



Improving Job Prospects for Palestinian Youth: The Role of Internships and Volunteering in Enhancing Employment Opportunities Amidst Conflict

Samer A. Salameh

Arab American University - Palestine

Abstract

This in-depth study investigates the role of internships and voluntary work in improving employment opportunities for Palestinian youth, graduates, and new entrants to the labour market, especially in the on-going political and economic crisis still facing the country. The Palestinian labour market still suffers from continuous instability and high unemployment rates, particularly among youth, graduates, and women. This is due to limited economic opportunities and political instability, which undermines youth opportunities and prevents them from accessing decent work opportunities. In Palestine, internships and volunteering are promoted as effective strategic tools to bridge the gap between educational outcomes at all levels and labour market needs by providing participants with the practical, technical, and life skills required by employers. Based on theories of human and social capital and career path, this study uses a quantitative empirical approach to measure the impact of these programs on the ability of youth and graduates to access available job opportunities compared to their peers who did not participate in these programs in the conflict-affected Palestinian context. This study aims to shed light on the importance of internships and volunteering in bridging the gap in the Palestinian labour market between educational outcomes and market needs, thus adding a valuable research contribution to the Palestinian and global scientific and research library. After analysing the results of a survey of 398 participants of all ages and educational levels, using several statistical tools, including correlation coefficients and logistic regression coefficients, the results answered the research question: Will young people and recent graduates who train and/or volunteer find employment opportunities faster and better than others in light of the on-going conflict in Palestine? The study also presented a set of practical and policy recommendations to maximize the benefits of internships and volunteering programs to increase their positive impact on employment opportunities for participants. This research will clearly contribute to presenting new insights on how training and volunteering can enhance youth's resilience and integration into the labour market.

Key Words: Education Outcomes, Employment Opportunities, Internships, and Volunteering.

Introduction

Palestine suffers from historical and ongoing conflicts, where young people and graduates face significant challenges in having decent and stable jobs. High unemployment rates, limited economic opportunities, and frequent disruptions in education and careers path, often lead to the creation of a large segment of society that constantly struggles to access the labor market and win decent job (Diwan, 1999). In light of this reality, the Palestinian government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have encouraged young people and graduates to engage in specialized internship (acquiring skills in a realistic work environment) and volunteering (unpaid activities that aim to develop skills or contribute to society) programs as new and creative means of skills and competences building that will contribute to bridging the gap between the education outcomes and labor market needs. These programs are seen as practical instruments of helping young people, graduates, and job seekers to acquire the needed skills and build connections with employers and business owners, thus enhancing their chances of obtaining a job (Brewer, 2013). Skills and networking are considered means that give their owner a competitive advantage in the market and increase the likelihood of obtaining a job opportunity (O'Donnell et al., 2002). Although countries suffering from conflicts often weaken the chances of young people to obtain a decent job. Internships, acquiring the necessary skills, and building relationships with employers often have positive effects on the chances of young people to access the labor market (Oxenbridge & Evesson 2012).

Accordingly, through this research paper, we will try to explore the role and impact of internships and volunteering in improving job opportunities for Palestinian youth and new graduates. It is common that job opportunities for young people and new graduates will increase as their technical, soft, life skills and experiences increase (Brewer, 2013), so that those with skills and experiences gain a greater competitive advantage when competing for available job opportunities (Kak, 2002).

This study will shed light on the role and impact of internships and volunteering programs in addressing unemployment among young people, especially in the Palestinian context directly affected by the conflict. Based on the results, we will provide policymakers, educators, and program designers with practical recommendations that will contribute to improving community initiatives that encourage internships and voluntary work programs.

In a world dominated by political and economic conflicts, unemployment remains the main dilemma facing politicians and policy makers, which requires innovative solutions to address it (Alt 1985). This research comes to emphasize the importance and necessity of investing in innovative solutions that unleash the potential of young people, even in the most difficult, fragile, and challenging circumstances.

