Lebanese society towards its higher education institutions and discusses the limitations that hinder achieving their civic role. He believes that higher education institutions are expected to graduate socially responsible citizens who can create movements similar to that of the 1960s -1970s, capable of solving the problems of the Lebanese democracy, and are able to run democratic elections without considering the electoral abstention and political tensions in Lebanon.

2.4.2 Community Service and Voluntary Organizations

Community service is considered as an essential means of developing lifelong commitments to civic engagement in young people, it is a way through which higher education promotes and develops social responsibility and awareness among its students. Students enrolled in higher education can participate in voluntary organizations like non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community service projects, campaigns if provided with these opportunities. To involve students in community service activities, many universities establish civic engagement centers whose role is to provide volunteering opportunities for faculty and students of every

discipline. Experts argue that only when community service activities become standardized components in university programs, youth will be empowered to become long-term contributors to local development efforts (Gottlieb & Robinson, 2006).

On the other hand, the important role civic engagement plays in the youth's lives is also worth exploring. First, it helps them develop skills, build competencies, form aspirations, gain confidence and attain valuable resources. Second, it prevents and reduces vulnerabilities to economic, political and socially unstable environments. Third, it promotes ownership and sustainability of change interventions as youth would be more motivated to engage. Finally, it helps enter the target, and in most cases, marginalized communities and build up trust and social capital (Udensi et al, 2013).

Nevertheless, youth's civic engagement is also challenging especially in developing countries whereby youth do not have clearly defined roles and opportunities that enable their active community engagement (Brennan et al, 2006). Here, it is still not clear how higher education institutions can help youth in the MENA bypass these challenges and whether they are providing them with the space to express their opinion, proper guidance, training and opportunities to be able to civically engaged citizens. Also, there is a significant lack of research regarding the level of engagement of university students in community service activities especially in the MENA region and how this engagement impacts social development. Without such data, universities and researchers are left with little understanding of whether they are realizing their mission in achieving citizenship education goals. They are also unable to compare their performance in this domain to peer institutions. Finally, they are not aware whether their students leave university prepared to work with others from diverse backgrounds to achieve social development.

2.4.3 Academic Programs and Courses

Higher education institutions can also fulfil their social role by incorporating the civic engagement aspect in its academic programs, curricula, and courses. One way is by offering service-learning courses; a non-traditional classroom teaching method which combines academic instruction, meaningful community service and critical reflective thinking to enhance student learning experience and improve their social responsibility (Gottlieb & Robinson, 2006). During this course, students are supposed to share their knowledge with the community organizations to gain more expertise. In a study conducted on eight community colleges in America, Prentice (2011) finds out that there is a statistically significant increase in service learners' civic engagement when compared to non-service learners. In the Lebanese context, some universities have introduced service-learning courses in some of its academic programs with an aim to unite classroom theory with practical work with community partners whose scope of work is relevant to the students' academic field. Community partners include NGOs, municipalities, foundations, not-for-profit firms, which are involved in community services.

Aside from providing courses related to civic engagement and community development, some universities offer graduate and undergraduate programs in this field. These programs prepare students to become effective community developers, allow students to earn fieldwork credits, and grants credits for previous educational experiences. Courses embedded in these programs teach the skills of community development, train people to work effectively in community settings to reach decisions, set priorities, and act upon problems of common concern. The first undergraduate program in Community Studies and Dynamics began in the fall of 1947 (Harris, 1982).

Since that time, this field has gained significance, and up till now many higher education institutions have associate degree, diploma, or certification programs or offer programs leading to undergraduate or graduate degrees with an emphasis on community development. Other universities included field experiences courses in their curriculum whereby students earn credits for volunteer work they do in social service programs and other practicum courses which tend to be more advanced (Harris, 1982). The indirect benefits of such courses in community development and public health in the community were discussed by Wright and Plasterer (2010) who explain this impact on the community of refugees in Kenya. Their courses have enhanced graduates' engagement with UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which has benefited the refugee camps. In the Lebanese context, some institutions offer undergraduate programs in public health, social work, community health, and other graduate programs in rural community development.

2.5 Higher Education and 21st Century Skills

When talking about higher education, it is not limited to courses it offers to its students. It is also about the skills that these students acquire throughout their university experience. Many studies link 21st century skills to employment and stress upon their importance in today's globalized, high-tech, knowledge-based world. They emphasize that employers rate these skills highest in importance for entry-level success in the workplace due to increasing global competition, and the search for new ways to increase productivity and profit (Mitchell et al, 2010; Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007). Aside from future career benefits, a study finds that 21st century skills empower students and contribute towards increasing their self- confidence, self-efficacy, and

credibility (Jacobson-Lundeberg, 2016). The reason why graduating university students are expected to come out with lifelong learning, employability, and competitiveness capacity. However, limited is the research that was conducted to evaluate students' level of 21st skills today in Lebanon.

Researchers have many interchangeable terms to refer to 21st century skills, soft skills, professional skills, interpersonal and personal skills, generic skills, key skills, adaptive skills, etc. Some further classify them into soft skills which include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, teamwork skills, commitment, reliability, empathy, etc. (Moss & Tilly, 1996; Dean, 2017). On the other hand, there are hard skills which encompass individuals' mental and physical capacities (Dean, 2017). They are referred to as a person's ability to utilize his/her specific knowledge; concepts, ideas, values, facts applied in a certain context, whether it is a learning or working context. (See [Appendix D](#) for more details related to the soft and hard skills).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Conceptual Framework

The diversity of theories prevalent to higher education and community development in the literature demands designing a new conceptual framework that can be utilized to guide the review of literature and the data collection process. A general framework was developed to articulate a conceptually consistent understanding of how higher education impacts economic and social development in the Lebanese contexts (Figure 1). Drawing on relevant theoretical paradigms related to human capital development, social development and higher education institutional literature, multiple potential pathways and interlinkages were identified. These pathways lead to an impact on four forms of outcome: employment, skills, civic engagement, and future prospects (Figure 2). The visual representation of the conceptual framework (overview and detailed) that guided this study is presented in Figure 1 and 2, below:

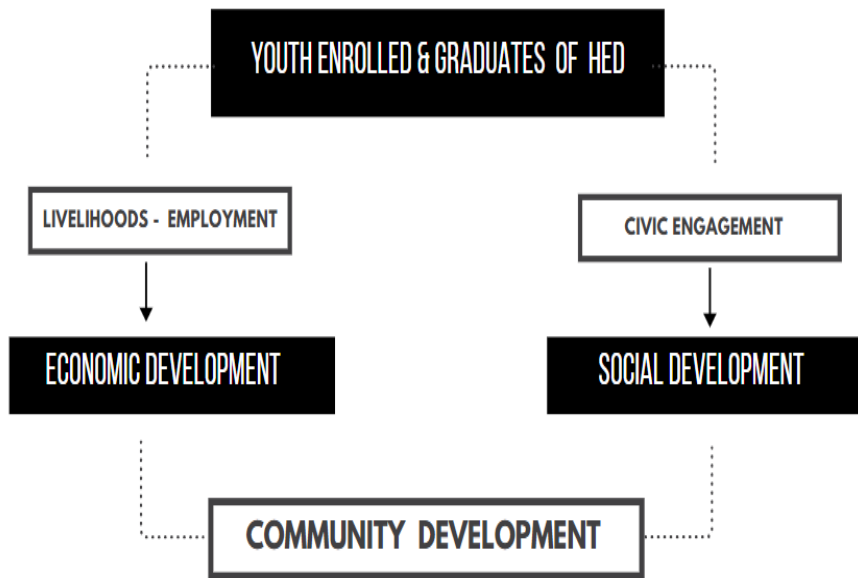


Figure 1 General Overview of the Conceptual Framework

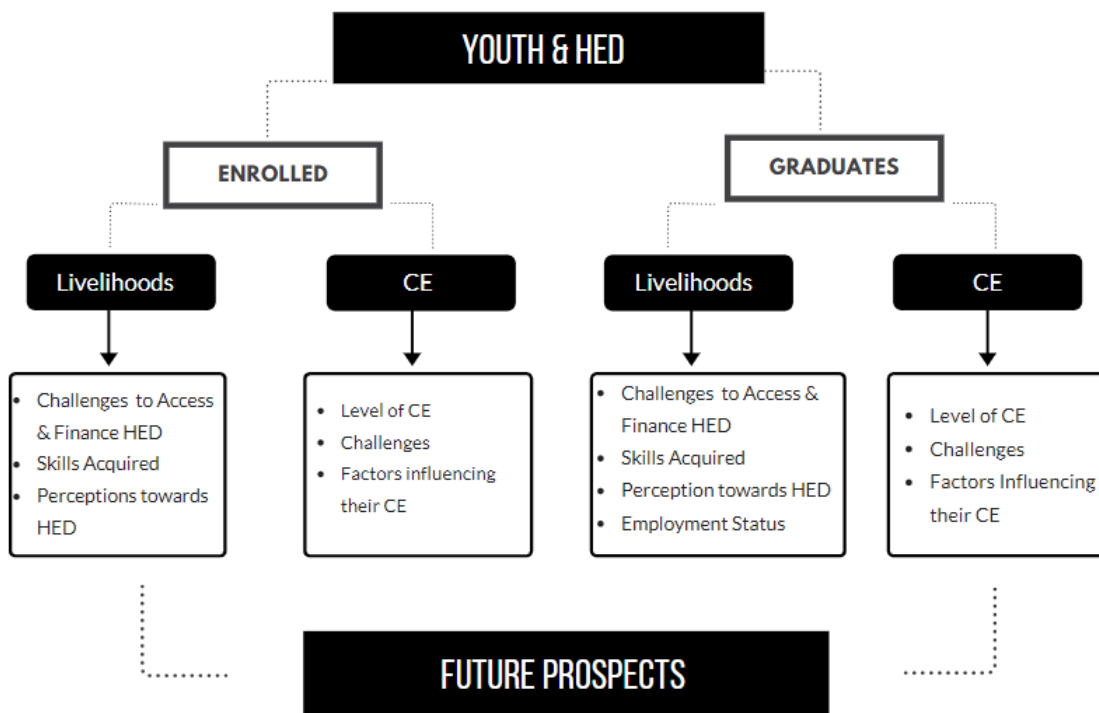


Figure 2 Detailed Conceptual Framework

As for the skills, Appendix D highlights the criteria that was adopted in this study for evaluating youth's 21st century skills. This was based on a study by Hadiyanto, et al (2018) titled: Graduate Candidates' 21st Century Skills and Challenge for the Faculty and the University in Online Learning Era.

