

Framework For Enhancing Civic Engagement At Qatar University With A Focus On Sustainable Development: A Pathway To A Brighter Future

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Abstract:

The current research explores civic engagement among university students, focusing on Qatar University. Adopting a descriptive approach, the study aims to develop a framework to enhance civic engagement, contributing to sustainable development as outlined in Qatar National Vision 2030. By reviewing previous initiatives in different countries and conducting ¹a detailed survey, the study identifies the barriers to student participation in civic activities and proposes strategies to overcome these barriers. The research findings revealed that four categories of barriers hinder student participation in civic engagement: barriers related to university students, the university environment, civil society volunteer organisations and Qatari society in general. In addition, findings showed that the competencies of the university stakeholders, the partnerships with external stakeholders and the strategies for implementation shape the civic engagement vision at Qatar University. Finally, findings indicated that the proposed framework to enhance civic engagement has six interconnected dimensions: the student, the teacher, the university administration, the partners (i.e. parents and civil society organisations), and sustainable development. The study aims to foster a robust culture of civic engagement, aligning educational practices with the broader goals of sustainable development in Qatar. Future research is suggested to evaluate the long-term impacts of these initiatives and explore cross-cultural perspectives on volunteering.

Keywords: *Civic engagement, university students, sustainable development, volunteerism, barriers to participation, proposed framework, Qatar.*

1. INTRODUCTION

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In the face of rapid societal changes, the responsibility of educational institutions to develop their students' thinking abilities has become more urgent than ever. This is achieved by designing activities that stimulate mental capabilities and prepare a generation capable of facing these changes. Therefore, fostering the concept of volunteerism among students is not just a luxury but a necessity imposed by the developments and changes of this era. It has become imperative for all educational institutions, including Qatar University, to cultivate this mindset and prioritise it as a key learning outcome. Many scholars in the fields of education and psychology have emphasised the urgency and importance of developing volunteerism and its various forms across different educational stages.

In the contemporary era, Qatar University stands as a beacon among educational institutions, uniquely tasked with serving society. It plays a pivotal role in establishing the concept of volunteerism as a social responsibility among its students. Following the footsteps of many international universities, Qatar University has also mandated a culture of volunteerism, underscoring its primary role in cultivating students' mindsets towards engaging in volunteerism as a key social responsibility. This not only fosters students' sense of responsibility, cooperation, and participation but also propels the advancement of society.

University education is one of the most important means of facing changes and challenges, preparing individuals for successful social lives, and enabling effective participation in decision-making, problem-solving, cooperation, and teamwork. Thus, university education has become a requirement of our time, aiming to prepare a generation that exercises its rights and fulfils its social responsibility to achieve societal cohesion (Daniel, 2010).

The current era is characterised by its complexities and diverse problems, making the need to instil the concept of social responsibility in young people's minds an urgent matter. With the complexities of modern life and the increasing social needs, volunteer organisations, charities, and non-profit associations need to work alongside government agencies to meet these needs. They have become a fundamental pillar supporting government agencies and may even surpass them in service and technology (Al-Shahri, 2017).

This is what the Qatari Ministry of Education and Higher Education emphasised in its 2017-2022 strategy, where it indicated in its vision and mission the inclusion of the principle of civic engagement in the educational process to achieve high-quality education. The strategy also clarified in its summary under the main outcome that the State of Qatar seeks a high-quality educational system that effectively contributes to society, strengthens Qatari values, and equips all learners with various skills. This strategy is also explained in its intermediate outcomes, in the first element of these elements, the provision of diverse learning opportunities that enable learners to enhance their potential for effective contribution to the workforce and Qatari society (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2017).

1.1 Overview of Civic Engagement

Strengthening civic engagement and social responsibility is essential across various sectors, including education, corporate environments, and community settings. These efforts play a pivotal role in shaping ethical behaviour, promoting sustainable development, and fostering a participatory society. By addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities associated with civic and social responsibility, we can cultivate environments that encourage active

participation and responsible citizenship. This comprehensive exploration delves into the significance of integrating social responsibility into educational models, corporate strategies, and community initiatives, highlighting the transformative potential of these efforts on individual and societal levels.

The Need to Strengthen Social Responsibility

Strengthening social responsibility is a critical issue for various sectors, including education, corporate environments, and community settings. In educational institutions, fostering social responsibility among college students is crucial for their moral development and societal contributions. Various methods, such as team learning and responsibility experiences, can enhance their sense of responsibility (Xia, 2012). Moreover, university management strategies that integrate social responsibility help universities stay relevant during societal transformations, emphasising the need for restructuring tasks with scientific, social, and cultural orientations (Cortez, 2023).

In the corporate sector, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is essential for sustainable development. Effective CSR initiatives can enhance brand equity by improving company reputation, building consumer loyalty, and managing reputational risks (Jusuf, 2023). CSR should be viewed as an opportunity for innovation and competitive advantage rather than merely a cost or public relations strategy. Integrating CSR with core business strategies can create mutual benefits for businesses and society (Porter & Kramer, 2006). In community settings, social responsibility programs in the hospitality and tourism sectors can strengthen local economies and promote sustainable practices, helping build strong market positions while addressing environmental and social issues (Pozo et al., 2023). Additionally, developing social responsibility from childhood and adolescence lays the foundation for lifelong ethical behaviour and civic engagement, with modelling prosocial behaviours and creating opportunities to practice civic skills being essential (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011).