Literature Review

Unemployment, especially among youth and recent graduates, is a global issue that many countries suffer from, especially those experiencing internal conflicts or wars with their neighbors, as is the case in Palestine. Political and economic instability and measures

that restrict access to available resources create barriers and challenges to the opportunities of youth and graduates to obtain a suitable and decent job (Kabbani & Kothari 2005). Through the experiences and expertise accumulated during the previous years in Palestine, especially the years of the first Intifada, it has been widely confirmed that training, on-the-job training, internships, and volunteering are considered a creative and effective way to enhance the opportunities of youth and graduates involved such an activity to obtain a job opportunity faster than others. The reason for this is that participants in such programs acquire practical skills and real-life experience and build a network of relationships that contribute to giving them a competitive advantage and enable them to win available jobs more and faster than others (Rutman 2023). Despite this fact, while the benefits of training and volunteering have been documented in stable contexts, the effectiveness of these programs in conflict-affected areas remains under-documented, particularly in the Palestinian context. Previous studies have demonstrated that training (on-the-job training/internships) significantly improves the employability of participants in a consistent and sustainable manner. Research by Choe et al., (2023) highlights that training contributes significantly to bridging the gap between academic education and labour market needs, as training provides participants with technical and life skills that employers prefer over purely academic knowledge. However, in the Palestinian context, the provision of training often has limited impacts due to political and economic instability and the family-dominated nature of the Palestinian private sector (Khatib 2022). Despite this reality in Palestine, some studies indicate that well-designed training programs (including the on-the-job training and internships) according to the needs of the Palestinian labor market are still able to achieve tangible results by enhancing participants' chances of obtaining a suitable and decent job (Hilal 2019). Despite these conclusions, there is still a lack of empirical research on the quality and effectiveness of these programs in countries suffering from conflicts such as Palestine, which are often poorly resourced and institutional support is absent, which hinders the implementation of effective training programs. As for voluntary work, it still plays an important role in enhancing job opportunities. According to Giancaspro & Manuti (2021), volunteering helps participants develop skills that can be transferred to the workplace and benefit from them significantly. For example, teamwork skills, communication skills, problem-solving, and effective negotiation are essential and even urgent skills for all businesses, so their holder will gain a competitive advantage over others and thus enhance their chances of obtaining a job faster than the others. All of these skills can be easily acquired by engaging in various voluntary works. In areas suffering from conflicts such as Palestine, volunteering is considered to have an additional value, as volunteering contributes significantly to giving young people the opportunity to participate in supporting their local communities by offering their time and effort to accomplish community work that often requires special resources that are not usually available, while gaining practical experience and special skills that will enable them to benefit from it to access the labor market (Massad et al., 2018). For Palestinian youth, volunteering has contributed in a special and influential way to strengthening the resilience of young people in their land and the sense

of national belonging, which has contributed significantly to facing various challenges, including the challenges of the labor market, which suffers from restrictions and scarcity in employment needs due to the fragility of the Palestinian economy and its ability to generate sufficient job opportunities (Faraj 2022). Therefore, we see that current literature focuses on the individual benefits of voluntary work without considering how to expand the scope of these programs and try to align them with employment strategies in areas suffering from conflict. Although internships and volunteering have significant benefits at the individual, societal and institutional levels, their effective implementation in conflict-affected areas such as Palestine still faces many challenges and difficulties. Political and economic instability, the fragility of the Palestinian economy, and limited institutional support, especially from private sector institutions, often hinder the implementation of highly effective training and volunteering programs (Sayre & Al-Botmeh 2009). If we also add cultural and social barriers, especially those related to women's participation in training and volunteering programs, they add socio-cultural challenges to the political and economic challenges (Awad 2010). While some studies have highlighted these challenges, there is still a lack of empirical research that shows the impact of internships and volunteering on employment opportunities for youth and graduates, especially in the Palestinian context. For example, few studies have examined the role of public-private partnerships in expanding participation in internships and volunteering programs in areas that suffer from significant restrictions on movement between cities and different geographic areas (Mitchell-Weaver Manning 1991).

Addressing the Gap

The current literature provides clear conclusions and insights on the impact and role of internships and volunteering programs on enabling young people and new graduates to access jobs in the labor market. However, at the same time, there are still significant research gaps in this area, especially when we look at the impact of internships and volunteering on the ability of young people and graduates to access available job opportunities in labor markets that suffer from political and economic instability due to ongoing conflicts. There is still a clear lack of quantitative or qualitative empirical research that examines the effectiveness of internships and volunteering programs on the ability of young people and graduates to access job opportunities in conflict-unstable economies such as Palestine. Especially since these programs are mostly designed on the basis of supply rather than demand. Hence, first, we find that there is a lack of quantitative/qualitative empirical research that measures how these programs are designed and implemented effectively in economies that suffer from political and economic instability. While current research has focused on the challenges and difficulties faced by Palestinian youth in accessing the labor market, especially women and recent graduates, few have highlighted the importance of internships and volunteering as effective tools to overcome the problem of unemployment among women and youth, especially the new graduates (Khatib 2022). Second, the literature focuses on individual outcomes, i.e. at the level of individuals, rather than a general approach, such as the relationship between the internships and the ability to access the labor market as a general approach rather than