3.2 Research Design

This study used a mixed-method approach for the sake of benefiting from the positive aspects of both research paradigms and achieving triangulation. This yields better answers to the research questions and helps in reaching more reliability and credibility. Berg emphasized the importance of triangulation as he explains that each method resembles a different line of sight directed toward the same point, and that with combining several lines of sight, "researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements" (Berg, 2001).

First, the available literature on youth, higher education, civic engagement, employment, and community development were reviewed. After that, a survey which is a quantitative data collection tool was designed with an aim to yield objective, observable, reliable facts about defined components of social reality (Allen-Meares & Lane, 1990). The surveys employed in this study include close ended-multiple choice questions, checklist, rating scale, and demographic items, that when completed by respondents can provide data on a variety of factors including personality traits, self-reported behavior, attitude, interest, setting, socioeconomic status, etc.

Following the survey, semi-structured interviews which are quantitative data collection tools were done virtually with a small sample of youth who graduated from

university. The importance of qualitative research lies in its attempt to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this study semi-structured interviews help in generating a better understanding of the current situation of graduating youth in Lebanon. And since qualitative research allows the researcher to share the understandings and perceptions of others (Berg, 2001), it is suitable for studying youth's perspectives regarding the role and impact of higher education on their economic and social life. Finally, the significance of using qualitative research in this study is that it allows for the use of inductive data analysis (Creswell, 2009). This enables the researcher to generate patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

As for the survey, the snowballing sampling technique was used to select the study participants. This technique was the most convenient and efficient sampling technique to be employed because of Covid-19 pandemic and the sporadic lockdowns. At first, few study participants with relevant characteristics were identified and filled the survey. Later, these first subjects were asked for referrals of additional subjects, and that is how the sample eventually "snowballs" from a few subjects to many subjects.

On the other hand, the purposeful sampling technique was used for recruiting participants for the semi-structured interviews. Twenty youth from different universities have been deliberately and purposefully selected from those who were involved in the survey, in order to provide an improved understanding of the perspectives of youth regarding the role of higher education and help in addressing the research questions

(Creswell, 2009). The interviews were done on encrypted and secure platforms (Zoom, WhatsApp call) to ensure the safety of the study participants.

3.4 Participants and Studied Area

A group of 120 male and female participants (ages 18-29) were included in this study and filled a survey; 55 youth who are currently enrolled in higher education in their junior and senior years, and 65 youth who graduated from higher education since no more than 4-5 years, from Ras El Matn and Roueiset El Ballout peri-urban areas in Baabda district of Mount Lebanon governorate. Among these 65 graduates, 30 were involved in semi structured interviews.

Ras El Matn is a peri-urban town in the Baabda district of Mount Lebanon Governorate that has a land area of approximately 13.0 km² and is situated on the western steep slopes of Mount Lebanon, in the upper Matn section at elevations ranging from 800m to 1000 m above sea level. Ras El Matn is 29 kilometers (45 minutes) away from Beirut and there are several possible routes that connect Ras el Matn to Beirut. The municipality of Ras El Matn estimates the current population at 10,000 residents with approximately 1500 households. Of these, around 3000 are part-time residents of the town as they live in cities, and they reside in Ras El Matn during weekends and summer break.

As for Roueiset El Ballout, it's a peri-urban village located in the Baabda district of Mount Lebanon Governorate that has a land area of approximately 1.32 km² and is situated on the western steep slopes of Mount Lebanon at 670m elevation above sea level. It is 24 kilometers away from Beirut and there are several routes that connect the

village to Beirut. The population of Roueiset El Ballout is currently estimated to be around 2800 residents. There are around 430 households in the village.

Like most mountain villages in Lebanon, the landscape of these two areas is steep and has the capacity to harbour diverse natural resources suitable for agricultural land use. Residents plant vegetables and fruits in their home gardens for their own household use. Ras El Matn is widely known for its abundance of pine trees there which people use as a source of income. With respect to the level of education in Ras El Matn and Roueiset El Ballout, local authorities indicate that illiteracy has been eradicated since 1990. Ras El Matn has one public elementary school, one secondary school and a private school, Roueiset El Ballout has only one public elementary school. After highschool, youth from both areas enroll in nearby universities in Aley, Zahle and Beirut. As for the civic engagement, both areas have several active non-governmental organizations, scouts' groups, and political parties.

Regarding the choice of the studied area, many aspects were taken into consideration. First of all, there is a scarcity of studies conducted with youth from Mount Lebanon because urban youth are usually more accessible than their rural counterparts. Another important aspect is that the studied area is 30- 40 min away from Beirut and that is why most of the youth from these villages enroll in higher education institutions in Beirut aiming to improve their socioeconomic conditions. This is important because it resembles a great opportunity to compare and contrast between these youth and other urban youth who are studying at these universities.

Concerning the choice to refer to these youth as Rural Youth, many issues were considered. The youth involved in this study are from peri-urban areas, that's why they can't be considered as urban youth because of their distinctive livelihoods, lifestyles

and larger social networks. It's true that these areas don't have the same aspect of rurality as Akkar for instance, yet, in this study they will be considered rural to differentiate them from youth living in urban areas or Beirut.

3.5 Data Collection

This study has received permission from the American University of Beirut Institutional Review Board (SBS-2020-0431). Two surveys and semi-structured interview questions were designed based on the research questions and information from the literature review. The surveys were filled by 120 youth enrolled in higher education and those who graduated from higher education ([Appendix A](#) for youth enrolled and [Appendix B](#) for youth who graduated). It was intended to involve these two groups in the study as this allows for a better understanding of the prolonged impact of higher education on civic engagement and livelihoods of students. A separate survey was prepared for each group to allow for the comparison and contrasting across the answers of both groups. What is special about the survey for youth who graduated from higher education is that it focused on aspects related to youth employment. The surveys were piloted with 10 youth with age ranging from 18-29 with an aim to test the participants' acceptability of the surveys in a matter of its length, clarity, and scale reliability and information validity. As for the semi-structured interviews, they included seven open-ended questions and were conducted virtually with 30 youth who graduated from higher education. The questions used in the interviews were divided into major categories based on the literature review ([Appendix C](#)). These interviews were not a unidirectional flow of information, and they were somehow flexible as some answers have led to further important points and the interviewer asked for further elaboration.

3.6. Data Analysis

The steps to analyze the qualitative data using the inductive approach included translating, transcribing the interview, coding the data into segments, and rearranging the segments into meaningful themes, in order to interpret the findings. The analysis was performed for the two types of data, the quantitative and the qualitative data. Thematic analysis was used for analyzing the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews. On the other hand, descriptive statistical analysis through excel was used to analyze quantitative data and summarize participant characteristics, such as age, major, income, etc. Socio-economic variables and other individual characteristics were interacted with attributes.

3.7. Limitations

As this study discusses the impact of higher education on youth's livelihoods and civic engagement from the youth perspectives, further studies can be done to tackle this topic from the perspectives of policy makers (government officials, university leaders, labor market and civil society representatives). Moreover, given the wide scope of the role that higher education can play in enhancing the civic role of its students, the measure of civic engagement in this study was limited to the items available in the survey.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings with the themes that emerged from analyzing the data by first providing the demographics of the students involved in this study. Second, it is important to highlight participants' university experience and their opinions towards the campus life, courses, internships, and acquired skills with an elaboration on the experience of youth enrolled at the Lebanese university. Third, the relationship between higher education and employment is explained from the youth perspective. Fourth, it is critical to discuss the interlinkages between rural youths' choice of major and university with the development of their community while commenting on some distinguished aspects of the rural community. Fifth, youth's opinions regarding a possible change in the near future on the local and national level are presented. Finally, youth's perspectives regarding their role in the development of their community are also reported.

4.1 Participants' Demographics

The selected population was formed of private and public university students and graduates from Ras El Matn (RM) and Roueiset El Ballout (RB). Table 1 consists of a summary of the sociodemographic characteristics of the studied population.

	Survey		Interviews
	Enrolled	Graduates	
Number of Participants	55	65	30
Gender	Male 45% Female 55%		Male 57% Female 43%
Average Age	21	25	24
City of Origin	RM 51% RB 49%	RM 58% RB 42%	RM 50% RB 50%
Universities	Private 80% Public 20%	Private 78% Public 22%	Private 87% Public 13%

Table 1 Summary of Demographics of the Studied Population

Out of the 37 universities in Lebanon, 15 are mostly attended by youth from Ras El Matn and Roueiset El Ballout and in a proximity distance to these areas. Figure 3 presents the number of students involved from each of the 15 universities.

Number of Students vs. University

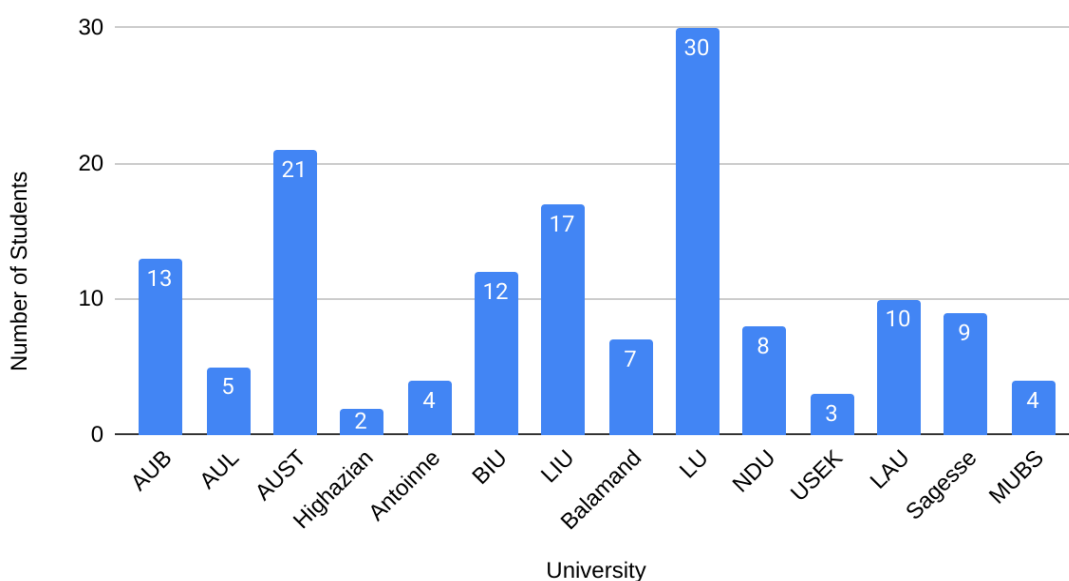


Figure 3 Number of Participants Involved in Each University

4.2 University Experiences: Discrepancy Between LU and Private University Students

Based on the detailed conceptual framework that was adopted ([Figure 2](#)) and to understand the impact of higher education on youth's livelihoods, students were asked about their perceptions towards their higher education, and they were asked to describe their university experience. Here, many participants noted that their higher education improved their livelihoods and they described it as an enriching experience which helped them build their social capital and improve their skills. Talking about social capital, an overwhelming majority stated that the most important aspect at university is that they built connections with friends, people from their field of study, professors with valuable knowledge, the university administration, and others from different backgrounds. However, few others from some universities mentioned that their university didn't have a campus life, elections, or activities. Others didn't enjoy their university years because it was near their houses, so in most cases they preferred to go home after classes instead of enjoying the campus life and for some, this wasn't an option as they had to rush to their work. Most of those enrolled at the Lebanese university referred to it as a bad experience stating:

“In LU, you cannot build connections with professors as they have limited time, so you always need to chase them to ask them questions.”

