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A Youth Service Learning Program in Palestine: A mixed method, quasi-experimental pilot examining young adult employment readiness and volunteerism

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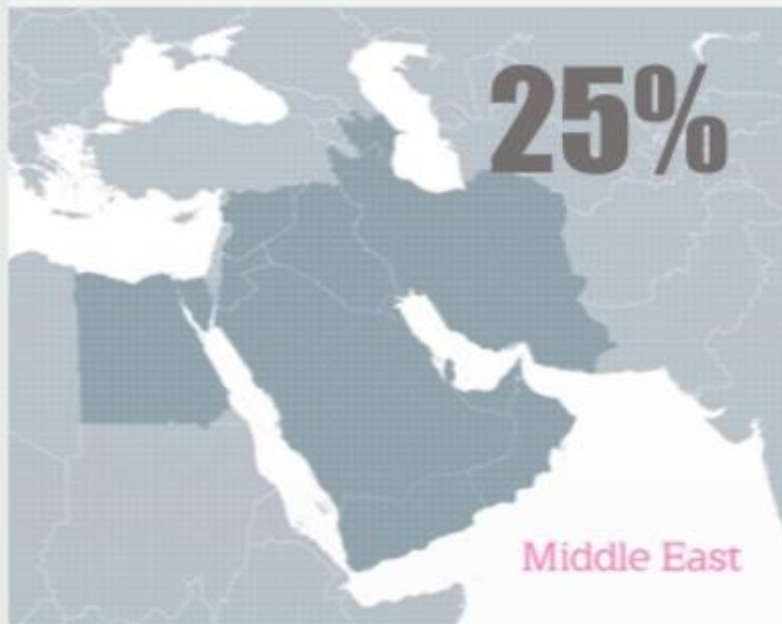
COLLABORATIONS