individual experiences here and there. Thus, addressing the gap in the labor market has not been deeply addressed from a comprehensive national political or policy perspective. Finally, there is still a clear research gap regarding how to design internships and volunteering programs to effectively align with labor market needs (on-demand training). In addition to targeting the most conflict-affected societal groups such as women and refugees, and the impact of these programs on their ability to access jobs in the labor market (Grawert et al., (2017)). Through this research paper, which is based on the quantitative empirical approach, we will address this research gap by studying and tracking the role and impact of internships and volunteering on the ability of youth and new graduates to access the labor market more smoothly and quickly. Since this paper focuses on the Palestinian context, we will be able to understand more clearly the effectiveness and impact of these programs on the ability of youth and new graduates to access the Palestinian labor market, which is characterized as instable as a result of the conflict. The results of this research can be generalized to all regions or countries that suffer from political and economic instability similar to Palestine, which adds something new to the literature of the economy of resilience.

Conceptual Framework

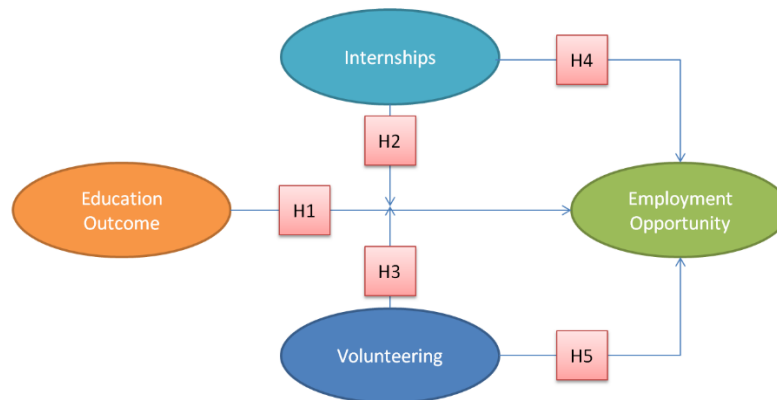


Figure 1

The conceptual framework of this study was developed based on the previously reviewed literature, taking into account the research gap discussed above. The conceptual framework of this study is based on different theories that are at the core of the relationship between investing in human resources to improve their chances of employment and success in their own businesses alike, such as human capital theory (Becker 1964; Schult, 1971), social capital theory (RogoÅ & BaranoviÄ 2016); Putnam 2000), and career building theory (Savickas 2002). These theories focus in one way or another on the importance of investing in human and social capital (internships and volunteering are effective tools) to develop the various technical and life skills of young people, women, and new graduates and to develop professional capital, in order to enhance their opportunities to access vacant jobs in the labor market.

Theories of human capital and social capital clearly and explicitly focus on the importance of investing in youth and new graduates through various training programs, not only to enhance their employability, but also to increase their ability to manage their own

businesses effectively and successfully to reach self-employment and open new horizons for their peers. Training has other dimensions than building and developing the skills of trainees, but also includes self-management of the profession and exposure to the industry (Bridgstock 2009). As for the theory of career building, it focuses on the importance of training youth and new graduates and enabling them to deal with the flexibility of professions (as a result of technological development) and raising their ability to adapt to the continuous changes in professions and unstable and unorganized markets, as the case of Palestine, and thus improving their chances of securing jobs (Fugate et al., 2004). Applying these theories in the Palestinian context has become necessary because political and economic instability causes a clear disruption of traditional employment paths (Grawert et al., 2017); Ghossein & Rana 2022). Therefore, it has become very necessary to invest in internship and volunteering programs to develop the various technical, life and soft skills of young people so that trainees become more attractive to employers and thus enhance their chances of accessing new jobs (Tomlinson 2017). If we take into account the concept of "career without borders" by (DeFillippi & Arthur 1994), this perspective highlights how and the importance of accumulating skills that can be transferred through multiple roles that a person can play to others instead of focusing individuals on a single career path, which leads to enriching the institution with diverse experience that helps its owner to move smoothly from one job to another. Volunteering and internships help young people and graduates to acquire diverse skills and experiences that will inevitably help them navigate the labor market smoothly. Various experimental studies clearly show that employers prefer graduates with high skills and practical experience over their counterparts because those with experience and high skills have the ability to professionalize, excel and solve problems better (Knouse & Fontenot 2008). Similarly, building social capital, internships and volunteering provide Palestinian youth with a competitive advantage that enables them to access jobs despite labor market constraints (Granovetter 1973; Inkson & Arthur 2001). These programs contribute to building and strengthening social networks that help youth and graduates access jobs in the labor market based on the social relationships built through training or volunteering. If we enhance the career guidance and counseling provided to participants in internships and volunteering programs, it will give them an additional competitive advantage. The conceptual framework clearly shows that internships and volunteering programs work as strategic interventions that facilitate the transition from education to work, which ultimately leads to enhancing the opportunities of Palestinian youth to access new and decent jobs.