They frequently pointed out that they chose the Lebanese university because it's affordable and it has a reputation of being a topnotch university, but after their enrollment, they were shocked by the reality that it does not equip its students with skills needed in the 21st century. Sarcastically, one graduate commented on this:

“LU equips you with problem solving skills, not because they want to, but because you have to learn on your own how to solve the numerous problems that you face at the university.”

What also affected the experience of students enrolled at the LU is the status of the buildings⁴ which were old in most cases and needed a lot of maintenance.

Commenting on the quality of the education provided by LU, all participants indicated that it deteriorated, and this was mainly caused by the clientelism that has a big influence on the LU administration.

“The corruption in the LU administration reflects the bigger Lebanese system. Unqualified professors are appointed by politicians to perform the tasks given to them, and students are being accepted even if they don’t meet the criteria.”

On the other hand, the majority emphasized the significant role their university has played in improving their livelihoods especially through equipping them with certain skills. Mainly, communication skills which were explained as learning how to deal with people from different backgrounds or how to be professional while dealing with professors. For many, the teamwork aspect was embedded in the courses, and this was really beneficial, while others noted that in teamwork, one person ends up doing everything. In addition to improving their ability to think critically, problem solving, working under pressure, decision making, time management, debate skills, building self-confidence and finally leadership especially for those involved in clubs/ political parties. When it comes to IT skills, they were important in some universities, but they

⁴ Here participants were referring to the buildings of Zahle and Aley branches.

varied from one university to another as this depends on the equipment of each university.

“Even the administration has old computers at LU, how can they teach us IT skills?”

As for the impact of higher education on livelihoods through preparing its graduates for the labor market, almost all participants assured that the courses alone aren't enough.

“I realized that what we study is totally different from the labor market, as the course material was mostly theoretical, and I barely used 10% of what I learned at university”

Having said that, many participants emphasized the importance of the practical components of their curriculum especially the internship or the senior project. In most cases, students are required to fulfill certain hours, submit a report, and present to a committee which urges them to take it more seriously. Others noted that even if the internship wasn't mandatory, they made sure to do it.

Evidence from the survey reveals that 66% of graduates involved in this study did at least one internship. They clarified that it was really beneficial as it increased their connections, taught them how to deal with problems that might arise at work, helped them see how things are applied and increased their chances of employment by making them more competent among others. Few said that the internship made them realize that they don't like their major, so they shifted. In some cases, the internship ended up with a full-time job.

4.3 The Dilemma Between Certification and Employment

Regarding the role of the university in impacting youth's livelihoods through securing employment, there were several points of views. From the perspective of those whose majors depend on arts and talents, the degree isn't that important and it's not worth the investment especially if you were paying a lot of money.

“Many youths have master's degrees but still they're not employed. I am employed and still I didn't get my degree because I didn't pay the remaining tuition.” “You can work in this domain if you have the talent and experience even without a degree. Nowadays, our biggest competitors are those in the field without a degree since they offer better prices which means that they get lower earnings.”

Nevertheless, some of the participants noted that those who work without a degree would still lack the theoretical framework and the general aspects of the major which they can't study on their own.

“We are more competent since those without a degree are more specialized in what they learned on their own...”

For many, the degree is a means and it's not enough on its own. They constantly pointed out that it complements other things like skills, experience, and connections.

“The university didn't help me a lot at work. But without this degree I wouldn't get into this job, you can say it's a key or the entry point, The degree gets you the interview, but in the end, it is about who you are..”

Another factor influencing employment was the university which gives its students more chances of being accepted over the others. While exploring the impact of

a university degree on the salaries, many commented that nowadays, this isn't applicable because of the economic crisis and few pointed out that in Lebanon, the nepotism plays a big role in determining the salary.

Hence, the degree isn't enough for securing employment, and since universities aren't providing enough skills and training, youth are working hard on their own to improve their chances for employment especially during these circumstances. They mentioned that they are attending a few workshops on interviews and writing a CV, building connections, and settling up for unpaid internships just to gain more experience.

4.4 Absence of Community Development Considerations in Youth's University Choices

Talking about the impact of higher education on youth's community development through their civic engagement, it was clear that, during the current circumstances and even before, youth don't relate their higher education to the development of their community, starting from the very beginning upon choosing their major. This was conveyed when the majority had other considerations while choosing their majors and very few considered the needs of their community or how their major can help them be involved in the development process. Referring to the social ecological model (Figure 4) which shows the levels of influence on youth's choice of major, which ranges from the individual to interpersonal relationships, institutions, community, and public policy.

With this being said, the majority decided on a certain major because of their passion for this domain and that they were good in the subject at school (individual). Few realized this passion from an elective course, which urged them to change majors

and caused a delay in their graduation. And a quite good number had financial considerations, as they chose a certain major because it secures a scholarship, financial aid, or a job in the future or even that this major needs less time and money. On this point one graduate commented:

“Engineering needs time and more money, business is easier”

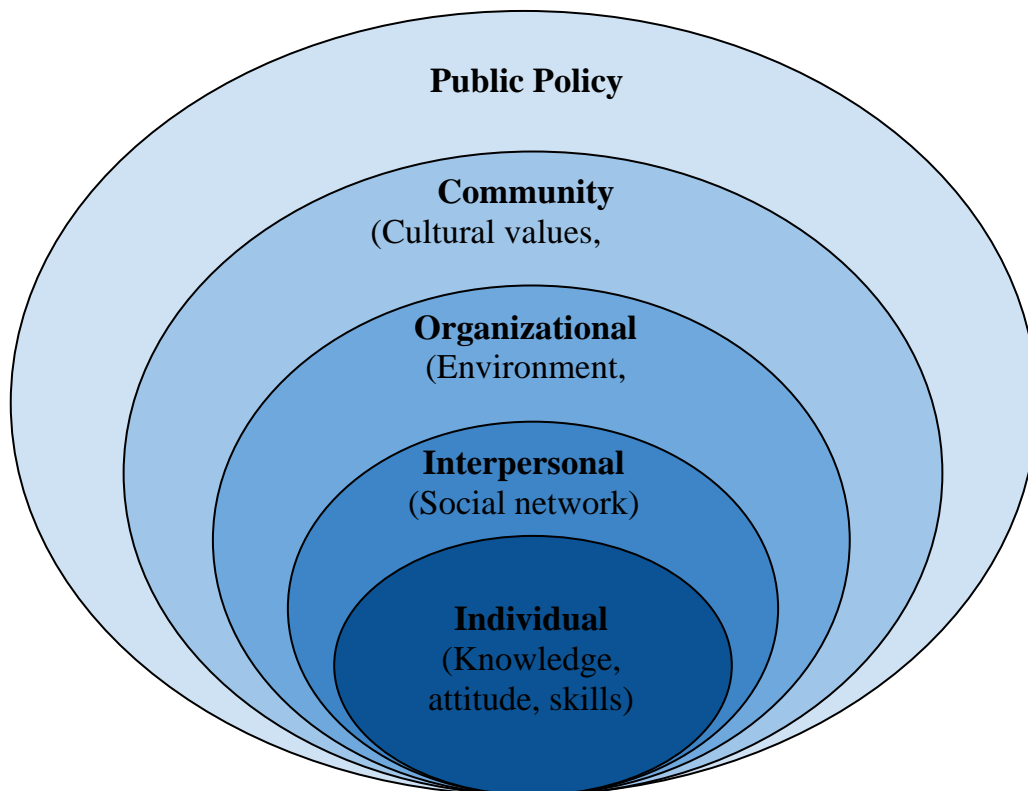


Figure 4 The Socioecological Model

A good number were influenced by their recommendations of friends or parents’ preferences (interpersonal), recommendations of their teachers at school (institutions) or certain cultural norms that appreciate a certain major more than another (community). Here another graduate commented:

“I wanted to do something related to sports. But then it is better to become an engineer, that's what everyone said”

Few others refer to the choice of major as a big challenge in their life especially when the Lebanese curriculum at high school lacks career guidance and doesn't make students aware of the needs of their community (public policy).

On the other hand, the reason behind the choice of university varied between one participant and another, however an overwhelming majority indicated that the affordability of the university was one of their basic considerations. Figure 5 reveals the ways that students relied on to secure their university tuition fees. The financial burden was a major challenge for students enrolled at university. Referring to the survey, around 78% for graduates depend on their families for paying their tuition. Yet, those who were enrolled at private universities had to seek other sources of financial aid. For 28% of the graduates and 42% of enrolled students, this was coupled with a scholarship/aid from the university. This increase is not surprising, as the economic crisis has urged all students to request financial aid from the university. Others got a student loan (11% for graduates and 4 % for enrolled). Here, it's important to note that nowadays, the banks no longer provide loans, so the decrease in the percentage of students receiving student loans is expected. Others secure the remaining tuition through their work. This is assured by some students who chose a university that allows them to work. However, what is worth noting is that 31% of graduates involved in this study relied on aid from political parties, which they refer to as a “scholarship” at some private universities. Participants indicated that in some instances it was 1 million L.L per year, others noted that the percentage of the scholarship ranges from 35% to 100% for distinguished

students or for those in extreme financial need. Here, the person who was in charge of issuing the scholarships in one of the political parties at one university noted:

“It is a win-win situation; the university uses this as a marketing strategy and the political party aims to benefit its followers... Not all of the scholarship recipients were politically affiliated, but the major criteria is that they should be from our area.”

There were opposing views when being asked about this aid from political parties. For some, this educational aid was given to many students who weren't necessarily committed to this party and that they as recipients of this aid weren't obliged to commit to any of its activities except the university elections. On the contrary, others refuse to receive any sort of political aid as they believe that this urges them to be faithful and linked to this party.