Challenges and Opportunities of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement involves citizens actively participating in their communities to improve conditions or shape the community's future. This participation is essential for democratic functioning and individual growth but faces several challenges and opportunities. Challenges in civic engagement among youth include unevenly distributed opportunities based on social class, race, and ethnicity, with youth from low-income families facing cumulative disadvantages and fewer institutional opportunities compared to their wealthier peers (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Additionally, youth often face segregation from adults and negative stereotypes, which limit their civic engagement opportunities. This issue is exacerbated by the lack of facilitative policies and structures to support youth-adult partnerships in civic activities (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Similarly, low-income families face substantial barriers to civic engagement, including limited resources and institutional support. Despite their engagement through volunteering and community activities, these families often lack the necessary support systems to sustain long-term civic involvement (McBride et al., 2006).

Opportunities for enhancing civic engagement exist in higher education, where universities play a crucial role in fostering civic responsibility through programs like service learning and community-based learning. These programs provide students with experiential learning opportunities while promoting civic responsibility. However, they need to align with democratic processes to be truly transformative (Hartley et al., 2010). Innovative civic engagement projects, such as Bombardier's civic innovation crowdsourcing project, demonstrate the potential of collaborative problem-solving to address urban mobility issues (Brunswicker et al., 2017). Schools that emphasise civic content, encourage open discussion of issues, and promote a participative culture can significantly enhance civic engagement among students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Torney-Purta, 2002). Additionally, recent movements aim to increase civic engagement among older adults, recognising their potential contributions to community improvement and redefining civic engagement to include diverse activities that cater to older demographics (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Promoting equitable access to civic engagement resources and support systems is crucial for fostering a more participatory and inclusive society.

Significance of Educational Models and Programs

Integrating volunteerism and social responsibility into educational models is essential for developing responsible, engaged, and ethically-minded individuals. Studies have shown that such integration enhances academic performance and prepares students to address complex social issues. For example, engineering students involved in volunteer activities demonstrate improved social responsibility and academic performance (Canney & Bielefeldt, 2015). High school programs like Teaching for Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) have yielded positive outcomes in student behaviour and academic metrics (Wright et al., 2010). In higher education, incorporating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the curriculum for economists and lawyers fosters ethical and socially responsible professionals (Savina et al., 2020).

Moreover, service learning in HEIs significantly enhances community service and student development, as seen in Ethiopian universities (Yizengaw & Nigussie, 2020). Programs based on the TPSR model improve prosocial behaviours, motivation, and classroom climate (Manzano-Sánchez & Valero-Valenzuela, 2019). Additionally, business schools that incorporate entrepreneurial volunteering benefit from a curriculum that blends ethics, social responsibility, and practical business education (Clarke & Underwood, 2011). These findings highlight the broad applicability and benefits of integrating volunteerism and social responsibility into education.

Focus on Social Service and Sustainable Development

Linking volunteerism with sustainable development is critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Volunteering plays a crucial role in implementing these goals by creating inclusive, active, and cohesive societies. For instance, volunteers' engagement with communities helps in addressing social and environmental issues, contributing significantly to sustainable development (Paine et al., 2020). International development volunteerism emphasises the importance of building relationships and negotiating cultural differences, which

are essential for achieving meaningful development outcomes (Schech et al., 2018). Volunteer tourism is another significant aspect, as it addresses various social and environmental issues, thereby promoting sustainable tourism development (Vasilyevna et al., 2018). However, effectively documenting and showcasing volunteers' contributions to the SDGs remains a challenge (Haddock & Devereux, 2016). Youth involvement in volunteerism further strengthens community collaboration and innovation, balancing economic, social, and environmental development, which is crucial for democratic governance and sustainable development (Saepudin et al., 2018).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) also play a significant role in preparing students for sustainable development through volunteer activities. Incentives from HEIs and students' beliefs in the value of volunteer work are critical factors motivating participation (Rampasso et al., 2020). Corporate volunteerism contributes to sustainable development by fostering economic, social, and environmental advancements. It enhances employee engagement and skill development while supporting community projects (Arulrajah, 2016). By creating opportunities for volunteerism and integrating it into educational and corporate structures, we can enhance contributions to sustainable development, ensuring a balanced approach that promotes economic, social, and environmental progress.

The Impact of the Educational Environment on Volunteer Behaviour

Studies consistently show that the educational environment significantly influences student engagement in volunteer work and social responsibility. Integrating community engagement and volunteerism into educational curricula is essential for fostering social responsibility among students. For example, in social work education, volunteerism enables students to appreciate societal issues and acquire relevant skills, underscoring the importance of partnerships between universities and communities (Chetty & Bhagwan, 2021). The educational environment shapes student engagement through reflexivity, influenced by the tasks and social relations within the learning environment. This engagement is critical in higher education as it helps students take responsibility for their actions amidst uncertainties (Kahn, 2014). Moreover, volunteer service has been found to significantly increase social responsibility among college students, with the length and type of service playing crucial roles (Wei & Liu, 2016).

In engineering education, volunteer activities help develop social responsibility, contributing to the creation of holistic engineers capable of addressing complex social issues (Canney & Bielefeldt, 2015). Factors such as religiosity and social environment also play significant roles in encouraging student participation in volunteer activities, highlighting the importance of these influences (Saad et al., 2021). Higher education institutions impact student engagement in volunteer work through institutional support and the students' motivations. This support is crucial for fostering voluntary activities and enhancing social responsibility among students (Berei, 2020). By creating supportive environments and integrating volunteerism into the curriculum, educational institutions can significantly enhance student engagement and cultivate a strong sense of social responsibility.