Hypothesis:

The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 clarifying the following hypothesis:

H1: Education outcomes have a weak and limited direct impact on employment opportunities.

H2: Internships has a positive moderating role between education outcomes and employment opportunities.

H3: Volunteering has a positive moderating role between education outcomes and employment opportunities.

H4: Internship programs significantly enhance employment opportunities.

H5: Volunteering programs significantly enhance employment opportunities.

The hypotheses of this research were developed based on the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1. It shows the relationship between education outcomes as an independent variable and employment opportunities as a dependent variable. It also shows the role of both internships and volunteering as moderators between the independent and dependent variables. The first hypothesis was based on the fact that despite the level of academic achievement of graduates, they often face difficulties in finding a suitable job due to the insufficient job opportunities available in the market on the one hand, and the mismatch between graduates' skills and competencies and market needs on the other. This hypothesis is supported by Samer Salameh (Salameh 2025) in his previous research, which showed that the Palestinian labor market is unable to generate sufficient job opportunities to the new comers. In addition, Salameh's research highlighted the disparity between the skills possessed by graduates and those required by employers, which leads to difficulties and challenges for graduates to enter labor market despite having advanced degrees. The second hypothesis indicates that internship programs play a crucial moderating role in bridging the gap between education and employment. Internships provide graduates with practical experience that adds to their theoretical knowledge, thus enhancing their competitive advantage and making them appear better to employers (Ismail 2018; Du-Babcock 2016). This also applies to the third hypothesis, which states that volunteer work programs also act as an effective moderator between educational outcomes and employment opportunities by providing graduates with various skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem solving, all of which distinguish graduates who possess them from their peers, which enhances their ability and competitive advantage in front of employers (Giancaspro & Manuti. 2021). Volunteering also expands graduates' professional networks, which helps them access job opportunities faster. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) decisively shows that despite the importance of educational and academic achievement, the impact of this achievement on graduates' ability to obtain jobs is limited due to the clear disruption of traditional employment paths (Grawert et al., 2017); Ghossein & Rana 2022) on the one hand, and the faltering Palestinian economy due to the conflict. While the model emphasizes that internships and volunteering programs have dual role. The first is the moderating role that facilitate the transition from school to the labor market, and the second is direct positive impact (H4 & H5) on enabling the graduates to access laboe market easier and faster. To answer some potential questions, the model explains that academic education alone may not be sufficient due to market demand constraints on some specializations and skills, which highlights the importance of internships and volunteering in providing participants with skills, practical experience, and networking, thus giving them a competitive advantage over their peers. Despite all of this, this model also has limitations, as it focuses primarily on those involved in internships and volunteering programs without considering external

economic or political factors and their impact on employment dynamics. This is based on the fact that this research looks at the importance of internships and volunteering from an empirical research perspective that combines empirical and theoretical perspectives, which highlights the delicate interaction between academic education, practical experience, and job opportunities in the specific context of Palestine.

Research Question

Through this research, we will answer the fundamental question: will young people and new graduates involved in internships and/or volunteering programs find a job opportunity faster and better than others in light of the ongoing conflict in Palestine? Answering this question will help politicians and decision-makers in Palestine, especially in the Palestinian Ministry of Labor, to develop a clear strategy for internships and volunteering based on the actual needs of the labor market for the skills and competencies that Palestinian youth and graduates must possess.