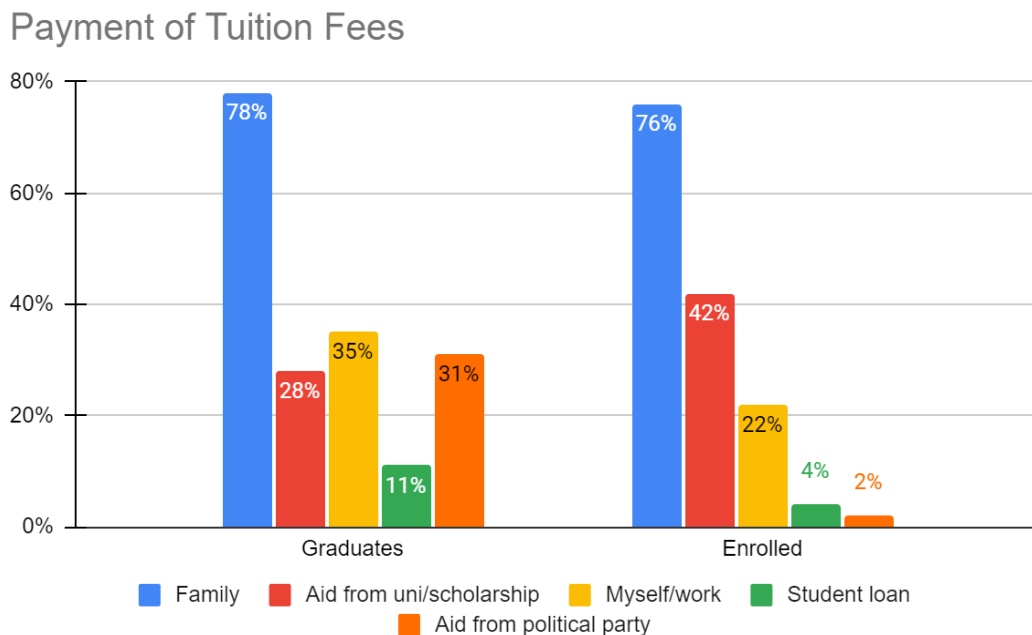


Figure 5 Payment of Tuition Fees by Students

Another factor linked to affordability is that few students wanted to enroll at LU but weren't accepted because they lacked a bribe. Some other participants chose a certain university based on the recommendations of their family, friends or school. Here, the distance between the place of residence and the university was a more prominent challenge that urged most of the youth to take dorms or live near the university if they could afford it. This wasn't the case of all students; some of them couldn't overcome this obstacle and studied in their surrounding area and familiar environment⁵ either because of their own preferences or because of their conservative families. Those who were happy with this stated:

"I am used to this environment, and we share the same background. I tried to register at a university in Beirut, but I could not adapt to it so I came back to a nearby university. The university is good especially for religious girls who find it near"

Other females commented that they really wanted to go to Beirut to study another major but their families didn't accept this out of conservatism. Most of these females are fully committed religious girls who find it hard to go to universities or even take public transportation. The reason why their parents urge them to enroll in a nearby university.

4.6 Rural Youth's Civic Engagement and Role in Community Development

As for the impact of higher education on youth's civic engagement, all participants in this study stated that it's not an easy task to fulfil their role in community development. Yet it was repeatedly mentioned that the connections, skills, and

⁵ Here it's meant as the political, religious and cultural area

knowledge the youth built at university help them fulfil their role. The main reason why they referred to volunteering in NGOs and helping in tasks that are relevant to their domain as ways to help in the development process. When asked about what drives them to be more civically engaged and involved in the community development process, they explained that it is a chance for them to give back to their community and influence others, utilize their own skills, and learn new skills.

“After meeting people from different backgrounds who succeeded in their community projects at university, I was more willing to do the same in my village. Although, I wanted to do this a long time ago, but in high school I didn’t have the confidence to do so.”

It was interesting to learn that 58% of graduates had no time to participate in the development process even if those are all unemployed. In their opinion, it is better to use this time to build their skills and competencies to get a job. As for students enrolled, 38% justified their lack of involvement because of time, this should be more considered by universities who have a role in embedding this component in its curriculum and courses. For instance, those who were obliged to fulfil certain volunteering hours or took service-learning courses noted that this made them more aware of the problems happening around, and that is how they realized their passion for the humanitarian field. This has a substantial benefit to the community and resembles a strategy adopted to instill civic engagement in students with an attempt to inform them about the struggles and injustice in the world.

As for the future plans, 91% of graduates made it clear that they’re applying for immigration or accepting any job or postgraduate opportunities abroad just to leave their village and country to live a decent life. For instance, few participants decided to

do another bachelor's degree abroad. Others noted that they accepted the first job offer they got but when they traveled the employer changed the contract and changed the deal to a lower salary. Nevertheless, few are those who still cannot make the decision to leave as they want to stay to help and are concerned with helping their parents in any way possible.

However, many noted that they're ready to help their community with their skills and expertise in any way possible. Despite the belief that civic engagement is less prominent in rural areas than urban ones as it used to be more into political engagement, many report that many youth groups are cooperating on the local level with an aim to help people in their community during these dire circumstances. They try their best to make use of the skills and connections that they acquired at university. Yet, few participants still think that doing this is not an easy task as it is difficult to cooperate with adults and influence their mentality when it comes to community development. The latter do not take them seriously or easily accept their new ideas.

4.5 Uncertainty Regarding the Near Future

It was important to ask youth about their hope for a change in the upcoming 5 years and to discuss with them how they perceive their role in the development of their rural area and the country as a whole. The below graph (Figure 6) indicates that the majority of the youth can't tell what's happening next but at least, they have more hope for a change in Lebanon than at the local level.

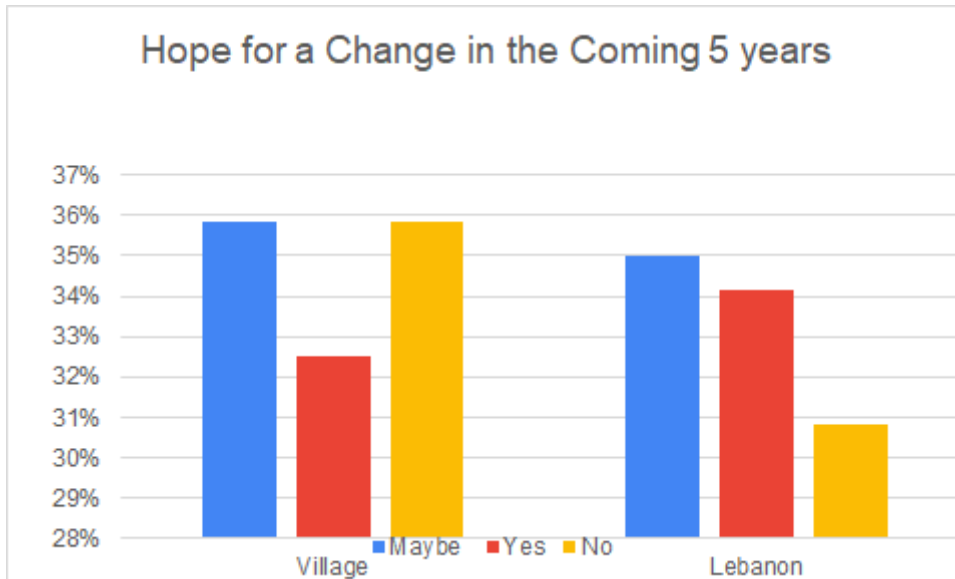


Figure 6 Youth’s Hope for a Change in the Coming 5 years.

One beacon of hope for these youth was the October 17 uprising whereby 71% of study participants answered that they were involved in it and 69% believe that this uprising will help in building a better Lebanon, explaining that the impact started to appear at the level of university elections. Here, what’s worth highlighting is that the majority of the youth who weren’t involved in NGOs because of lack of time during their undergraduate studies, were involved in the revolution because they were unemployed and desperate. This brings us back to the fact that the driving cause of the revolution was the deteriorating conditions and unemployment rate among youth.

Yet, many still believe that the real impact of this revolution will take place in the long run as people can no longer believe their politicians anymore. Even youth who are politically affiliated added that the revolution helped them raise their voice within their party stating:

“We started questioning everything and we were taken more seriously.”

The reason why many think that the number of politically affiliated youth has decreased in the last year. Commenting on this issue, many participants involved in this study believe that youth's political affiliation is related to clientelism while others inherited this affiliation from their families, were influenced by their friends or wider community or maybe fully convinced of their party's principles. In their opinion, the university resembles a space where they can meet and interact with others from different backgrounds, in this way, they are becoming more educated, open minded, aware, and critical about what is happening in their communities. At this point, they criticize and try to improve if they couldn't, they choose to leave.

“To be honest, I was a victim myself. I grew up in an environment where there was a dominant party. I thought they were doing the right thing but then after attending university and being exposed to people from different backgrounds, I started to reflect on what's happening and realized that they were telling lies and false hopes.”, “People follow them because they're making them afraid of the different others. All parties are adopting this strategy. All their speeches are about the civil war, martyrs and how we should fight to survive.”

On the other hand, those who don't believe in a change at the country level refer to the issue of volunteering with local or international NGOs noting that iNGOs and the established system distracts the youth's attention from the main problem by providing them with temporary solutions. That's how youth start to volunteer and become concerned with tackling the implications of the problems, but when it comes to affecting public policies which lead to sustainable solutions, they aren't doing enough effort.

“Maybe they adopt this strategy to silence the youth. In the end, it is for everybody’s sake that these problems still exist.”, “I believe that even in Red Cross, I was not much involved in community development. We were more responsive to crises and problems, not proactive. That is why I believe that I should be more involved in advocacy and policy implementation.”

..“Not all NGO programs are applicable and efficient in all contexts, especially in rural areas. The solution is that in the long run, the entire system would change, and the NGOs role would become limited”.

Those who have some hope assure that the development process in the village is widely affected by what is happening around in the country, yet they still believe that it’s easier to make a change at the local level than at the country level. On the contrary, some believe that the development of the village is impossible, this is mainly because of the people within this village who are not willing to make a difference. They insist that there exists a high level of ignorance especially among the adult generation who are still affiliated to political parties that aim to control the citizens through clientelism. 50% of graduates commented that the adults are still highly limiting the youth involvement in the development process, and they are not taking them seriously which resembles a major obstacle for their involvement. Nevertheless, it was also mentioned that youth who are politically affiliated in rural areas are more active than other NGOs in providing humanitarian aid because they are always competing with other parties to be able to control this area. In their opinion, if they stop, other people would dominate.

“You can see that there are no factories in the whole area, just one hospital funded by the political party. In this way people would still need their help and can’t easily become independent especially during these harsh circumstances...”

