

“Public Relations’ Ability in Raising the Level of Community Awareness about the Importance of Volunteering”

Sawaed19 as a case study

Dr. Abdelkareem Sarhan, Dana Mesbah Nabulsi, Sara Ghasoub Abu Ghoush
An- Najah National University, Nablus, Palestine

Through studying, evaluating, and analyzing the many actions, campaigns, and programs of the Public Relations Department at Sawaed 19, this study intends to determine public relations' role to raise community awareness about the value of volunteering. A questionnaire and an interview were employed as research methods, and the team used a descriptive analytical methodology that was suited for the research. Sawaed 19 provided a random sample of 166 volunteers for the survey. The most notable findings were: Palestinian citizens use social networking sites with little regard for materials related to volunteer work, volunteer work in Palestine is unorganized, and there is a lack of legislation and laws that protect the rights of citizens who volunteer; in conclusion, the team recommends: the importance of supporting the role of public relations in Sawaed.

Keywords: Public Relations, community awareness, volunteering, Sawaed 19

Introduction

During the previous two years, the coronavirus outbreak had a devastating impact on almost every element of life in Palestine and around the world. Limiting the fields of volunteering to health epidemiology and ignoring the rest of the fields of volunteering in society to life in Palestine is a critical issue, because volunteering has the ability to mitigate all of the negative effects of Corona in Palestine in terms of economic, social, and other aspects, whether due to the occupation of the beloved homeland or for a variety of other reasons. The relevance of increasing community awareness of volunteer work rests in increasing people's sense of belonging to the community and the importance of their participation and aid. The team came up with the idea for the study after browsing social networking sites and noticing the launch of a volunteer program website called Sawaed 19, and after contacting public relations officials in this startup institution, which has been operational since 2019, the team decided to research this topic, as the study's main problem is to determine the ability of public relations activities, programs, and campaigns to attract volunteers. This study will answer the following main questions: How does the Public Relations Department, through the Sawaed 19 platform, raise community awareness about the importance of volunteering?

Theoretical framework:

This study relies on Maslow's hierarchy theory for its needs and suitability for the study's purposes. Public relations professionals use Maslow's hierarchy as a communication theory to deliver the right message to the right audience. This theory gives the public relations field a better insight into determining human priorities for meeting different needs, which affects how public relations The study focuses on raising societal awareness in Palestinian society, which has a variety of social issues that dozens of non-profit organizations work on relieving. The role of PR is to communicate with volunteers and potential volunteers to enhance and expand the effectiveness of non-profit organizations as they are an important asset to society. (Hall & Innes, 2008) The "two-way symmetrical communication" model was used by the research team. In context, the communication is from the organization to its audience (internal and external) and from the public to the organization. The main objective of public relations is limited to persuasion, planned and based on scientific foundations, as well as converting this persuasion into a behavior that supports the organization and its goal in the message (convincing them of the importance of volunteering in this study, thus attracting them), which also includes feedback from the audience. (Crichton; O'Connor; Flynn, 2013, p. 72)

Literature review:

The study was conducted in reference to 10 literature reviews of past studies. The complete set of past studies served as inspiration for the research team in order to design a study that was well-focused on public relations and volunteers. It aided in establishing the current research's topic and questions in a way that corresponded to the research's goals, as well as outlining the methodology employed in the current study.

Methodology and procedures:

Study Methodology: The descriptive-analytical method was chosen by the researchers because it best fits the nature of the study. The descriptive approach is defined as a method of studying scientific phenomena or problems by first doing a scientific description and then arriving at logical explanations with evidence and proofs that allow the researcher to set specific frameworks for the problem, which are then used to determine the research's results. (Mahmoud, 2021).

Study population: The exterior audience of Sawaed 19, which consists of (282) individuals, is represented by volunteer Palestinian people with Sawaed 19, and an interview with Maysa Al-Shami, the public relations, media, and community building officer in the internal audience of the 19 media saddlers.

Study sample: The research team employed a questionnaire instrument and released it to an external audience for the forearms of 19 volunteers via the platform, with a total of (166) people chosen at random.

Study tool: The researchers used the questionnaire tool as one of the study tools to collect all the required information from the study community, analyze it, and come up with the results.

Repetitions of the paragraphs of the axes of the questionnaire

The following tables explain in detail all the axes of the questionnaire submitted to the study sample; indicating the number of repetitions for each answer of each statement.