Methodology and Data Collection

In this study, we used the quantitative empirical approach to examine the relationship and impact of internships and volunteering on job opportunities for Palestinian youth. We used a structured questionnaire as a tool to collect primary data, which was designed through Google Forms to collect data online from various youth categories involved in internships and volunteering, and employers from business owners hosting young trainees. The survey is designed to assess the opinions and experiences of young graduates, employers and NGO officials regarding the relationship and role of internships and volunteering in enhancing youth opportunities in finding a decent job. A wide and diverse sample of respondents was targeted to enhance understanding of the relationship between internships and volunteering and employment opportunities in Palestine. A total of 1,700 questionnaires were distributed via email and WhatsApp groups to youth, graduates and employers from different professional backgrounds, including university graduates, vocational and technical education and training, community colleges, NGO officials and employers from the public and private sectors in Palestine. We did our best to ensure that the research sample covers all geographical areas in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to provide a comprehensive perspective on this issue. Out of the 1,700 questionnaires distributed, 398 questionnaires were returned, representing 23.4% of the total sample. This percentage is considered good for obtaining opinions and insights that can be analyzed statistically and to come up with insights and conclusions that will add something new to the current literature. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, a serious filtering and refining process was conducted to neutralize biased or incomplete responses. The filtering process included reviewing the consistency of the answers and removing any duplicate, incomplete or clearly biased entries that could question the reliability of the results. This step is very important to maintain the objectivity of the study and ensure its reliability.

The filtered data were analyzed using the quantitative statistical method via (SPSS application) to identify trends, associations and potential causal relationships between internships, volunteering and employment opportunities. Descriptive statistics were used

to summarize the main findings, while inferential statistical tools, such as logistic regression analysis, were applied to determine the strength of the relationship between the independent variable and the moderators with the dependent variable, represented by the strength of the relationship and the impact of participation in internships and volunteering on job opportunities. Through statistical analysis, we were able to provide empirical evidence of the strength and effectiveness of this relationship, thus providing policy makers and academics with valuable insights with reliable statistical significance. It should be noted here that ethical considerations were given primary attention in the research process. Care was taken to ensure the confidentiality of the answers without revealing the identity of the respondents, and the consent of all parties was obtained before starting to distribute the questionnaire. Strict data protection measures and the protection of the personal information of the respondents were implemented. Given the social and political context in Palestine, attention was given to the security and comfort of the respondents and everything required was provided to ensure neutrality and impersonality when answering the questionnaire questions. Despite the strengths of this research, we cannot hide some of the limitations and challenges that we have experienced. This study relies primarily and fundamentally on self-reported data from the respondents, which may not be free of bias (Groves 2006). In addition, conducting research in a politically unstable region imposes challenges in reaching a fully representative sample covering all geographical areas, as some may have difficulty connecting to the internet and thus smoothly accessing the questionnaire (Dillman et al., 2014). Nevertheless, we have succeeded in reaching a good representative sample that will help us provide valuable insights into the role of internships and volunteering in addressing the problem of youth unemployment in Palestine, and provide a basis based on data and statistical analysis to provide recommendations to future policy makers and researchers.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Table 1: Percentage Description of the Study Sample

Age	18 and Less	8.1%
	19-25	38.2%
	26-35	39.0%
	36-45	9.4%
	46 and More	5.5%
	Total	100.0%
Gender	Male	33.9%
	Female	66.1%
	Total	100.0%
Educational Level	High school or less	15.8%
	Diploma	9.3%
	Vocational and technical training certificate	5.5%
	Bachelor's	60.6%
	Master's degree or higher	8.8%
	Total	100.0%
Current Employment Status	New graduate	12.3%

	Full/Part Time Employee	22.4%
	Unemployed and looking for work	56.0%
	Unemployed and not looking for work	2.8%
	Employer	6.5%
	Total	100.0%

The demographic status of the study sample:

- **Age Distribution:** The majority of participants (77.2%) were youth between 19 and 35 years old.
- **Gender:** Female participants represent 66.1% of the sample.
- **Educational Level:** Most participants have a bachelor's degree (60.6%). TVET still the lowest on 5.5%.
- **Employment Status:** Around (56%) of the sample were unemployed. This result clearly matches with the national statistics results.

Background Characteristics

Table 2: Percentage of the Study Sample by Background Characteristics and dependent, independent, and moderator variables