On the country level, the only hope is that people would become more aware of the corruption of the current system. After that, the political system changes and qualified people lead this country and develop it. Others stated that the immigrants can also make a change if they come back in the long run to build a better society.

“They have the experience, assets and the critical thinking of what this would lead to...If there is an initiative that brings them back, then they would make a big difference.”

But many agree that this is not an easy task, and it requires time, as this starts by raising awareness among the new generation coupled with the failure of the political parties. For many, they expect that the situation would become worse since people and mainly politicians are not concerned about the country, they are affiliated to other countries. Also, many mentioned that the Covid-19 pandemic made the situation more critical and complicated. For them, the only solution is when state actors are not politically or religiously affiliated, which is not feasible in the near future.

“Yes, I have hope that things will become better in the long run, But the issue is that I cannot wait until then.”

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Several studies described youth as the leaders of tomorrow and the source of innovation and creativity in their communities, providing ingenious solutions to problems and serving as the driving force of the economy (Appleton & Teal, 1998; UNDESA, 2019). However, this is not really the case when we talk about the Lebanese youth, especially graduating rural youth, and it remains unclear how they can involve the development of the community.

While many studies have proven that higher education can induce a positive impact on the community through social and economic development and it was used as a way to advance the livelihoods of rural youth, this study assures that the impact of higher education on the studied Lebanese rural areas has a different meaning compared to other places in the developing world. In other words, the quality of higher education rural youth receive is not achieving the advancement that it claims it does for the rural community. However, it is still contributing in a way or another to the development of the rural community despite the fact that this contribution is minimal and can be increased.

When investigating the impact of higher education on youth's livelihoods (through employment) and how it's affecting the community's economic development, it was evident that around 90% of the "leaders of tomorrow" involved in this study are planning to leave the country to work or study abroad. Despite being a coping mechanism for the youth themselves, this emigration has a negative impact on the community's economic growth and the accumulation of human capital (Dibeh et al,

2018). These youth are urged to do so as they are probably facing the hardest challenges caused by the deteriorating economic situation, political and social instability.

Compared to urban youth, these youth face more challenges, in access to higher education and post-graduation, the reason why they are not probably succeeding as much as others do. The findings assure that these youth still find ways to enroll in universities in Beirut and be involved in the development of their community despite the physical distance affecting their choice of major and university. In line with evidence from Charbel Nahas (2009) the study indicates that the funding of youth's higher education is mainly secured by their families despite their limited financial capabilities. Additionally, the study assures that the impact of higher education on improving rural youth's livelihoods and securing their employment is limited which was also noted in Jalakh's (2019) study, whereby the number of jobs offered in Lebanon, as well as the types of such jobs and their corresponding salaries, fall below the level of expectations of the Lebanese youth, and in a good number of cases make their parents' investment in their higher education a financial loss. Commenting on this point, participants believe that employment isn't only secured by a university degree. From their perspective, employment is secured by a university degree along with the experience, skills, connections and in some cases of nepotism. Despite the general belief that a university degree is the most crucial thing for employment, it was frequently reported that experience appeared to be playing a significant role in job attainment. At the university level, youth can gain this experience from internships that were a major requirement in few universities. Here, students emphasized the need for more practical experience especially in universities that focus solely on the theoretical approach. They recommended taking the internships more seriously and coordinating it

with the help of the students. And while some differences appeared between females and males in access to distant higher education institutions especially in the case of religious girls, no gender-based differences appeared on factors that predicted occupational attainment. This contradicts the findings of another study by Nasser and Abodchedid (2003) that observes a difference between male and female employment attainment.

The study finds that the relationships of political power structures and clientelism are more prevalent in these rural areas as they help in securing some basic services or human rights like that of health, education, etc. Here, education seems to become something not oriented to reach development but more toward the reproduction of a certain political power. The need for this political power structure to survive is also emphasized by familial connections, culture, and traditions. In this regard, the impact of higher education on social development through the social non-market benefits appeared to be significant. Rural youth involved in this study noted that they acquired many skills upon enrollment in higher education like communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and open mindedness after meeting people from different backgrounds. This helped them find alternatives and opportunities that are based on competencies and are not linked to political parties or family connections. It was documented in the study that most of the youth participants broke out the power of political parties as they started criticizing it after they realized that it doesn't include the things they wanted. The economic crisis and October 17 revolution played a vital role in this regard as it caused an increase in awareness among rural youth, especially within the parties. Several participants noted that they started questioning these power structures and ended up either making a change or leaving. This assures the claim that the more

education youth receive the more informed citizens they become (Michelsen et al, 2002). Additionally, based on the results of this study, the tangible impact of higher education on rural youth's livelihoods and civic engagement is not the information they receive or the content of their courses, yet the social capital which resembles the connections they build at university whether friends, professors, or even administration. Along with the skills, mindset, and critical approach that many graduating youth come back with.

On the other hand, it was reported by the study participants that in these rural areas, universities are heavily influenced by political powers who use these universities as a way to ensure the subordination of their followers through providing educational political aid. Nevertheless, it was also evident that the political aid decreased after the economic crisis because of changes in the political party's agenda and budget allocations at universities. Furthermore, it was noted that the Lebanese university is a good example of political involvement at universities. These findings concurred with a previous study by El Amine et al (1999) which indicated that each of the LUs' branches is influenced by certain political factions who are the university's president and committees and thereby influence student activities. This explains why political incentives, like in other parts of the world, prompted some political leaders to open new private and public university campuses in their rural areas to gain popular support without considering educational standards (Al Habbal, 2011).

When being asked about their perception towards their higher education institution LU students from the studies rural areas largely comment on the deterioration in the educational quality and weak infrastructure at the branches of the LU. This aligns with empirical evidence from another study by Adnan el Amine in 1998 whereby LU

students' ratings about the competency gained at the LU was 28.2% compared to 50.2% at other private universities. And since 1998, El Amin have noted that the regional branches at LU seem to contribute less to empowering students with competencies than the Beirut branches.

Another major aspect related to the impact the higher education can induce on youth's livelihoods and civic engagement is skill attainment. In this regard, the communication skills were mostly mentioned, followed by the teamwork skills, but only few reported advancement in their IT skills and other hard skills related to their majors. These findings imply that university students were not prepared enough with 21st century skills. In students' opinion, faculties as well as universities have to reform the process of learning practices and such a policy must be taken to give more emphasis on 21st skills on curriculum, syllabi, and teaching.

On the other hand, commenting on whether universities are performing their civic role and impacting youth's civic engagement, participants highlighted the advantages of service learning and the importance of incorporating civic engagement in courses. In this way, it can be integrated into academics across all disciplines and levels of higher education. This finding goes in line with other studies that emphasize the visibility and ability of service learning in reaching more students because not all of them have the time and ability to engage in activities outside the time they spend in class (Gottlieb & Robinson, 2006). What is more important in this approach, if well-coordinated and implemented, is that it encourages youth to use their expertise in their major to benefit their community outside the scope of this course. With this being said, and as previously explained by Saddiki (2016), higher education institutions in Lebanon should expand their civic engagement and social responsibility, building more informed

citizens. This will lead to an increased engagement of youth in the community development process as it gives them more confidence in their capabilities. However, this should be coupled with motivation from the youth's rural community, particularly older generations, who should take them more seriously and give them a role in all aspects of development starting with small activities to reach the municipal and national elections. Based on the findings of this study, it was reported that older generations lack trust in youth's potential and capabilities in rural development like in other parts of the world.

Finally, the study reveals that the majority of the rural youth didn't lose hope completely, but they believe that the problems Lebanon faces nowadays need more than five years to be resolved. And given that they can't wait, they are obliged to leave the country to build their future.

5.1 Recommendations

- To improve the impact of higher education on youth's livelihoods through securing employment.
 - 1) MEHE should:
 - reinforce the quality assurance mechanisms that govern the work of higher education institutions and thereby help in combating corruption and clientelism in this sector.
 - reorganize and reassess public expenditures on education to increase access to high-quality education for all Lebanese at the LU. Here, the distant branches of the Lebanese university should be taken into consideration. This can be done if MEHE focuses on increasing the efficiency and accountability of people

working in this domain. This is critical as the number of students enrolling at LU starting this academic year (2021-2022) is drastically increasing because of the economic crisis and increase in the tuitions of several private universities.

2) Universities should

- improve the linkages between education and employers, especially with their training system. Also, universities should work closely with the job market in order to align both the education and labor market, especially in rural areas, so that youth can make use of their majors to impact the development of their community to a larger extent

- give more emphasis on practical experience (internships) because experience appeared to be playing a significant role in job attainment and it's not just about the degree.

- reform the process of learning practices and such a policy must be taken to give more emphasis on 21st skills on curriculum, syllabi, and teaching. This will increase students' chances in securing employment and ultimately will positively impact their livelihoods

- To improve the impact of higher education on youth's civic engagement:

1) Universities should integrate Civic Engagement into academics across all disciplines and levels of higher education (courses, activities, majors) as some students don't have time to engage.

2) Older generations surrounding rural youth should

- Motivate them to be involved in civic engagement activities in their areas.

- Take the youth more seriously and give them a role in all aspects of development.

3) Government should ensure the participation of youth who are immigrating in major decisions related to policy making in the country.

APPENDIX A

Survey for Youth Enrolled in Higher Education Institutions (Juniors - Seniors)

Dear Participant,

My name is Nour Zeidan, a graduate student at the American University of Beirut (AUB). I am inviting you to participate in a research study about: Youth and Higher Education: Implications on Livelihoods and Civic Engagement. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of Higher Education on Youth's livelihoods and civic engagement activities.

You are kindly asked to fill a short survey of 8 sections. You are invited because we are targeting youth who are 18-29 years old from Roueiset El Ballout and Ras El Matn villages who are currently enrolled in university. The estimated time to complete this survey is approximately 5 to 10 minutes.

Please read the consent form and consider whether you want to be involved in the study.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the principal investigator (Dr. Ali Chalak at ac22@aub.edu.lb)

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Section 1: Sociodemographic

1) Gender: Male Female Other I prefer not to answer

2) Age: -----

3) Level of education

University Postgraduate Other (please specify) -----

4) City of Origin -----

5) City of current residence -----

6) Marital status

Married Single Divorced Other (please specify) -----

7) Who is the breadwinner in your family? (Check all that apply)

Mother Father Brother / Sister Grandparent
 Aunt or Uncle Yourself Wife/ Husband
 Other (please specify) -----

8) What is the household total income per month (L.L)?