Diverse Geographical and Cultural Focus

Challenges and opportunities in social responsibility and volunteerism are global issues that demand worldwide attention. Various studies illustrate how these challenges manifest differently across the globe. Social responsibility requires companies to balance competitive and sustainable practices, demanding changes in attitudes towards production and consumption for better efficiency and eco-friendliness (Jucan & Jucan, 2010). Incorporating global challenges into educational curricula can foster a sense of social responsibility among students, as evidenced by engineering students recognising their role in solving global problems after specific classroom activities (Vanasupa et al., 2006). Volunteerism, driven by a sense of unified responsibility, plays a crucial role in non-profit organisations and highlights the importance of personal and social domains in motivating individuals to volunteer (Dutta-Bergman, 2004). Moreover, volunteering activities in health and social care charities offer transformative learning opportunities for volunteers, charities, and the broader community, showcasing how collaborative efforts address complex societal challenges (Darley, 2018).

Promoting social responsibility and civic engagement is crucial for developing ethical, engaged, and proactive individuals capable of addressing complex societal challenges. Educational institutions, corporate sectors, and community settings all have a significant role to play in this endeavour. By integrating volunteerism and social responsibility into their frameworks, these sectors can foster sustainable development, enhance community well-being, and contribute to a more inclusive and participatory society. Addressing the disparities and barriers to civic engagement, particularly among disadvantaged groups, is essential for ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources. Ultimately, the collective effort to strengthen social responsibility and civic engagement will lead to a more cohesive, resilient, and forward-thinking global community.

1.2 The Research Problem:

The researchers identified the research problem by working in an academic educational program at Qatar University. They observed that the university makes significant efforts to enhance civic engagement, most notably by providing volunteer opportunities both inside and outside the university. However, student participation remains low compared to the total number of students at the university. This deprives volunteer work of its most important pillar, namely the university students, who are considered essential elements of volunteerism.

The 2018 United Nations report indicated that the Arab world has 8.9 million volunteers, which does not exceed 3% of the total population. In contrast, the number of volunteers in the United Kingdom alone constitutes about 30% of the population and 22% of the population in New Zealand (UN Volunteers, 2018).

Qatar has become a host country for a large number of regional and global events in various economic, social, cultural, and sports fields. One of the most important of these global events is the FIFA World Cup 2022. All of this has made Qatar continuously need a large number of volunteers to participate in these events.

Although university youth are considered a driving force in volunteer work, their participation in volunteerism remains weak, as mentioned in previous studies and the United Nations report. This weak participation may be due, as some previous studies have indicated

in their results, to the lack of scientific and practical programs and plans implemented by universities that would motivate students to participate in volunteer work.

The current research sought to address this problem by proposing a scientific and practical framework to help the university develop civic engagement among its students by motivating them to organise and effectively participate in volunteer work in light of Qatar National Vision 2030.

2. Literature Review

This literature review explores the concept of civic engagement, particularly within the context of educational institutions. It examines the theoretical foundations, key elements, and motivations behind civic engagement, emphasising its significance in fostering a sense of social responsibility among students. By integrating various theories and models, this review provides a comprehensive understanding of how civic engagement can be cultivated and sustained. Additionally, it highlights successful international experiences and addresses the unique challenges faced in different geographical and cultural contexts, laying the groundwork for developing an effective framework to enhance civic engagement at Qatar University.

2.1 The Concept of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement refers to the efforts individuals make towards their community, motivated by a sense of duty and without expecting anything in return. It encompasses taking responsibility for organised social activities aimed at promoting human well-being (Ayman, 2002). Similarly, it involves the expenditure of effort, time, or money driven by a sense of responsibility towards the community without anticipating any material rewards (Rahim, 2009).

Despite the various definitions of civic engagement, several unified elements emerge across different concepts. Key aspects include:

- It reflects the extent of an individual's belonging to their homeland, evidenced by serving their community without compensation.
- It is undertaken voluntarily, without coercion, as an individual effort towards the community.
- The community organises civic engagement to foster a sense of citizenship and belonging, particularly among youth.

Youth civic engagement specifically focuses on enhancing young people's sense of belonging and participation in their community. This engagement aims to strengthen their personal, scientific, and practical skills, allowing them to identify gaps in community services, express their ideas on relevant issues, and actively participate in problem-solving (Al-Adli, 2007).

Motives for civic engagement vary based on factors related to individuals, such as educational, social, and age levels, as well as community-related factors. Motives for civic engagement in developing countries often differ from those in developed countries and include religious, cultural, psychological, social, humanitarian, and civilisational reasons (Abdul Hamid, 2017).

2.2 Civic Engagement Theories:

Civic engagement can be better understood through its various theories, which are highlighted below.

2.2.1 **Structural Functional Theory:**

This theory views civic engagement as a social system component essential for maintaining societal stability and integration. It posits that society consists of interconnected parts, each fulfilling a function that benefits the community, primarily through volunteer work (Al-Shammari, 2013; Al-Hathli, 2019).

2.2.2 **Exchange Theory:** This theory suggests that individuals participate in community activities that offer them benefits and satisfy their needs. It frames community activities in terms of reward and cost, viewing civic engagement as a reciprocal process where volunteers are motivated by appreciation, trust, and respect for their efforts (Al-Obaid, 2013; Al-Nughaimishi, 2021).

2.2.3 **Theory of Values:** This theory asserts that civic engagement is infused with values and norms related to charitable work and public services, which are developed by community institutions such as families, places of worship, schools, and universities. It highlights the role of these institutions in fostering volunteer behaviours, particularly in Arab and Islamic societies (Al-Obaid, 2013).