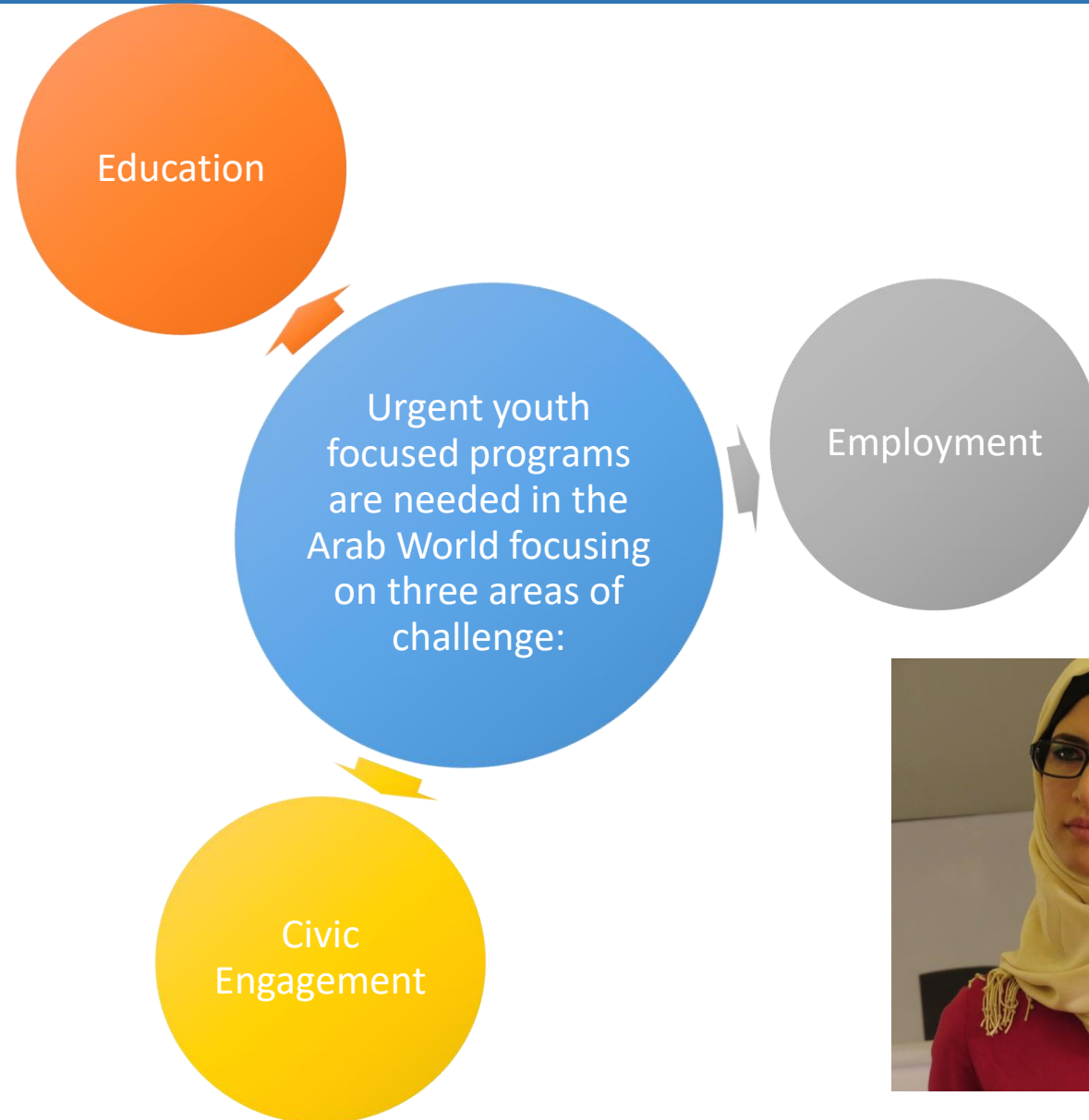
THE CHALLENGE

Employment opportunities for young adults are at critically low levels in the Middle East

**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
15 -24 YEARS OLD**



THE NEED



TOMORROW'S YOUTH ORGANIZATION (TYO)

An American 501c3, non-governmental organization that works in disadvantaged areas of the Middle East and uniquely targets this risk group in the West Bank. TYO has worked with:



1600 children



2800 youth



80 American interns



800 local young adult volunteers



850 women



Tomorrow's Youth
ORGANIZATION
منظمة شباب الغد

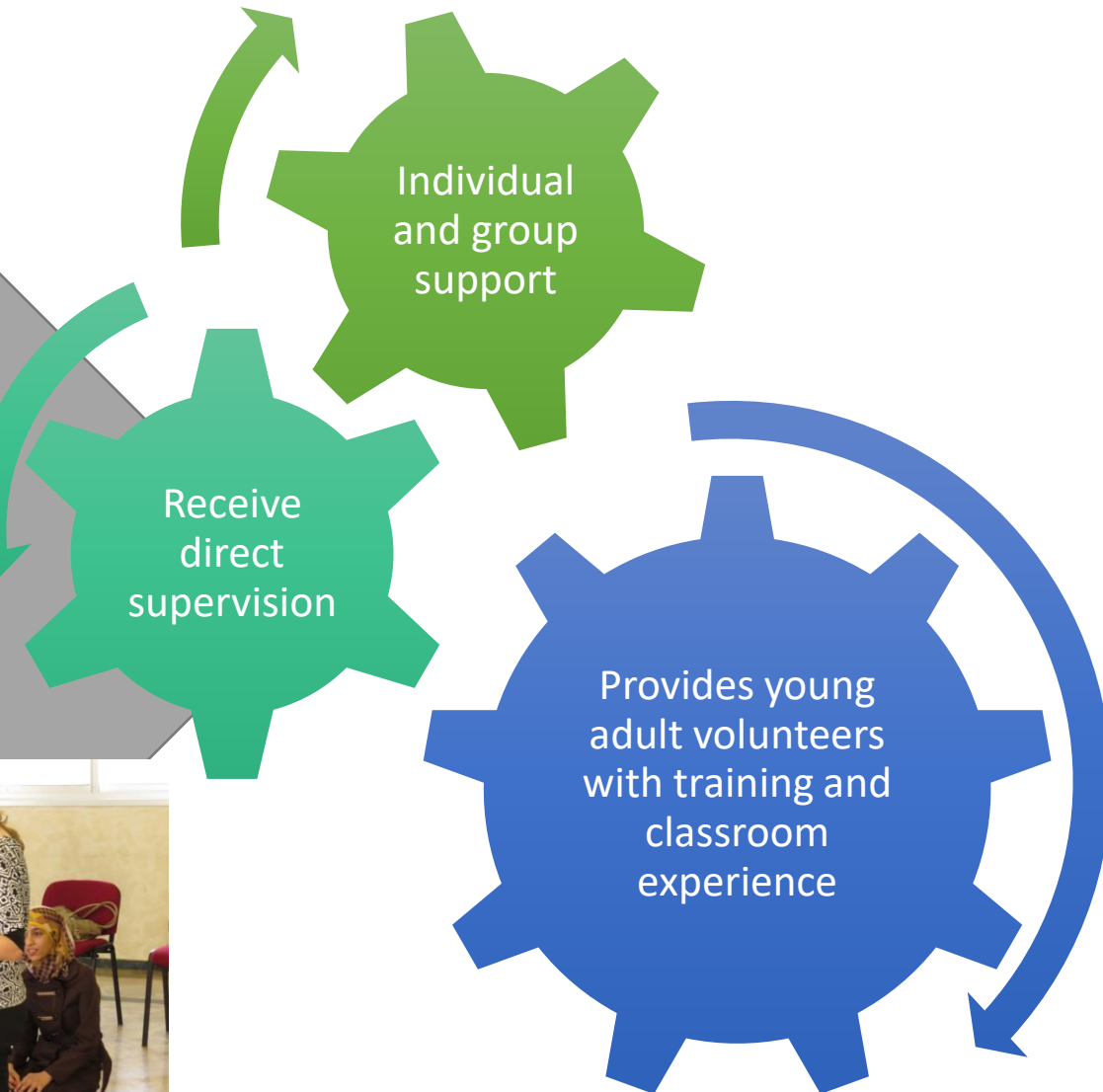
www.tomorrowsyouth.org

THE PROGRAM: Youth Service Learning (YSL)

12-weeks program where young adults assist TYO full-time teachers deliver creative and tailored, after school psychosocial programming for 4-15 year olds in Nablus, West Bank

Build volunteers' capacity in:

- Classroom management
- Work and mentor children who have experienced trauma
- Enhance youth professional conduct
- Enhance leadership skills
- Enhance their public speaking and language skills
- Benefit from international intern-run professional development classes focusing on employability skills



THE STUDY

Pilot study aimed to evaluate YSL program's impact and its ability to increase the employability of volunteer youth in Palestine