Less than 500,000 500,000 to 1,000,000 LL
 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 LL 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 LL
 More than 3,000,000 L.L I prefer not to answer

Section 2: Enrollment in Higher Education

9) Are you currently enrolled in university? Yes No

10) Please specify the name of the university you are enrolled in: -----

11) Please specify your year at university: -----

12) Is it a private or a public university? Private Public

13) Please specify your major: -----

14) What challenges did you face in access to higher education (higher education)?

Check all that apply:

Distance from university (tuition fees) Financial challenges
 Education is not important to my parents (disability, etc.) Health problems
 Helping parents perform a task Parents' opposition
 others, please specify: -----

15) Why did you choose this higher education institution? Check all that apply:

Proximity to my residence
 Affordable (low) tuition fees

- ensures the highest quality education for the profession of my choice
- Ease of admission procedure
- Ease of studying
- Recommendations of friends or relatives
- Random choice

16) Why did you choose your major/ field of study? Check all that apply:

- It's interesting for me It secures a job in the future
- Skills in the subject
- My parents' choice My siblings recommendation
- Related subject in high school
- Other (please specify) -----

17) How are you financing your education? Check all that apply:

- Family Student loan Scholarship
- Financial aid from university

Myself/Work

- Aid from a political party/ club Others, please specify:

18) Do you think your studies prepare you for the labor market? Yes
 No

19) What languages do you know and what is your level in each?

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
English			
French			
Arabic			

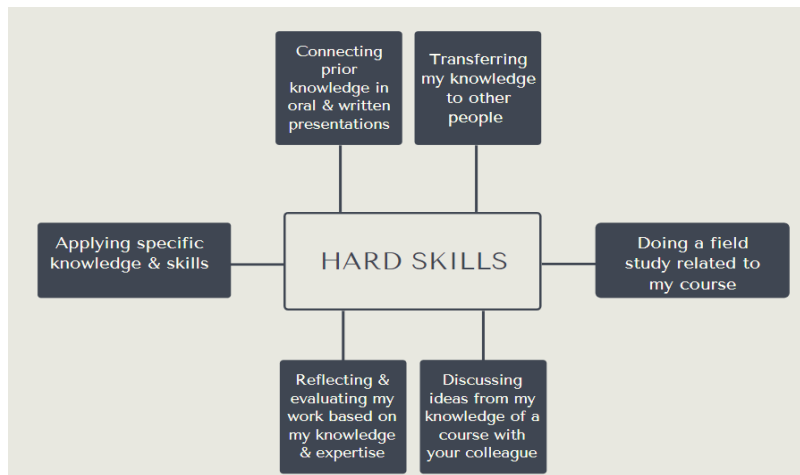
Section 3: Skills

How much do you rate each of the following skills on a scale from 1 to 10 (considering 10 as the highest)?

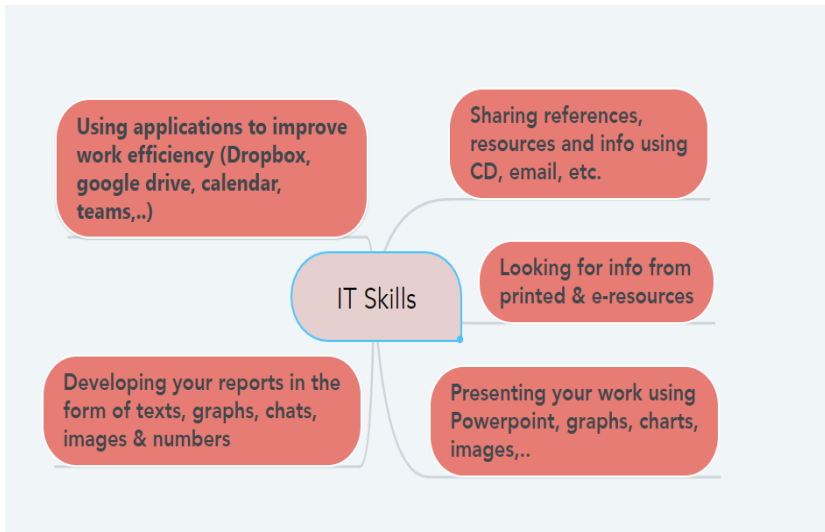
20) How much do you rate your communication skills considering the following picture? -----/10



21) How much do you rate your hard skills considering the following picture? ---/10



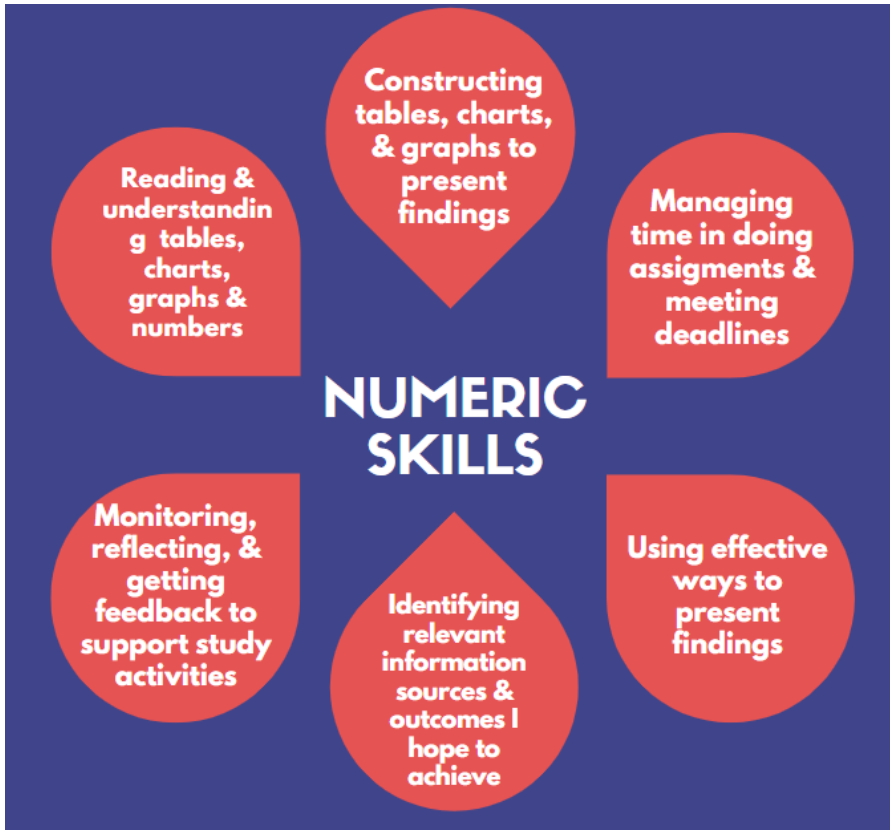
22) How much do you rate your IT skills considering the following picture? -----/10



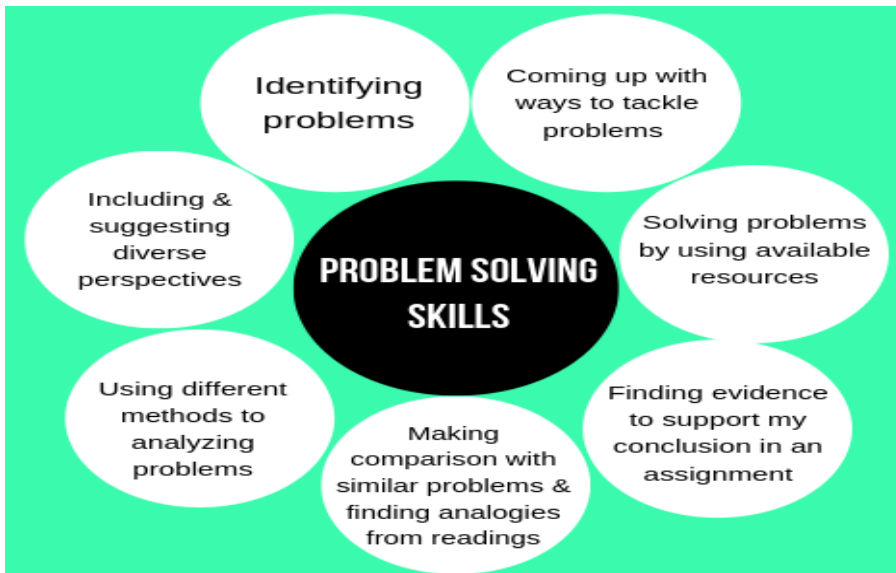
23) How much do you rate your learning skills considering the following picture?
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24) How much do you rate your numeric skills considering the following picture?
-----/10



25) How much do you rate your problem-solving skills considering the following picture? /10



26) How much do you rate your teamwork skills considering the following picture? -----/10



Section 4: University Assessment

27) On a scale from 1-5, how do you assess your higher education on each of the below items? (considering 5 as the highest)

	Item
	It gives all the necessary knowledge to its students
	They prepare good specialists in their domains
	They apply modern methods of teaching (interactive techniques, demonstratic materials, etc.
	They focus on practical skills development
	The teachers' are qualified and professional qualifications
	the quality of the libraries and electronic information sources
	Focus on life skills (like time management, teamwork, etc)
	They have modernized educational programs and content of courses
	Course material is found online
	Course content is correspondent to labor market demands
	They have cooperation and exchange educational programs with foreign educational institutions

Section 5: Civic Engagement

28) Are you currently a member, or a volunteer for any of the following groups?
(Check all that apply). If the answer is no, then skip to question number 29

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> University clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> Political parties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NGOs, etc | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> Others----- | <input type="checkbox"/> I am not part of
any |

29) If yes, does this group contribute to the development of your village? How?

30) Specify your self-ranking of your level of involvement in local activities, events, or organizations (1 – not at all active to 4 – very active)

31) What is the **number hours per week** spent on organized activities with other members of this community? -----

32) What are the skills that you acquired from your university that you are using in your volunteering work? (Check all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership skills | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify ----- | | |

33) If no, please specify the reason why you are not involved:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of time | <input type="checkbox"/> My engagement won't make a difference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> This isn't something of interest to me | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of trust in these organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify ----- | |

34) Were you involved in the October 17 uprising? Yes No

35) Do you believe that this uprising will build a better Lebanon? Yes No

Section 6: Future Prospects

36) What are your Future Plans? (**Please choose one answer**)

- plan to start your own business
- find any job you can
- find a job by profession abroad
- no employment-related plans.
- apply for immigration
- pursue further studies (masters, PhD,..)

37) If you have a chance, would you leave Lebanon?

- Yes No

38) If your answer was yes, what are the reasons behind your immigration application? Can you further clarify?

39) To what extent do you agree with this statement: (from a scale of 1 -5)

- I am sure, if I have a university degree, I'll have a better future.

40) Do you believe that things will become better in the upcoming 5 years in Lebanon in general? (Social, economic, justice system)?