These theories provide a comprehensive understanding of civic engagement, its importance, and the motivations behind it. They serve as the foundation for the proposed framework, which aims to enhance civic engagement as a crucial aspect of social responsibility.

2.3 University Students and Civic Engagement

This section explores the role of university students in civic engagement. Youths are the cornerstone of societal development and a driving force for progress. A thriving society is characterised by positive values that are continually imparted to its youth. Consequently, young people are regarded as the true wealth of a community, significantly influencing social and human development and reinforcing social responsibility.

University students are among the most vital segments of society. They are acutely aware of the importance of civic engagement due to their strong desire to foster social solidarity. In Europe, several universities actively encourage civic engagement by providing community service projects, establishing offices to register volunteers, and facilitating communication between students and civil society organisations. These initiatives are designed to operate within the university setting (Najm, 2021).

Civic engagement should be a priority for university students in Arab Muslim communities, given its religious significance in Islam. Islamic law promotes civic engagement, highlighting the associated rewards, thus deeply impacting the Muslim community (Al-Amer, 2021).

Despite the recognised importance of civic engagement, various barriers hinder effective participation among university youth. These barriers include:

- Limited awareness of the concept and benefits of civic engagement.
- Lack of information about volunteer programs offered by civil society organisations.
- Low youth participation in decision-making processes within these organisations.
- Insufficient training programs to develop volunteer skills.
- Weak encouragement of volunteerism among university students (Saeed, 2002).

These challenges underscore the need for a structured approach to enhance university student participation in volunteer work. Researchers have developed a proposed framework to address these barriers and effectively motivate students to engage in organised volunteer activities.

2.4 Successful Initiatives in Civic Engagement within Universities

This section highlights successful initiatives in university youth volunteering from Arab and foreign countries, providing valuable insights for building the proposed framework.

Saudi Arabia: Saudi universities have made significant strides in promoting volunteerism, with a student participation rate of 47.2% (Azzazi, 2014). Notable examples include Majmaah University, which introduced a “Volunteer Work” course in 2012/2013, which is required for all students. It also hosted the Forum of Charitable and Voluntary Associations to showcase these efforts to students and staff. Additionally, it facilitated various volunteer activities, such as book exhibitions, environmental campaigns, and health awareness programs (Majmaah University, 2022).

United Kingdom: The UK has shown a strong commitment to civic engagement among university students. A 2007 ministerial decree mandated student involvement in volunteer work and offered tuition fee exemptions for participants. The Higher Education Active Community Fund (HEACF) finances university volunteer projects, aiming to maximise student involvement. Volunteer service offices, supported by the HEACF, manage these projects and provide student training. Media collaborations promote these initiatives, increasing student participation (Ibrahim, 2015).

United States: The US has implemented various measures to enhance student civic engagement. Universities offer numerous volunteer projects to engage students with key community organisations. Internal media campaigns introduce students to volunteer programs. Civil society organisations frequently visit universities to promote volunteerism. Some universities require volunteer work courses for graduation. Organisations are allowed to recruit students for practical training (Ibrahim, 2015). As a result, 76% of American university students participate in volunteer work, with significant faculty involvement as well (Ibrahim, 2015).

These experiences demonstrate that fostering a culture of civic engagement among university youth requires a concerted effort and collaboration between universities, students, faculty, administrators, and civil society organisations. This research aims to establish a

comprehensive strategy for volunteer work within universities, enhancing civic engagement among students and affiliates and ultimately increasing participation rates in Qatar.

2.5 Sustainable Development in the State of Qatar

Under Amiri Decision No. (44) of 2008, Qatar adopted its comprehensive development vision, known as Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030). This vision aims to transform Qatar into an advanced country capable of achieving sustainable development and ensuring a continued decent life for its people, generation after generation. QNV (2030) focuses on the desired outcomes and provides a general framework for detailed national strategies and implementation plans. QNV (2030) identifies five main challenges:

1. Modernisation while preserving traditions.
2. Balancing the needs of current and future generations.
3. Managing targeted growth versus uncontrolled expansion.
4. Aligning development paths with the size and quality of the expatriate workforce.
5. Integrating economic and social development with environmental protection.

Guiding principles of the vision include:

- Protecting public and personal freedoms.
- Upholding moral and religious values and traditions.
- Ensuring security, stability, and equal opportunities.

QNV 2030 outlines developmental horizons through four interconnected pillars:

1. **Human Development:** Developing and nurturing the people of Qatar to enable them to build a prosperous society.
2. **Social Development:** Creating a just and safe society based on good morals and social care, capable of engaging with other societies and playing a significant role in global partnerships for development.
3. **Economic Development:** Building a diversified and competitive national economy capable of meeting the needs of Qatari citizens now and in the future, ensuring a high standard of living.
4. **Environmental Development:** Managing the environment in a way that ensures harmony and consistency between economic and social development and environmental protection (The Amiri Decree (44), 2008).

The current research aims to foster a culture of civic engagement among Qatar University students through volunteer work within the university. It will prepare students both scientifically and practically for civic engagement involving university faculty, administration, partners, and researchers. This approach will help achieve learning outcomes that encourage students to serve their community effectively. It will also prepare students to embrace volunteerism as a way of life, enabling them to contribute to any volunteer work required.