Effectiveness of YSL

Motivation for volunteering

Perceived general self-efficacy

Satisfaction with life as a whole

Soft employability skills

Attitudes toward the availability
and equal access to
employment



Disseminate study findings

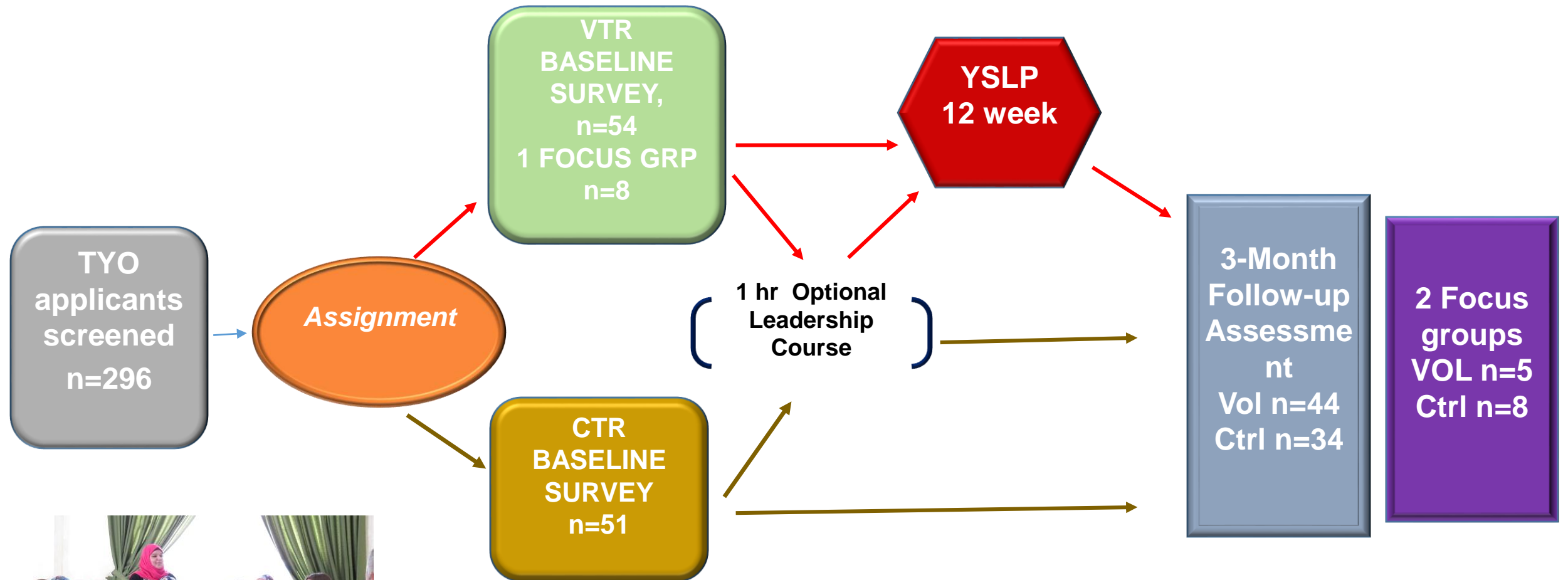
TYO administrators

Funders and key stakeholders

Improving TYO volunteering model

Planning future studies and programs

DESIGN



DATA COLLECTION AND INSTRUMENTS

Standardized Scales

Volunteer Functions Inventory
(VFI)

The General Self-Efficacy Scale
(GSF)

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLS)

Employability Skills Scale (ESS)

Malachi Burnout Inventory (MBI)
for educators

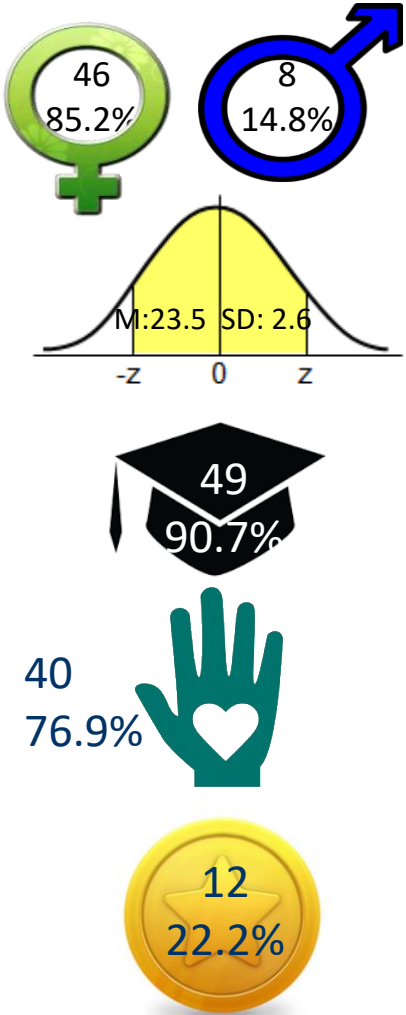


Baseline Survey
(111 questions)

3-months follow up
survey (190 questions)

THE SAMPLE-BASELINE (N=105)

Volunteer



NC	NV	RC	OT
21 (38.9%)	20 (37.0%)	4 (7.4%)	9 (16.7%)