- Yes No Maybe

41) Do you believe that things will become better in the upcoming 5 years in your village? How will your village be impacted?

- Yes No Maybe

Section 7: Role in Community Development

42) How do you perceive your role in the development of your community? Do you wish to stay in your village?

43) What influences your involvement in community development? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving a money reward | <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving recognition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to use my skills | <input type="checkbox"/> To get known |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity for new skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Being asked by friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To influencing others | <input type="checkbox"/> To set an example for others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being asked by local leaders | |

44) What are the obstacles that you may face through your involvement in the development of your community? (Check all that apply)

- Not being taken seriously Not being asked to participate

No identified role for youth
 Friends disapproving

Feeling intimidated

Not having time to commit

Not being recognized

No assignment to committees
 Not having skills to offer

Not having transportation

Not being sure of the benefit

APPENDIX B

Survey for Youth Graduated from Higher Education Institutions (max 4-5 years post-graduation)

Dear Participant,

My name is Nour Zeidan, a graduate student at the American University of Beirut (AUB). I am inviting you to participate in a research study about: Youth and Higher Education: Implications on Livelihoods and Civic Engagement. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of Higher Education on Youth's livelihoods and civic engagement activities.

You are kindly asked to fill a short survey of 8 sections. You are invited because we are targeting youth who are 18-29 years old from Rweiset El Ballout and Ras El Matn villages who graduated from university. The estimated time to complete this survey is approximately 5 to 10 minutes.

Please read the consent form and consider whether you want to be involved in the study.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the principal investigator (Dr. Ali Chalak at ac22@aub.edu.lb)

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Section 1: Sociodemographic

1) Gender Male Female Other
 I prefer not to answer

2) Age: -----

3) Level of education
 University Postgraduate Other (please specify) -----

4) City of Origin -----

5) City of current residence -----

6) Marital status

Married Single Divorced Other (please specify) -----

7) Who is the breadwinner in your family? (Check all that apply)

Mother Father Brother / Sister Grandparent
 Aunt or Uncle Yourself Wife/ Husband
 Other (please specify) -----

8) What is the household total income per month (L.L)?

Less than 500,000 500,000 to 1,000,000 LL
 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 LL 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 LL
 More than 3,000,000 L.L I prefer not to answer

Section 2: Enrollment in Higher Education

9) Have you successfully completed your university degree? Yes
 No

10) Please specify the name of the university you were enrolled in: -----

11) Is it a private or a public university?

Private Public

12) Please specify your major: -----

13) What challenges did you face in access to higher education (higher education)?

Check all that apply:

Distance from university (tuition fees) Financial challenges
 Education is not important to my parents (disability, etc.) Health problems
 Helping parents perform a task Parents' opposition

: others, please specify: -----

14) Why did you choose this higher education institution? Check all that apply:

- : Proximity (near) to my residence
- : Affordable (low) tuition fees
- : ensures the highest quality education for the profession of my choice
- : Ease of admission procedure
- : Ease of studying
- : Recommendations of friends or relatives
- : Random choice

15) Why did you choose your major/ field of study? Check all that apply:

- : It's interesting for me : It secures a job in the future
- : Skills in the subject : My parents' choice
- : My siblings' recommendation : Related subject in high school
- : Other (please specify) -----

16) How did you cover your university tuition fees? (check all that apply)

- : Family : Student loan : Scholarship
- : Financial aid from university : Myself/Work
- : Aid from a political party/ club : Others, please specify

17) Have you ever had practical work experience (internship) as part of your studies?

- : Yes : No

18) if Your answer was yes, Do you think that the work experience you have done will be useful for your professional career? : Yes : No

19) Do you think your studies have prepared you for the labor market?

- : Yes : No

20) What languages do you know and what is your level in each?

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
English			
French			
Arabic			

21) Since how many years have you graduated? -----

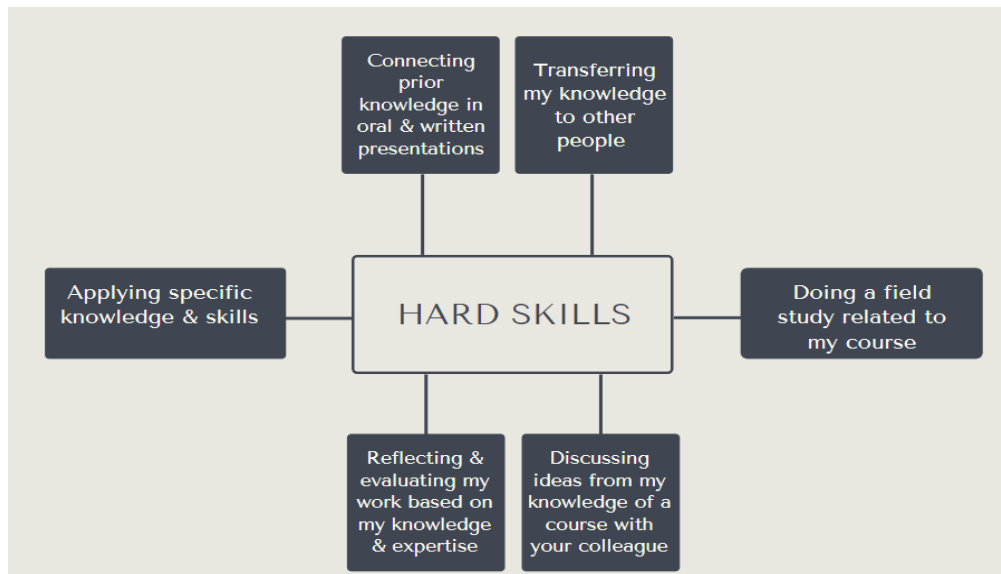
Section 3: Skills

How much do you rate each of the following skills on a scale from 1 to 10 (considering 10 as the highest)?

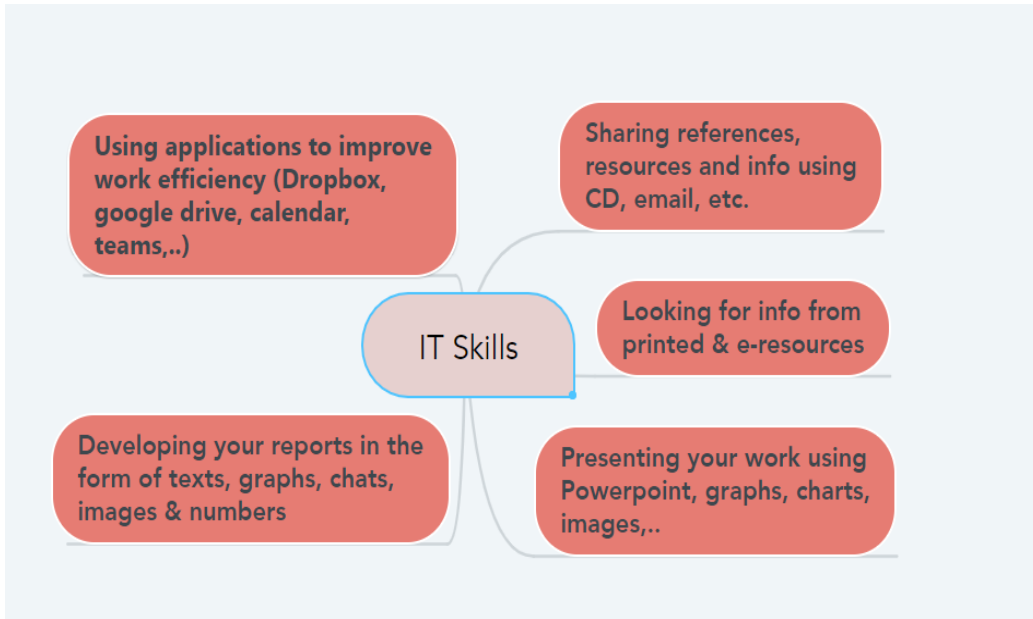
22) How much do you rate your communication skills considering the following picture? -----/10



23) How much do you rate your hard skills considering the following picture? -----/10



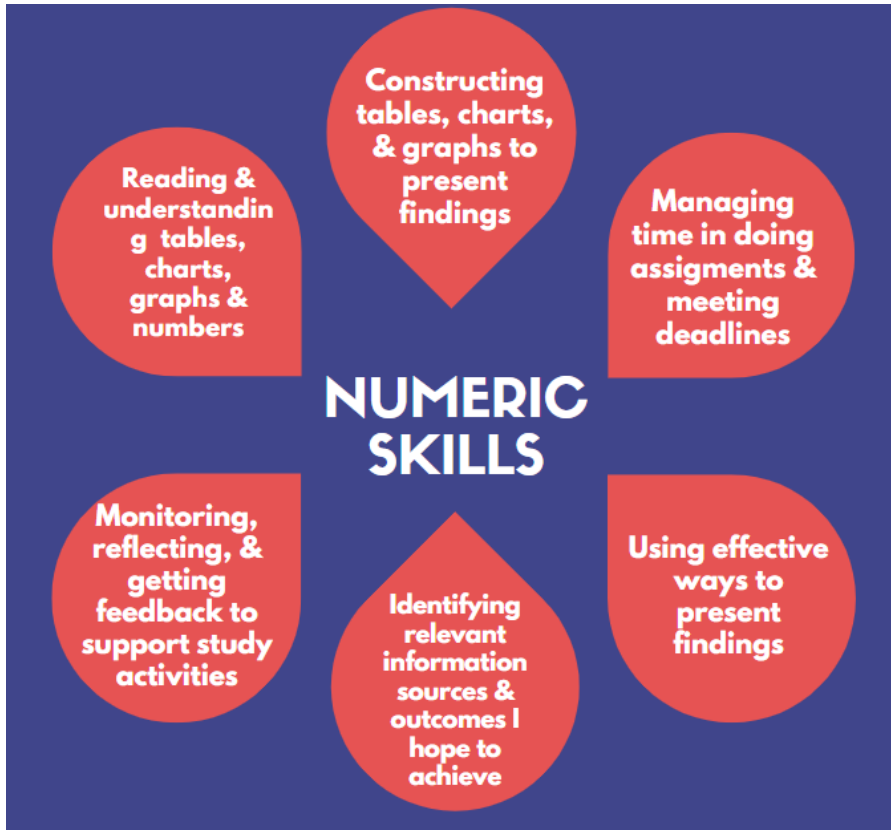
24) How much do you rate your IT skills considering the following picture?
-----/10