Background Characteristics		Employment opportunity (Y)	Education outcome (X)	Internship programs (M1)	Volunteering programs (M2)
Age	18 and Less	13.0%	30.0%	9.0%	7.0%
	19-25	18.0%	64.0%	20.0%	17.0%
	26-35	27.0%	76.0%	26.0%	24.0%
	36-45	33.0%	75.0%	33.0%	32.0%
	46 and More	33.0%	78.0%	31.0%	30.0%
	Total	23.0%	67.0%	23.0%	21.0%
Gender	Male	21.0%	60.0%	19.0%	15.0%
	Female	24.0%	71.0%	25.0%	23.0%
	Total	23.0%	67.0%	23.0%	21.0%
Educational Level	High school or less	11.0%	20.0%	13.0%	10.0%
	Diploma	19.0%	40.0%	17.0%	15.0%
	Vocational and technical training certificate	23.0%	60.0%	20.0%	15.0%
	Bachelor's	25.0%	80.0%	26.0%	24.0%
	Master's degree or higher	31.0%	100.0%	29.0%	28.0%
	Total	23.0%	67.0%	23.0%	21.0%
Current Employment Status	New graduate	12.0%	67.0%	14.0%	13.0%
	Full/Part Time Employee	35.0%	75.0%	19.0%	16.0%
	Unemployed and looking for work	20.0%	64.0%	26.0%	23.0%
	Unemployed and not looking for work	9.0%	53.0%	4.0%	2.0%
	Employer	35.0%	75.0%	38.0%	38.0%
	Total	23.0%	67.0%	23.0%	21.0%

The collected data analysis tested education outcomes (X), employment opportunities (Y), internships (M1), and volunteering programs (M2) across demographic variables:

- **Age:** Employment opportunities showed an increase by age. The results showed higher rates (33%) with older participants.
- **Gender:** Females had higher engagement in education outcomes (71%) and voluntary work programs (23%) compared to males.
- **Educational Level:** Higher education fulfilled strong correlation with better employment chance; master's degree holders showed the highest rates of employment opportunities (31%).

ANOVA Results

Table 3: ANOVA (One-Way Analysis of Variance) between (dependent, independent, and moderator variables) and Gender

	Gender	Mean	F	Sig.
Employment Opportunity (Y)	Male	0.2074	0.520	0.471
	Female	0.2395		
	Total	0.2286		
Education Outcome (X)	Male	0.5956	21.542	0.000
	Female	0.7148		
	Total	0.6744		
Internship Programs (X2)	Male	0.1859	6.363	0.012
	Female	0.2526		
	Total	0.2300		
Volunteering Programs (X3)	Male	0.1533	9.230	0.003
	Female	0.2341		
	Total	0.2067		

ANOVA Analysis of Gender:

- Significant differences were seen between males and females for education outcomes ($F = 21.542$, $p = 0.000$), internship programs ($F = 6.363$, $p = 0.012$), and voluntary work programs ($F = 9.230$, $p = 0.003$).
- Employment opportunities did not indicate significant gender differences ($F = 0.520$, $p = 0.471$).

Table 4: ANOVA (One-Way Analysis of Variance) between (dependent, independent, and moderator variables) and Age

	Age	Mean	F	Sig.
Employment Opportunity (Y)	18 and Less	0.1290	2.105	0.080
	19-25	0.1837		
	26-35	0.2733		
	36-45	0.3333		
	46 and More	0.3333		
	Total	0.2364		
Education Outcome (X)	18 and Less	0.3032	31.426	0.000
	19-25	0.6395		
	26-35	0.7560		
	36-45	0.7500		
	46 and More	0.7810		
	Total	0.6758		
Internship Programs (X2)	18 and Less	0.0919	5.550	0.000

	19-25	0.2005		
	26-35	0.2611		
	36-45	0.3291		
	46 and More	0.3139		
	Total	0.2336		
Volunteering Programs (X3)	18 and Less	0.0665	6.447	0.000
	19-25	0.1729		
	26-35	0.2362		
	36-45	0.3249		
	46 and More	0.3020		
	Total	0.2103		

ANOVA Analysis of Age:

- Employment opportunities showed minor significance about age groups ($F = 2.105$, $p = 0.080$).
- Education outcomes ($F = 31.426$, $p = 0.000$), internship programs ($F = 5.550$, $p = 0.000$), and volunteering programs ($F = 6.447$, $p = 0.000$) showed significant differences about age groups.

Correlation Analysis

Table 5: Correlations between dependent, independent, and moderator variables

		Employment opportunity	Education outcome	Internship programs	Volunteering programs
Employment Opportunity (Y)	Correlation	1	0.136**	0.411**	0.410**
	Sig. (2-tailed) (P)		0.007	0.000	0.000
Education outcome (X)	Correlation	0.136**	1	0.205**	0.219**
	Sig. (2-tailed) (P)	0.007		0.000	0.000
Internship programs (M1)	Correlation	0.411**	0.205**	1	0.933**
	Sig. (2-tailed) (P)	0.000	0.000		0.000
Voluntary work programs (M2)	Correlation	0.410**	0.219**	0.933**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed) (P)	0.000	0.000	0.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Significant positive correlations were identified:

- Employment opportunities correlated strongly with internship programs ($r = 0.411$, $p < 0.01$) and volunteering programs ($r = 0.410$, $p < 0.01$).
- Education outcomes showed positive correlations with both internship programs ($r = 0.205$) and volunteering programs ($r = 0.219$).