By instilling this service-oriented mindset, the research aims to elevate Qatar's status among both Arab and Western countries. Students will be equipped to respond to Qatar's needs, both nationally and internationally, through a scientifically grounded approach to service. This preparation aligns with the human development dimension of QNV (2030), which emphasises "developing and nurturing the people of Qatar to enable them to build a prosperous society" (The Amiri Decree (44), 2008). Overall, the university's efforts will result in graduates who can significantly contribute to building and enhancing their community locally and globally.

2.6 Research Aims:

The present research aims to explore Qatar University students' perspectives on the barriers to civic engagement and investigate the university's role in overcoming these barriers. It also aims to develop a proposed framework to enhance civic engagement within Qatar University, including the following partners: students, teachers, researchers, administration, stakeholders, and partners. This will be followed by implementing organisational procedures for volunteer work within the university, which will then be applied and enhanced to help the university easily implement civic engagement inside and outside the university, thus achieving the sustainable development programs that Qatar seeks to achieve by 2030.

2.7 Research Questions:

The present research attempted to answer the following three questions:

1. What are Qatar University students' perspectives on the barriers to civic engagement?
2. What is Qatar University's role in overcoming these barriers?
3. How can a proposed framework be developed to enhance civic engagement within Qatar University?

3. Research Methodology

The research aims, and the nature of this research necessitated a descriptive approach. This approach is used in its theoretical framework to present and discuss studies and literature related to civic engagement, showcasing previous Arab and international experiences in civic engagement. This is done to derive elements of the proposed framework, define the roles of each element in this model, and apply a questionnaire to identify the reasons for university students' reluctance to participate in civic engagement activities. The results are then analysed and interpreted to be utilised in preparing the proposed framework.

3.1 Research Delimitations:

The present research is delimited with the following delimitations.

- Topic delimitations: Civic engagement as a key tributary to sustainable development.
- Human delimitations: University students.
- Spatial delimitations: Qatar University.

3.2 Research Procedures:

The current research went through the following steps:

1. Identifying the elements of the proposed framework, following these procedures:

- Reviewing previous research and relevant literature related to volunteer work in the Arab world and globally, relevant to the following elements: (concept of civic engagement and its theories - university students and civic engagement - successful experiences in civic engagement within universities - sustainable development within Qatar (Qatar National Vision 2030).
- Tracking the reluctance of Qatar University students to participate in community activities.
- Preparing a questionnaire (by the researchers) to identify the reasons for this reluctance. Ethical approval was obtained from Qatar University – Institutional Review Board (QU-IRB) before data collection.
- Presenting the questionnaire items to a group of reviewers for their feedback.
- Preparing the proposed framework based on the results of the previous questionnaire in its initial form.
- Presenting the proposed framework to a group of reviewers to gather their opinions and modify it accordingly.
- Analysing and interpreting the data, extracting and interpreting the results.
- Reaching recommendations and suggestions.

3.3 Target Beneficiaries:

The elements of the proposed framework within Qatar University are intended to benefit the following partners in enhancing civic engagement within the university and encouraging participation:

1. Qatar University Students.
2. Qatar University Teachers.
3. Qatar University College.
4. Partners and Civil Society Organisations.
5. Postgraduate Researchers

3.4 Research Terminology:

3.4.1 Civic engagement:

In this research, civic engagement is defined as institutions establishing programs and activities that lead to achieving social goals integrated with economic objectives. This means informing community members that the results of social performance led to creating a type of harmony between the institution's goals and the community's expectations of it (Khalil, 2006).

This research operationally defines civic engagement as a set of decisions and practices taken by Qatar University and all its elements to achieve the desired civic engagement for university students within the framework of sustainable development that the State of Qatar seeks to achieve in its 2030 vision.

3.4.2 Sustainable Development:

Sustainable Development is defined as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It takes into

account natural balances to preserve resources from deterioration and depletion, ensuring sustainable development (Sobhi, 2019).

This research operationally defines sustainable development as the comprehensive development that aims to achieve progress and prosperity for citizens and residents of the State of Qatar, transforming Qatar into an advanced country capable of achieving sustainable development and ensuring a continued decent life for its people across generations.

4. Research Findings

This section presents the research findings of the current study in response to the research questions.

RQ1: What are Qatar University students' perspectives on the barriers to civic engagement?

The researchers designed a questionnaire to determine the role of university education in promoting a culture of volunteerism, the reality of university student participation in this work, and the most significant barriers to that participation. The final version of the questionnaire included 30 items measuring the barriers to Qatar University students' participation in community engagement. The questionnaire covered four areas: Qatar University Students, Qatar University Environment, Civil Society Volunteer Organisations, and Qatari Society.

The questionnaire responses consisted of three options: Agree, Somewhat Agree, and Disagree. Each item in the questionnaire was given a weighted score according to the Likert triadic scale: Agree (3 points), Somewhat Agree (2 points), and Disagree (1 point). To determine the length of the triadic scale cells, the following formula was used: $\text{Standard} = (\text{Highest Limit} - \text{Lowest Limit}) / \text{Highest Limit}$. Therefore, the standard is $(3-1)/3 = 0.66$.

These values were added to the lowest value in the scale to determine the upper limit for this item and so on for the rest of the items. Table (1) shows the benchmark used in this research to measure Qatar University students' (the research sample) assessment of barriers to participation in volunteer work, according to the arithmetic means.

Table (1) Research Criterion

Mean	Rating
1-1.66	Low
1.67-2.33	Medium
2.34-3	High

Questionnaire Validity: The performance was presented to several specialists in the field of volunteer work to ensure the validity of the tool in terms of its linguistic formulation, its consistency with the research topic, and the suitability of its content to the field to which it belongs. In light of the observations of the arbitrators, the process of deletion and addition was carried out so that the paragraphs of the questionnaire in its final form consist of (30) paragraphs.