Table 1. volunteer work fields promoted by public relations in Sawaed 19

Statement	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Special Needs	42 (25.3%)	42 (25.3%)	56 (33.7%)	23 (13.9%)	3 (1.8%)	166
Public Spaces	38 (22.9%)	55 (33.1%)	62 (37.3%)	10 (6%)	1 (0.6%)	166
Charity	40 (24.1%)	53 (31.9%)	48 (28.9%)	22 (13.3%)	3 (1.8%)	166
Humanitarian Assistance	42 (25.3%)	56 (33.7%)	54 (32.5%)	9 (5.4%)	5 (3%)	166
Environmental Issues	22 (13.3%)	56 (33.7%)	57 (34.3%)	22 (13.3%)	9 (5.4%)	166
Animals	20 (12.0%)	49 (29.5%)	50 (30.1%)	18 (10.8%)	29 (17.5%)	166
Education	26 (15.7%)	75 (45.2%)	50 (30.1%)	12 (7.2%)	3 (1.8%)	166
Health Care	32 (19.3%)	48 (28.9%)	39 (23.5%)	34 (20.5%)	13 (7.8%)	166
Social Issues	44 (26.5%)	51 (30.7%)	56 (33.7%)	14 (8.4%)	1 (0.6%)	166

Sports	16 (9.6%)	47 (28.3%)	50 (30.1%)	24 (14.5%)	29 (17.5%)	166
---------------	--------------	---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------	-----

The average field of volunteer work promoted by public relations in Sawaed 19 is 3.48, at a rate of 70%, which is an average percentage, and the “Social Issues” and “Humanitarian Aid” items got the highest arithmetic average, which is equal to 3.74 and 3.73, and at a rate of 75%, which is an average percentage. While the lowest percentage was the animals, they got an arithmetic average of 3.08 by 62%, which is an average percentage. This indicates the focus of public relations in 19 Sawaed on the social and humanitarian aspect on other fields, which is an urgent necessity in the State of Palestine due to the circumstances in which it is located.

Table 2. Personal Motivational Factors to Volunteer

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Total
University Requirement	84 (50.6%)	82 (49.4%)	166
Spare time	127 (76.5%)	39 (23.5%)	166
Confirmation of self-confidence	143 (86.1%)	23 (13.9%)	166
Friendships	121 (72.9%)	45 (27.1%)	166
Social/ personality development	157 (94.6%)	9 (5.4%)	166
Strengthening national belonging	132 (79.5%)	34 (20.5%)	166
Grasp on Community Problems	153 (92.2%)	13 (7.8%)	166
Gain New Skills	131 (78.9%)	35 (21.1%)	166
Increase Practical Experience	147 (88.6%)	19 (11.4%)	166
Community Service Contribution	140 (84.3%)	26 (15.7%)	166
Employment Opportunity	114 (68.7%)	52 (31.3%)	166
Cultural Background Development	129 (77.7%)	37 (22.3%)	166
Satisfaction of Psychological and Social Needs	145 (87.3%)	21 (12.7%)	166
Religious Values	108 (65.1%)	58 (34.9%)	166

The average range of motives that encouraged you to do volunteer work was 1.79, or 89%, which is a high percentage, and that the highest paragraph was “social personality development” and obtained an arithmetic average of 1.95 by 98%, which is high, while the lowest paragraph was “university requirement” and obtained

My arithmetic average is 1.51 at 76% which is average. This confirms that the main driving force behind youth volunteering is the self, as they aspire to satisfy their need for self-knowledge, development, and satisfaction, and volunteering is one of these means as shown by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (theory of the study).

Table 3. Obstacles that limit volunteer opportunities in the community

Statement	Important	Not Important	Total
Insufficient time	131 (78.9%)	35 (21.1%)	166
Unorganised volunteering in Palestine	122 (73.5%)	44 (26.5%)	166
Lack of institutions directed to the volunteer work	133 (80.1%)	33 (19.9%)	166
Insufficient invitation of volunteer work participation	110 (66.3%)	56 (33.7%)	166
Weak morale	122 (73.5%)	44 (26.5%)	166
Negative stereotypes about voluntary organisations	108 (65.1%)	58 (34.9%)	166
Lack of sufficient awareness of volunteering programs/ fields	152 (91.6%)	14 (8.4%)	166
Lack of legal legislation regulation of voluntary work	111 (66.9%)	55 (33.1%)	166
Lack of awareness on the benefits of volunteering	145 (87.3%)	21 (12.7%)	166
Lack of Family encouragement for children to participate in volunteer work	132 (79.5%)	34 (20.5%)	166
Weakness of voluntary organizations' definition of their identity and scope of work	143 (86.1%)	23 (13.9%)	166
Doubting the credibility of voluntary organizations	118 (71.1%)	48 (28.9%)	166
Paid work preference over volunteer work	130 (78.3%)	36 (21.7%)	166
Work nature and environment within the voluntary institutions	117 (70.5%)	49 (29.5%)	166
Volunteering that requires physical effort	115 (69.3%)	51 (30.7%)	166