Logistic Regression Analysis

Table 6: Interpretation of Model Coefficients Model 1

Variable	Coefficient (coeff)	Standard Error (se)	Z	p-value	Lower CI	Upper CI
Constant	-3.5215	0.7377	-4.7737	0.0000	-4.9674	-2.0757
X (Education Outcome)	1.7917	0.9722	1.8430	0.0653	-0.1137	3.6971

M1 (Internship Programs)	6.0846	1.8654	3.2618	0.0011	2.4285	9.7408
Int 1 (X * M1)	-3.3049	2.4143	-1.3689	0.1710	-8.0369	1.4270

Model 1: Employment Opportunity (Y), Education Outcome (X), Internship Programs (M1)

- The model accounted for **23.52%** of the variance in employment opportunities (Nagelkerke R²).
- Internship programs significantly influenced employment opportunities (coefficient = **6.0846**, p = **0.0011**).
- The interaction term between education outcomes and internships was not statistically significant (coefficient = **-3.3049**, p = **0.1710**).

Table 7: Interpretation of Model Coefficients Model 2

Variable	Coefficient (coeff)	Standard Error (se)	Z	p-value	Lower CI	Upper CI
Constant	-3.6311	0.7287	-4.9832	0.0000	-5.0593	-2.2029
X (Education Outcome)	2.0969	0.9506	2.2059	0.0274	0.2338	3.9601
M2 (Volunteering Programs)	7.4653	1.9778	3.7745	0.0002	3.5888	11.3417
Int 1 (X * M2)	-5.2586	2.5125	-2.0929	0.0364	-10.1831	-0.3341

Model 2: Employment Opportunity (Y), Education Outcome (X), Volunteering Programs (M2)

- This model explained a slightly higher variance (**23.97%**, Nagelkerke R²).
- Volunteering programs had a stronger impact on employment opportunities (coefficient = **7.4653**, p = **0.0002**).
- The interaction term between education outcomes and volunteering was statistically significant (coefficient = **-5.2586**, p = **0.0364**), indicating a complex relationship between these variables.

Discussion

The results clearly and unequivocally indicate that the Internships and volunteering contribute to improving the employment opportunities of Palestinian youth. This requires further attention as strategic interventions to address unemployment among Palestinian youth or communities experiencing conflict. However, the research topic does not end here. Rather, the research hypotheses considered these two variables as moderating variables, not independent variables only. The research question focused on the strength of the influence of these two variables as moderators which moderates the relationship between educational outcomes and employment opportunities. When we applied the logistics regression to test the strength of the moderating impact of these two variables on the relationship between education outcomes and employment opportunities, the results revealed that internship programs, has a weaker effect than voluntary work programs. This result warrants careful consideration, in-depth analysis, and linking it to the level of education. According to the research sample, the results showed that the higher the level

of education, the greater the employment opportunities. What does this indicate? The significance of these results clearly indicates that the higher the level of education, the greater the level of knowledge and skills of graduates, and thus their employment opportunities. This also highlights the lack of significance in the joint relationship between internship and educational outcomes on employment opportunities (as shown in Model 1 Table 6), especially since the largest segment of the sample are bachelor's degree holders. This indicates that bachelor's degree holders have sufficient skills and knowledge that qualify them to enter the labor market in a better position. This also refutes the prevailing impression that the problem in the Palestinian labor market lies in the mismatch between educational outcomes and market needs, confirming the results of our previous research, which demonstrated that the reason for the high unemployment rates among youth is due to external political and economic reasons that limit the Palestinian economy's ability to generate new job opportunities, not to a mismatch between educational outcomes and market needs.

Regarding the volunteering variable, the results showed that voluntary work programs have a greater impact than internship programs on enhancing youth employment opportunities. This positive impact also extends to being a moderating variable between educational outcomes and employment opportunities, according to the second model (Table 7). I believe this result is objective and logical, as young people in Palestine engage in voluntary work at an early age, which provides them with the technical and life skills necessary to enter the labor market, regardless of educational level. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the relationship between voluntary work as a moderating variable between educational outcomes and employment opportunities is required in future research.