Questionnaire Reliability: The stability coefficient of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach’s alpha stability coefficient, and it was found that the stability coefficient of the questionnaire reached (85.), which is a high and appropriate coefficient for applying the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Results:

The questionnaire was applied to a sample of students at Qatar University, with a total of 70 male and female students, both Qatari and non-Qatari students. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate this:

Table (2) Distribution by gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	40	57%
Female	30	43%

Table (2) clearly shows that the percentage of males is higher than the percentage of females, and this may be because males are more willing to participate in volunteer work than females.

Table (3) Distribution by nationality

Nationality	Number	Percentage
Qatari	25	35%
Non-Qatari	45	65%

Table 3 shows a noticeable superiority of non-Qataris’ participation in this questionnaire, which indicates the residents’ desire to participate in volunteer work. As for the Qatari students, the low percentage of their participation may be due to the loss of desire for volunteer work, which requires effort and time during university work.

Table (4) Mean score and ranking for the questionnaire of barriers to university student participation in volunteer work

Categories	Mean score	Ranking	Status
1. Barriers related to Qatar University students	1.94	4	Medium
2. Barriers related to the Qatar University Environment	2.25	3	Medium
3. Barriers related to civil society volunteer organisations	2.55	1	High
4. Barriers related to society	2.33	2	Medium
The Entire Questionnaire	2.26		Medium

It is clear from Table (4) that the arithmetic averages of the research sample individuals for the barriers to civic engagement ranged between (1.94 and 2.55), and that the arithmetic average for all areas of barriers reached: (2.26) with a medium rating. This result highlights the students’ initial awareness of the multiplicity of barriers that weaken their participation in volunteer work. These results are consistent with the findings of the studies by Wafaa Morsy Ahmed 2012, Ahmed Abdel-Moaty and Asmaa Farghali 2020 that the participation of

university students in volunteer work is still between medium and weak in some Arab countries. (Ahmed, 2012) (Abdel-Moaty & Farghali, 2020).

It is also clear from Table (4) that the barriers related to civil society volunteer organisations came first from the point of view of the research sample. This may be due to the weakness of these voluntary organisations in attracting university students to volunteer work or the fact that the organisational and administrative procedures do not match students' aspirations for practising the desired civic engagement. This result aligns with the findings of Jamila and Javlina's 2014 study, which emphasised the need for volunteer organisations in the country to collaborate in attracting more young people to their volunteer projects (Pavlina, 2014).

Table (4) reveals that community-related barriers ranked second. This result indicates that the concept of civic engagement in Qatari society still needs support from all elements of various community institutions: family, school, university, media, civil society, and other institutions.

Table (4) also shows that barriers related to the environment at Qatar University ranked third. This may be due to the environment within Qatar University largely encouraging volunteer opportunities, in addition to the presence of a volunteer service centre within the university, along with numerous volunteer activities that many students participate in. However, these efforts still need support from all educational elements to develop the concept of civic engagement among students both inside and outside the university while facilitating the tasks of student volunteers as much as possible.

Table (4) further reveals that barriers related to university students ranked fourth. This means that students still face some barriers hindering their participation in volunteer work, such as numerous university assignments, consecutive exams, graduation projects for some, and various academic burdens. This result aligns with Al-Fadala's (2021) study, which indicated that barriers associated with university students may be due to their academic responsibilities, such as assignments, reports, costs, and exams, along with a crowded academic schedule, leaving students with no time for volunteer work (Al-Fadala, 2021).

Research Question 2: What is Qatar University's Role in Overcoming These Barriers?

To address the second research question, which investigates the role of Qatar University in overcoming barriers to civic engagement, the researchers developed a comprehensive vision outlining the competencies required by all participants in the educational process. This vision includes not only university stakeholders but also partners such as parents, civil society organisations, and researchers. The aim is to foster a robust culture of civic engagement among students, enabling them to effectively participate in volunteer activities both within and outside the university, thereby contributing to the sustainable development goals of the State of Qatar. Key aspects of this vision include the following dimensions (See Fig.1)