The results confirmed that the average range of obstacles that limit volunteer opportunities in the community is 1.76, at 88%, which is a high percentage, and that the highest paragraph was "lack of sufficient awareness of volunteering programs and their fields" and got an arithmetic average of 1.92 at 96%, which is a high percentage, while the lowest paragraph was "the presence of Some negative stereotypes about voluntary

institutions.” And I got a mean of 1.62 with a rate of 81%, which is a high percentage. This indicates the necessary public relations role in Sawaed in raising awareness of volunteering programs and directing individuals towards it.

Table 4. The role of public relations in Sawaed 19 in finding ways and means to encourage citizens to volunteer

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Activating the role of the various media method in educating community members about the importance of volunteering	72 (43.4%)	68 (41%)	20 (12%)	3 (1.8%)	3 (1.8%)	166
Carry out research and field studies on volunteer work	44 (26.5%)	80 (48.2%)	35 (21.1%)	2 (1.2%)	5 (3.0%)	166
inclusion of volunteer concepts and importance in educational institutions' programs and courses	58 (34.9%)	64 (38.6%)	39 (23.5%)	2 (38.6%)	3 (1.8%)	166
Supporting institutions and bodies that work in the field of volunteer work	56 (33.7%)	72 (43.4%)	24 (14.5%)	13 (7.8%)	1 (0.6%)	166
Cultivating principles and values that encourage volunteer work	50 (30.1%)	76 (45.8%)	33 (19.9%)	6 (3.6%)	1 (0.6%)	166
Training and rehabilitation of youth wishing to volunteer	54 (32.5%)	76 (45.8%)	25 (15.1%)	8 (45.8%)	3 (1.8%)	166
Influential lectures and seminars on the importance of volunteering	64 (38.6%)	68 (41.0%)	27 (16.3%)	4 (2.4%)	3 (1.8%)	166
Networking between volunteers and organizations	72 (43.4%)	56 (33.7%)	31 (18.7%)	6 (3.6%)	1 (0.6%)	166

The results indicated that the average field of how to evaluate the performance of public relations in Sawaed 19 is 4.05 with a rate of 81%, which is a high percentage, and that the highest paragraph was “its activity through social networking sites and the diversity of its content” and obtained an arithmetic average of 4.30 by 86%, which is a high percentage, while the paragraph The least was "working statistics and studies related to volunteering" and I got an arithmetic average of 3.76 by 75%, which is an average rate. This indicates the good use of public relations in Sawaed 19 for social networking sites, which is an important tool for raising societal awareness.

Table 5. How do you evaluate the performance of public relations in Sawaed 19?

Statement	Excellent	Very Good	Neural	fair	Poor	Total
Its activity through social networking sites and the diversity of its content	72 (43.4%)	73 (44%)	18 (10.8%)	2 (1.2%)	1 (0.6%)	166
The ability to effectively network between volunteers and institutions	40 (24.1%)	87 (52.4%)	32 (19.3%)	6 (3.6%)	1 (0.6%)	166
Ease of use of Sawaed's website	54 (32.5%)	77 (46.4%)	32 (19.3%)	2 (1.2%)	1 (0.6%)	166
Effective and fast public communication	50 (30.1%)	87 (52.4%)	20 (12%)	8 (4.8%)	1 (0.6%)	166
Efficiency of training provided to volunteers	61 (36.7%)	70 (42.2%)	28 (16.9%)	6 (3.6%)	1 (0.6%)	166
public relations' seminar effectiveness, in Sawaed, at raising awareness about the importance of volunteering	53 (31.9%)	68 (41%)	34 (20.5%)	10 (6%)	1 (0.6%)	166
Providing volunteers with appropriate workshops to prepare them for volunteering	57 (34.3%)	72 (43.4%)	32 (19.3%)	4 (2.4%)	1 (0.6%)	166
Inclusion of professional human values in the field of volunteering (Sustainable Development Goals)	54 (32.5%)	79 (32.5%)	30 (18.1%)	2 (1.2%)	1 (0.6%)	166
Providing statistics and studies related to volunteering	37 (22.3%)	70 (42.2%)	44 (26.5%)	12 (7.2%)	3 (1.8%)	166
The ability of Sawaed's PR campaigns in raising awareness about the importance of volunteering	43 (25.9%)	88 (53%)	24 (14.5%)	8 (4.8%)	3 (1.8%)	166

The field of public relations role in Sawaed 19 in finding ways and means to encourage citizens to volunteer got an arithmetic average of 4.07 by 81%, which is a high percentage. 4.22 by 84%, which is a high percentage, and the paragraph "Doing research and field studies in the fields of volunteer work" obtained the lowest arithmetic average in this field, which is 3.94 by 79%, which is an average rate. This indicates the ability of public relations in Sawaed 19 to use and activate the most effective tool, which is activating the media in educating the importance of volunteering, which is a key factor in raising the level of community awareness about the importance of volunteering.