TVET and Lower Secondary Education

The insignificance of internships as a moderating factor is naturally influenced by the level of education in the research sample. Looking at participants with technical and vocational education (TVET) degrees, who accounted for 5.5% of the sample, and those with a high school diploma or less, who accounted for 15.8%, we find that their employment rates were 23% and 11%, respectively. Compared to those with bachelor's and postgraduate degrees, who accounted for 60.6% and 8.8% of the sample, we find that their employment rates reached 25% for bachelor's and 31% for postgraduate degrees. This finding confirms that internships can play a more significant moderating role for lower secondary education and TVET holders by bridging practical skills gaps, unlike those with bachelor's and postgraduate degrees, whose theoretical education is more closely aligned with internships experiences.

Participation Trends and Potential

On the other hand, the participation data strongly supports the hypothesis. The results indicated that respondents with TVET certificates (20%) and high school diplomas (13%) participated in internships at a lower rate than those with bachelor's and postgraduate degrees. These results indicate that there are untapped opportunities for internships to enhance employment prospects for those with TVET certificates and lower education.

Furthermore, had the sample of participants with TVET holders and lower education certificates been larger, the interaction between education and internships outcomes ($X * M1$) could have been statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) with a positive coefficient, strengthening the impact of education on employment. This finding calls for more specialized future research on TVET graduates.

The Moderating Effect of Volunteering

Regarding the volunteering variable, the results were completely opposite. Voluntary Work showed a statistically significant moderating effect across the current sample ($p = 0.0364$), which calls for its wider application to connect youth and graduates to the labor market. This result can be explained by the flexibility that distinguishes voluntary work from internships, especially in building networks and skills that go beyond educational levels. For TVET holders and lower education certificates, the negative interaction coefficient associated with volunteer work (-5.2586) indicates that the skills acquired through participation in volunteering can be substituted for lower educational levels. Based on the Palestinian experience, reliance on voluntary work will continue for various reasons, which will always provide additional opportunities for TVET holders and lower education certificates to access employment opportunities more quickly and better.

Conclusion

The results of this study clearly and unequivocally indicate the pivotal role played by both internships and voluntary work in addressing the challenge of unemployment, particularly among youth and graduates in the Palestinian context, which continues to suffer from numerous constraints imposed by the nature of the ongoing conflict in the country for decades. The results of this study clearly demonstrate that both interventions contribute positively to enhancing the opportunities for youth and graduates to access available employment opportunities, with the emphasis that volunteering has a slightly greater impact. This is due to the broad scope of volunteering activities and the high number of participants, from childhood to adulthood. These cross-disciplinary and cross-skill volunteering activities clearly enhance the development of diverse skills among participants and build a broad network of relationships that also transcends limited educational qualifications.

Furthermore, this study highlights the slight relationship between educational attainment and the impact of these interventions. Specifically, the moderate and limited impact of internships on participants' ability to access the labor market is due to the sample's educational level. We observed that those with lower educational levels and graduates of TVET may benefit more from internship programs than those with bachelor's degrees or higher. Conversely, volunteering can compensate for educational gaps, particularly among these groups.

Therefore, longitudinal research may be necessary at this stage to comprehensively assess the sustainable and long-term effects of internships and volunteering on the career paths of youth and graduates. Longitudinal studies could also explore the specific tools and mechanisms by which these interventions are used and function, including skills development, network building, and career path identification for participants. By

deepening our understanding of these dynamics, we will enable policymakers to develop more targeted and effective strategies to promote youth employment and support sustainable economic development in conflict-affected areas like Palestine.

Recommendations and future research

Given that this research is applied, not solely theoretical, addressing the challenges of unemployment, especially among youth, graduates, and marginalized groups, requires several initiatives and policy developments that maximize the role of internships and voluntary work. Therefore, we propose the following recommendations:

1. Expand access to internship and voluntary work programs to include marginalized groups and newcomers to the labor market, especially those with degrees below a bachelor's degree, with the aim of developing the several skills of these groups and thus enhancing their employment opportunities.
2. Integrating the internship and voluntary work initiatives with formal education at all educational levels, especially secondary education and TVET, to build the students' skills in their early stages. The focus of the training should be on enhancing employment opportunities for the participants taking into account the early dropout.
3. Conduct further longitudinal research to investigate the long-term impact of the internship and voluntary work programs. These researches should focus on the impact these programs on career paths of young people in their early years.
4. Expand voluntary work programs to reach the marginalized rural areas and youth of both genders. Focusing on women and young females is a must to build their skills and increase their opportunities to network with employers especially for those from the rural areas.
5. Conduct other researches focusing on the efficiency of the tools and techniques used in internship programs. Measuring its impact on enhancing employment opportunities for each educational level is greatly needed.

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