Civic Engagement Vision

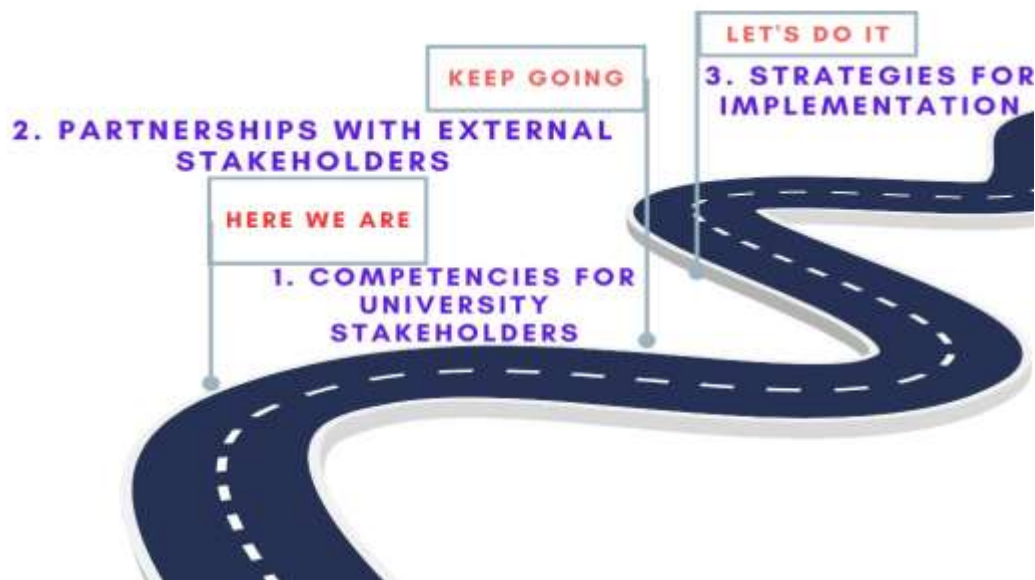


Fig. (1) Civic Engagement Vision

1. Competencies for University Stakeholders:

- **Students:** Provide opportunities and support for students to engage in volunteer activities that align with their interests and academic schedules. Equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective civic participation.
- **Faculty:** Encourage faculty to integrate civic engagement into their teaching and mentoring. Offer training and resources to help them support student involvement in volunteer work.
- **Administration:** Develop policies and frameworks that facilitate student participation in volunteer activities. Ensure coordination between academic responsibilities and volunteer opportunities.

2. Partnerships with External Stakeholders:

- **Parents:** Engage parents in promoting the value of civic engagement. Encourage them to support their children's involvement in volunteer activities.
- **Civil Society Organizations:** Establish strong partnerships with civil society organisations to provide diverse and meaningful volunteer opportunities for students. Facilitate training and mentorship programs to prepare students for effective participation.
- **Researchers:** Conduct ongoing research to identify best practices and measure the impact of civic engagement initiatives. Use findings to continuously improve and adapt the university's approach to fostering civic responsibility.

3. Strategies for Implementation:

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of civic engagement and its benefits for personal and community development.
- **Training Programs:** Develop and implement training programs for students, faculty, and staff to build competencies related to volunteer work and civic engagement.
- **Recognition and Incentives:** Recognise and reward students, faculty, and partners who demonstrate exceptional commitment to civic engagement. Provide incentives to encourage wider participation.
- **Integration with Curriculum:** Embed civic engagement components into the university curriculum, ensuring that all students gain exposure to the principles and practices of volunteerism as part of their education.

By adopting this comprehensive vision, Qatar University can play a pivotal role in overcoming barriers to civic engagement. This approach not only enhances the university's educational mission but also contributes to the broader goals of sustainable development in Qatar.

RQ3: How can a proposed framework be developed to enhance civic engagement within Qatar University?

Comprehensive Framework for Enhancing Civic Engagement at Qatar University

To enhance civic engagement at Qatar University and address the identified challenges, the researchers developed a comprehensive framework that involves all university stakeholders. This framework aims to foster a culture of civic engagement that aligns with sustainable development goals.

Establishing a Philosophy for Civic Engagement

The philosophy underlying this framework is that civic engagement should be inclusive of all university students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, interests, abilities, and living conditions. The goal is to cultivate a culture of civic engagement that contributes to Qatar's sustainable development objectives.

Objectives of the Proposed Framework

1. **Address Shortcomings:** Improve the promotion of civic engagement at Qatar University and align these efforts with sustainable development requirements.
2. **Develop Partnerships:** Foster effective collaborations between Qatar University and civil society organisations.
3. **Raise Awareness:** Educate students about their societal roles and responsibilities in achieving sustainable development.
4. **Enhance Community Belonging:** Strengthen students' sense of belonging by involving them in sustainable development programs.
5. **Utilise Enthusiasm:** Leverage students' enthusiasm to support sustainable development initiatives within the university.

Principles of the Proposed Framework

1. **Opportunity for Participation:** Ensure all students have the chance to engage in volunteer work, regardless of their financial or personal circumstances.
2. **Flexibility:** Adapt volunteer work opportunities to fit students' schedules and circumstances.
3. **Effectiveness:** Maximise the impact of volunteer work and showcase the capabilities of participating students.
4. **Innovation:** Present volunteer opportunities in creative ways to attract student interest.
5. **Sustainability:** Link civic engagement activities to the sustainable development programs outlined in Qatar National Vision 2030.

Dimensions of the proposed framework are shown in Fig. 2. below.