Notes:

1. An open question was asked regarding the sample's opinion of volunteers in Sawaed 19 about volunteering through the Sawaed platform through the question "Do you recommend volunteering through the Sawaed 19 platform?" The number of supporters reached 166 individuals, 100%.
2. Some reasons were given by the sample members to advise others to volunteer through the Sawaed 19 platform. The number of comments reached 17 comments describing the positives of volunteering and praising the platform and Sawaed's staff.

Authenticity of the tool: Face Validity

After preparing the study tool in its primary form and to verify the validity of the tool and its suitability for the study, the research team presented it to a number of arbitrators with experience to determine the extent of its content validity and suitability for the study's objectives, importance, variables and methodology.

Scale stability: Item- Inter Consistency

The researcher calculated the scale's stability using Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient, and the reliability coefficient reached (92%).

Study Results

To verify the study question, the research team used averages and percentages, and they were arranged according to the arithmetic mean and the following estimate:

(less than 50%) is a low score.

(50% to less than 79.9%) Intermediate score.

(80% or more) High score.

Interview analysis

The research team conducted a direct interview with Ms. Maysa Al-Shamy- Public Relations Officer at Sawaed 19, in order to confirm the results of the questionnaire and strengthen the research, several questions were directed to Ms. Maysa Al-Shami, and they came as follows:

1. What is the Sawaed 19 platform?

Sawaed 19 is a professional social networking platform that organizes volunteer work by connecting volunteers through public relations with institutions that want to create voluntary projects and need volunteers.

2. What is the nature of public relations work in Sawaed 19?

The public relations in Sawaed 19 consists of one public relations employee, the media person "Maysa Al-Shamy", who employs her university studies in the field of public relations in order to Promote Sawaed 19, network between institutions and volunteers, and employ appropriate public relations tools for the desired goal. Public relations in Sawaed 19 is working to achieve the 17 sustainable development goals through its volunteer programs and campaigns.

3. What is the role of public relations in Sawaed 19, and what are the tools that you use in order to raise the level of societal awareness of the importance of volunteering?

The main role of public relations in Sawaed 19 is to build the real community first and the virtual second for Sawaed 19 and to deliver the idea to the community through various public relations tools, including social media as a tool of Public relations tools. Other tools are employed, whether workshops, direct communication or public relations visits with institutions, the use of personal relationships that are the basis of public relations, organizing and creating new events. Public relations work is an integrative work with the media.

4. How does public relations in Sawaed 19 communicate with the public?

Communication with the masses is divided into two parts, beginning with institutions, through direct communication and field visits (public relations visits). As for communicating with young volunteers and students, they are reached through social media and the platforms they also go to universities and schools and organize events and awareness days, so the adoption of Sawaed 19 is on direct communication.

5. Who is the audience interested in Sawaed 19?

The community of Sawaed 19 who are interested in volunteering is diverse. It is possible that the individual is over the age of fifty or even in his twenties, and public relations must study it well and divide it in order to use

the appropriate public relations tool for the appropriate category in order to obtain the best results and attract volunteers and measure the impact afterwards and help in planning.

6. What are the challenges facing public relations in Sawaed 19 in raising the level of societal awareness of the importance of volunteering?

The interest of a large part of the Palestinian people in paid work more than volunteering, as well as the large number of commitments and the lack of free time, in addition to the weak awareness of the importance of volunteering and the absence of a culture of volunteering in society. Another type of challenges such as the lack of legislation and laws organizing and preserving volunteer rights, in addition to the lack of families encouraging their children and the absence of educational activities in educational institutions that motivate students to volunteer, as well as challenges related to the low financial budget necessary to complete activities, campaigns and programs aimed at motivating citizens to volunteer.

7. What is the impact of public relations campaigns and activities on Sawaed 19?

According to statistics from various sources, more than 700,000 Palestinian citizens are volunteers, as 26% of the Palestinian community volunteered or had the experience of volunteering, and that 85% of the volunteers They see that their experience is positive. With regard to Sawaed 19, several cooperation agreements have been signed with various local associations, institutions and individuals.