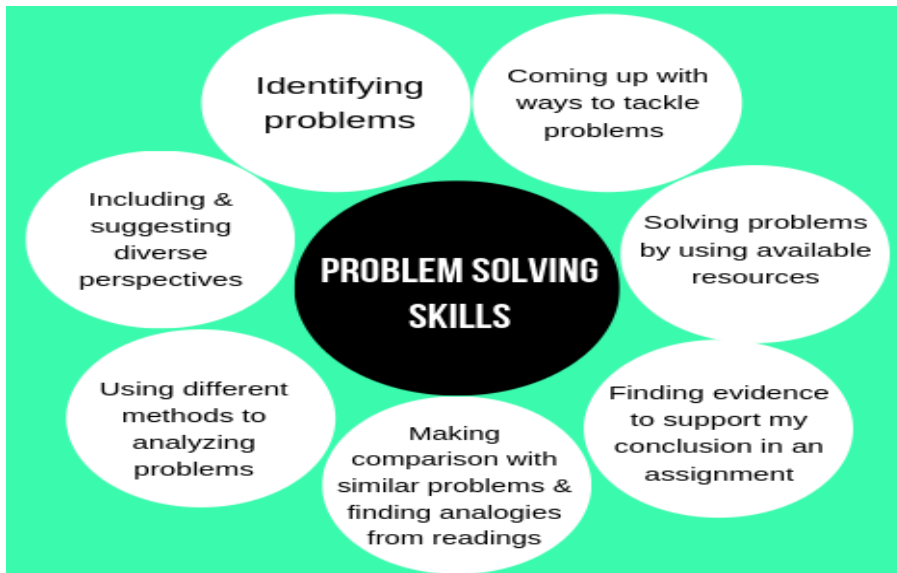
25) How much do you rate your learning skills considering the following picture?
-----/10



26) How much do you rate your numeric skills considering the following picture?
-----/10



27) How much do you rate your problem-solving skills considering the following picture? -----/10



28) How much do you rate your teamwork skills considering the following picture? -----/10



Section 4: University Assessment

29) On a scale from 1-5, how do you assess your higher education on each of the below items? (considering 5 as the highest)

	Item
	It gives all the necessary knowledge to its students
	They prepare good specialists in their domains
	They apply modern methods of teaching (interactive techniques, demonstration materials, etc.
	They focus on practical skills development
	The teachers' are qualified and professional qualifications
	the quality of the libraries and electronic information sources
	Focus on life skills (like time management, teamwork, etc)
	They have modernized educational programs and content of courses
	Course material is found online
	Course content is correspondent to labor market demands

	They have cooperation and exchange educational programs with foreign educational institutions
--	---

Section 5: Employment Status

30) Are you currently employed? Yes No

31) If the answer is no, then skip to question 28.

If the answer is yes, your job is:

Permanent Temporary Seasonal work
 Free lance

Are you satisfied with your job? Yes No
 Now skip to question 32.

32) If not, do you seek to find work in Lebanon? Yes No

33) Why aren't you employed? (Check all that apply):

- lack of sufficient workplaces
- tendency toward hiring acquaintances
- Economic crisis
- Employers set unrealistic requirements
- Employment Agencies don't fulfill their functions
- Education institutions don't provide applied knowledge/skills
- Low salary
- Qualification of job seekers is higher than labor market requirements
- Other, please specify -----

34) How are you facing this issue (Check all that apply):

- Accept a job even if it's not within your field of study
- Accept a part time job
- Improving your skills and competencies to find a better job
- Connecting with people in events and conferences
- Immigrating
- Volunteering in NGOs
- Other, please specify -----

35) Would you accept a job even if it was...? (Check all that apply)

- Badly paid unsanitary or tiring
- Far from your place of residence Different from your area of specialization
- Below your skill level Inconsistent with your ethical principles

36) How do you plan to improve your competencies for a job? (Check all that apply)

- : Attending trainings within your domain
- : Enrolling in unpaid internships within your field of study
- : Attending short term courses related to your major
- : Life skills trainings
- : Trainings on how to get a job/ interview/ cv etc
- : Nothing
- : Other, please specify -----

Section 6: Civic Engagement

37) Are you currently a member or a volunteer for any of the following groups? (Check all that apply). If the answer is no, then skip to question number 38

- : Youth clubs
- : University clubs
- : Political parties
- : NGOs, etc
- : Sports clubs
- : Religious groups
- : Music clubs
- : Others
- : I'm not part of any

38) If yes, does this group contribute to the development of your village? How?

39) Specify your self-ranking of your level of involvement in local activities, events, or organizations (1 – not at all active to 4 – very active)

40) What is the **number hours per week** spent on organized activities with other members of this community? -----

41) What are the skills that you acquired from your university that you are using in your volunteering work? (Check all that apply)

- : Teamwork
- : Computer skills
- : Communication skills
- : Critical thinking
- : Leadership skills
- : Other, please specify -----

42) If no, please specify the reason why you are not involved

- : Lack of time
- : My engagement won't make a difference
- : This isn't something of interest to me
- : Lack of trust in these organizations

Other, please specify -----

43) Were you involved in the October 17 uprising? Yes No

44) Do you believe that this uprising will build a better Lebanon?

Yes No

Section 7: Future Prospects

45) What are your Future Plans **(Please check one answer)**

- plan to start your own business
- find any job you can
- find a job by profession abroad
- no employment-related plans.
- apply for immigration
- pursue further studies (masters, PhD,..)

46) If you have a chance, would you leave Lebanon? Yes No

47) If your answer was yes, what are the reasons behind your immigration application? Can you further clarify?

48) Do you believe that things will become better in the upcoming 5 years in Lebanon in general? (Social, economic, justice system)?

- Yes No Maybe

49) Do you believe that things will become better in the upcoming 5 years in your village? How will your village be impacted?

- Yes No Maybe

Section 8: Role in Community Development

50) How do you perceive your role in the development of your community? Do you wish to stay in your village?

51) What influences your involvement in community development? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Receiving a money reward | <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving recognition |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to use my skills | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To get acquainted |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Opportunity for new skills | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being asked by friends |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To influencing others | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To set an example for others |

Being asked by local leaders

52) What are the obstacles that you may face through your involvement in the development of your community? (Check all that apply)

- Not being taken seriously
- Not being asked to participate
- No identified role for youth
- No assignment to committees
- Friends disapproving
- Not having skills to offer
- Feeling afraid
- Not having transportation
- Not having time to commit
- Not being sure of the benefit
- Not being recognized

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Gender:

Age:

Major:

University:

- 1) Let us begin by having you describe some background information about yourself, your major, field of interest, experience, how long have you been graduating?
- 2) Can you please tell us whether you faced any challenges when you wanted to access higher education? How did you choose your major/ field of study? Can you tell us more how you were able to cover your university tuition fees? (Parents, student loan, scholarship, Financial aid, aid from a political party/ club, work)
- 3) Tell us more about your university experience. How did you spend your time, what about the courses, building connections, relationship with professors, were you involved in any extracurricular activity at university? If your answer is yes, then why did you get involved, and how? How did you learn about these activities? Were there any incentives for students to engage in them?
- 4) Have you ever had practical work experience as part of your studies? (Internship, practicum, any course, etc? If your answer was yes, do you think that this experience was useful for your professional career?
- 5) What is the most thing that you learned at university that you think is really valuable and important and that you will need in your future job? And to what extent do you think your studies have prepared you for the labor market?
- 6) Do you think that your university years improved your communication, IT, problem-solving, and teamwork skills? If yes, how? And which of these skills did you most improve? Which is least? Why?
- 7) And are you currently employed?
 - If yes, tell us more about your job and is it well paid?
 - If not, do you seek to find work in Lebanon? Or outside Lebanon? Why do you think you're not employed? How are you facing this issue?
 - How do you plan to improve your competencies for a job?
- 8) Are you currently a member, participant or a volunteer for any of the social, volunteering groups?
 - If yes, does this group contribute to the development of your village? How?

- If no, please specify the reason why you're not involved
- Were you involved in the October 17 uprising? Do you believe that such uprisings will build a better Lebanon? Why or why not?

9) What are your Future Plans? Are you planning to immigrate? If yes, what are the reasons behind your immigration application? Can you further clarify?

10) Do you believe that things will become better in the upcoming 5 years in Lebanon in general? Why yes, or why not? Or will things remain the same? (Social, economic conditions – employment, Justice system of the country, political system)? Do you believe that things will become better in the upcoming 5 years in your village?

11) How do you perceive your role in the development of your community? Do you wish to stay in your village?

APPENDIX D

CRITERIA FOR SKILL EVALUATION

SOFT SKILLS	
Learning Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving a performance in the quality and way of work. - Assessing the effectiveness and efficiency. - Identifying factors that had an impact on my learning outcomes. - Setting and planning realistic targets of work. - Learning independently at times and being responsible for organizing your own tasks. - Getting conclusion from different angles of view when completing - Adapting learning strategy (i.e. independent, collaborative and cooperative) as necessary to improve your academic performance.
IT Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looking for information from e- resources and printed resources. - Sharing references, resources and information using CD, email, etc. - Developing your report (assignment) in the form of text, graphs, chart, image & numbers. - Using software or application features to improve work efficiency. - Developing a refined presentation by combining text, graph, chart images, video, & numbers.
Numeric Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading & understanding & constructing tables, charts, graphs, and numbers. - Using effective ways to present findings - Managing time & dealing with any difficulties to meet deadlines. - Monitoring, getting feedback & improving calculation skills to support activities. - Identifying the relevant information sources and outcomes, I hope to achieve.
Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making a class presentation. - Using different formats for presenting information. - Using varied vocabulary and expressions. - Integrating ideas or information from various sources.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summarizing key issues from a classmate's oral presentation. - Giving feedback (question, comment, or suggestion) - Writing a report clearly, in detail and precisely. - Using English as an average of oral and written communication.
Problem-Solving Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying problems in doing assignments. - Coming up with ways to tackle a problem. - Making comparisons with similar problems and finding analogies from readings or own experience. - Finding and showing evidence to support my conclusions in an assignment or in a discussion. - Using different methods to analyze the problem.
Teamwork Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with others on activities/projects. - Having discussion in different races, ethnic and religions. - Resolving conflicts occurred in group work. - Sharing constructive feedback. - Seeking effective ways to keep team members motivated. - Respecting diverse perspectives from different races, religion, gender, academic achievement etc) in learning activities. - Thinking and offering ideas to a group work to complete and achieve better output of a group assignment.
HARD SKILLS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applying specific knowledge skills. - Discussing ideas from your specific knowledge of a course with your colleague. - Doing a field study related to my subject course. - Reflecting and evaluating my work and its outcome based on my subject knowledge and expertise. - Connecting prior knowledge with topic of discussion in oral and written presentation. - Transferring your knowledge to other people.

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