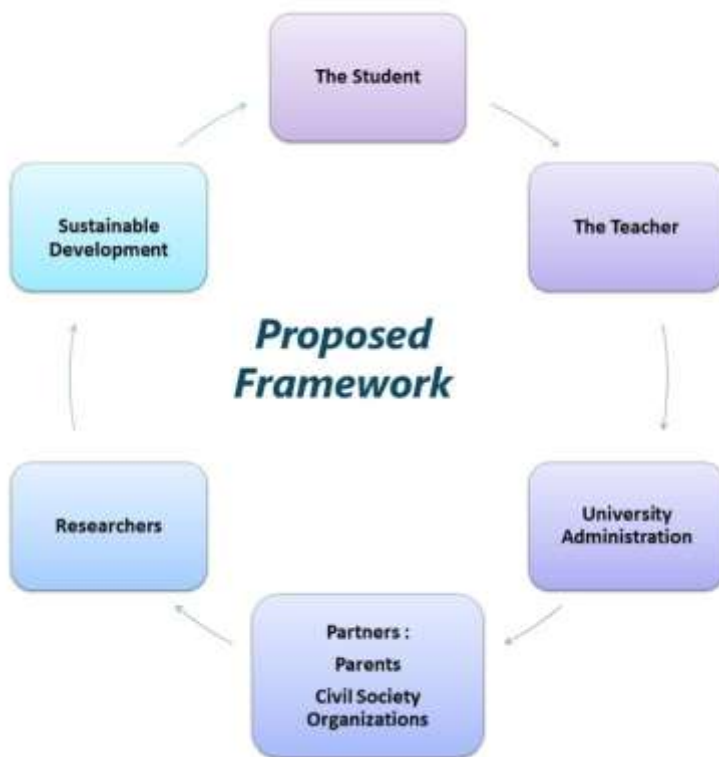


Fig. (2) Proposed Framework

1. The Student

1. Allocate time for volunteer work within and outside the university.
2. Provide comprehensive information on the importance and goals of volunteer work.
3. Offer moral recognition for completed volunteer activities.
4. Enable students to choose from various volunteer opportunities.
5. Ensure a safe environment for students, even in case of mistakes.

6. Allow withdrawal from volunteer commitments when necessary.
7. Match volunteer opportunities to students' abilities and interests.

2. The Teacher

1. Appreciate students involved in volunteer work.
2. Participate in volunteer work to inspire students.
3. Highlight the importance of volunteerism in coursework.
4. Continuously encourage students to volunteer.
5. Maintain regular communication with student volunteers.
6. Support students with special needs in their volunteer efforts.
7. Show flexibility in academic requirements for volunteer students.

3. University Administration

1. Communicate the importance of volunteer work to students.
2. Provide guidelines for faculty on supporting student volunteers.
3. Schedule volunteer activities to avoid conflicts with academic commitments.
4. Establish a complaint mechanism for volunteer-related issues.
5. Coordinate with external volunteer organisations.
6. Promote volunteer events and participation opportunities.
7. Develop a mandatory volunteer work course for first-year students.

4. Partners (Parents and Civil Society Organizations)

1. Contribute materially and logistically to support university volunteer work.
2. Understand and appropriately engage with student volunteers.
3. Offer suggestions for improving volunteer activities.
4. Monitor and evaluate student volunteer work.
5. Advocate for the importance of volunteer work in society.
6. Publicly recognise and appreciate student volunteers.
7. Collaborate with the university to support student volunteer efforts.
8. Promote volunteerism within the broader community.

5. Researchers

1. Conduct descriptive and applied research to enhance volunteer work.
2. Evaluate the positives and negatives of volunteer initiatives.
3. Incorporate modern theories into volunteer work design.
4. Compare volunteer work environments and practices internationally.
5. Continuously evaluate major volunteer activities to identify areas for improvement.

6. Sustainable Development

1. Integrate Qatar's development programs into volunteer activities.
2. Ensure alignment with the nation's sustainable development goals.

This comprehensive vision aims to create an environment at Qatar University where civic engagement is deeply integrated into the fabric of university life, contributing to the broader goals of sustainable development.

Research Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the researchers recommend the following actions to enhance civic engagement among students at Qatar University:

- **Integrate Volunteer Work into Curricula:** Incorporate the concept of volunteer work, its goals, and its societal importance into mandatory courses for first-year students.
- **Align Volunteer Opportunities with Student Interests:** Link volunteer activities to students' interests, inclinations, and previous experiences to increase participation.
- **Coordinate Training with Civil Society Institutions:** Establish partnerships between the university and civil society organisations to provide pre-volunteering training for students.
- **Promote Exemplary Volunteer Models:** Organise seminars showcasing exemplary models of volunteerism to inspire and motivate student participation.
- **Consider Academic Schedules:** Take into account students' academic schedules, including exams, assignments, and other academic commitments, to facilitate their engagement in volunteer work.
- **Conduct Faculty Workshops:** Hold workshops for faculty members to educate them on motivating students to engage in volunteer work.
- **Highlight Volunteer Programs in Media:** Publicise volunteer programs both within and outside the university to emphasise their importance and encourage societal acceptance of student volunteerism.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the following suggestions for further research are proposed:

- **Longitudinal Studies on Civic Engagement:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track changes in civic engagement attitudes and behaviours among university students over time, assessing the long-term impact of university programs and initiatives.
- **Comparative Studies Across Universities:** Compare the effectiveness of civic engagement programs across different universities in Qatar and other countries to identify best practices and successful models that can be adapted and implemented.
- **Impact Assessment of Volunteer Programs:** Evaluate the impact of specific volunteer programs on students' academic performance, personal development, and career prospects better to understand the benefits and potential drawbacks of civic engagement.

- **Barriers to Volunteer Participation:** Investigate in greater detail the specific barriers that prevent students from participating in volunteer work, including socioeconomic factors, time constraints, and personal attitudes towards volunteering.
- **Role of Digital Platforms in Civic Engagement:** Explore the role of digital platforms and social media in promoting and facilitating volunteer activities among university students, including the potential for online volunteer opportunities.
- **Faculty and Staff Engagement:** Examine the role of faculty and staff in promoting civic engagement, including their perceptions, attitudes, and the effectiveness of their efforts to encourage student participation in volunteer work.
- **Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Volunteering:** Study the differences in civic engagement and volunteerism between students from different cultural backgrounds to understand how cultural values and traditions influence volunteer behaviours.
- **Policy and Institutional Support:** Analyse the policies and institutional support mechanisms that are most effective in fostering a culture of civic engagement within universities, providing recommendations for policymakers and educational leaders.
- **Volunteer Work and Social Impact:** Assess the broader social impact of student volunteer activities on local communities, measuring outcomes such as community development, social cohesion, and public health improvements.

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