Summary and conclusions

The research team reached the following results:

1. The results showed that volunteering in Palestine faces many challenges in promoting it due to the lack of financial resources allocated to it, and the lack of specialized experts.
2. The results confirmed that citizens use social networking sites little with regard to materials related to volunteer work and awareness publications regarding it.
3. The study proved the efficiency of the role played by public relations in Sawaed 19 and its use of public relations tools in an appropriate manner.
4. The study showed a lack of interest on the part of municipalities and institutions in voluntary work and its encouragement, in addition to the lack of support and neglect of ministries and private sector institutions for voluntary work.
5. The study showed that the number of public relations workers in Sawaed 19 is small compared to the work to be done in order to raise the level of community awareness of volunteering.
6. The results showed citizens' neglect of the benefits of volunteering, its importance and the extent of its coherence with the issue of patriotism and belonging. It has a strong role in improvement and development, especially with the conditions of the Israeli occupation in the homeland.
7. The results showed that volunteer work in Palestine is unorganized and random, and showed the lack of legislation and laws that guarantee the rights of volunteer citizens.
8. The study confirmed the lack of interest of school and university students in volunteering and the insufficient level of awareness of the importance of volunteering and its benefits to them and society.
9. The results showed the small number of citizens who know about Sawaed 19, its role in society, and what its work is.
10. The study confirmed the lack of public relations departments in the local non-profit, charitable and voluntary institutions, or their work was limited to one employee.

Study recommendations:

1. Integrating volunteer activities in Sawaed 19 with volunteer activities in international institutions outside Palestine and benefiting from their experiences.
2. Investing in social media more effectively, to ensure the sustainability of volunteer work, and to spread its benefits to all segments of society in a larger and broader way.
3. It is necessary to support the role played by public relations in Sawaed 19 in raising the level of community awareness about the importance of volunteering and promoting it.
4. Allocating more activities to support such institutions, raising community awareness of the importance of volunteering in Palestine through municipalities and various civil society institutions, stimulating the private and governmental sectors to support the volunteering policy and raising citizens' awareness of its importance.
5. Rehabilitation and increase the number of workers in the field of public relations in Sawaed 19.

6. Linking volunteer work and belonging to the homeland and the Palestinian identity.
7. Imposing policies, laws, and laws regulating voluntary work and guaranteeing rights in Palestine by the government.
8. Establishing strong links between universities and schools in order to create a spirit of volunteerism in the hearts of students.
9. Work to intensify activities and campaigns to familiarize the community with 19.
10. Establishing a public relations department in all non-profit, charitable, voluntary institutions for its important role in raising citizens' awareness of the importance of volunteering and promoting it.

References:

1. Arabic Language Academy: Intermediate Dictionary, Fourth Edition, Al Shorouk International Library, p. 570 (2014).
2. Ferjani, Ali: Public Relations and Communication Strategies, First Edition, Jordan: Dar Amjad for Publishing and Distribution (2018).
3. Crichton, Margaret; O'Connor, Paul; Flynn, Rona: Safety at the Sharp End: A Guide to Non-Technical Skills, 2nd Edition, Ashgate Publishing, p. 72 (2013).
4. Nasser, Aya: Cultural information site, definition of public relations, objectives of public relations.
5. Mahmoud: The concept of the intentional sample, the messenger.(2020).(2021).
6. Adam, Selma: SUST Repository: public relations and its role in voluntary work (case study of the endowment organization for orphan care) DSpace. (2019).
7. Al-Tamimi, Khalaf: The dimensions of the social responsibility of public relations and its role in promoting volunteer work, a survey study of public relations managers in government institutions in Wasit. Iraqi Academic Scientific Journals - IASJ (2019).
8. The official website of the Sawaed 19 platform.
9. Maslow, A. H.: *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper and Row (1954).
10. Maslow, A. H.: *Toward a psychology of being*. Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company (1962).
11. Hall, J., & Innes, P.: The Motivation of Volunteers: Australian Surf Lifesavers. *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, 5–7 (2008).
12. Hamdan, M., el Talla, S., al Shobaki, M., & Abu-Naser, S.: Strategic Sensitivity and Its Impact on Boosting the Creative Behavior of Palestinian NGOs. AUG Repository (2020).
13. Siame, D.: "ASSESS THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGNS." A CASE STUDY OF MTN ZAMBIA. CAVENDISH UNIVERSITY ZAMBIA (2020).
14. Taylor, C.: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory in Public Relations | Courtney Taylor (COMM473) Penn State (2018).