Gender

Age

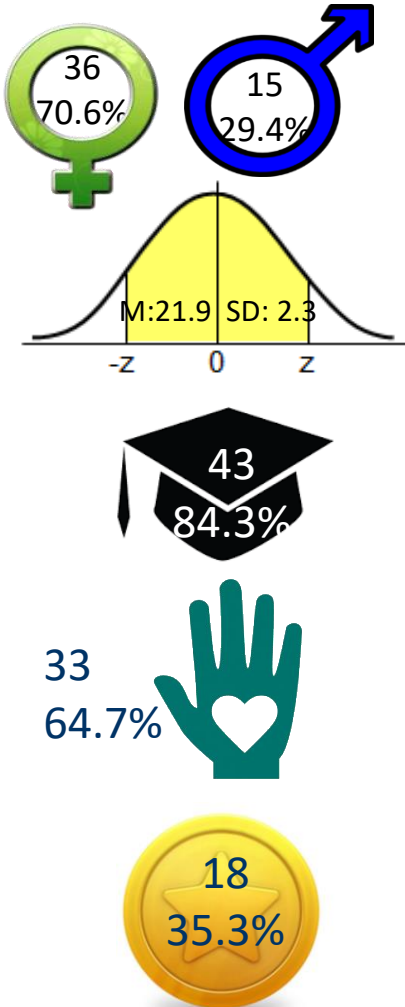
Bachelors Degree in progress

Volunteering exp.

Paid work

Region

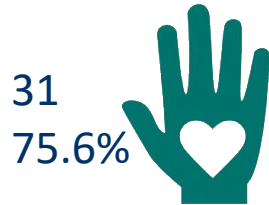
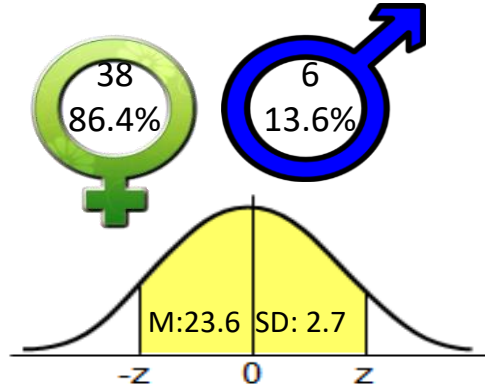
Control



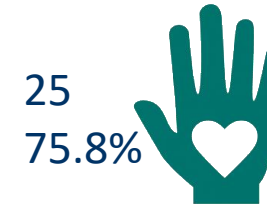
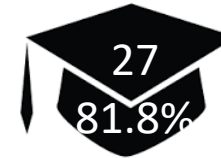
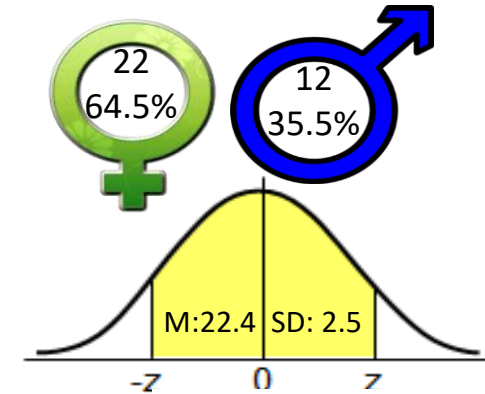
NC	NV	RC	OT
26 (51%)	12 (23.5%)	5 (9.8%)	8 (15.7%)

THE SAMPLE-FOLLOW UP (N=78)

Volunteer



Gender
Age
Bachelors Degree in progress
Volunteering exp.
Paid work



Control

KEY FINDINGS

Primary Scales Between Group Comparison -- Baseline

SCALES	Volunteer group (n=54)	Control group (n=51)	T test p value (<0.05)
Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI)			
Protective factor	27.5, 5.0 (48)	26.2, 4.3 (48)	0.183
Values factor	31.0, 2.9 (49)	29.0, 3.9 (48)	0.005 **
Career factor	33.3, 12.5 (51)	29.8, 3.9 (51)	0.060
Social factor	25.5, 5.0 (50)	24.7, 4.8 (48)	0.436
Understanding factor	32.0, 2.2 (52)	31.1, 3.1 (50)	0.095
Enhancement factor	31.1, 2.5 (52)	30.8, 3.8 (49)	0.688
General Self Efficacy (GSE)	31.6, 4.6 (54)	32.9, 4.1 (51)	0.131
Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS)	18.5, 6.5 (54)	21.4, 6.3 (51)	0.023 *
Burnout scale (MBI)			
Emotional exhaust	19.2, 8.7 (51)	17.5, 8.8 (48)	0.362
Depersonalization	3.7, 5.1 (49)	4.8, 5.0 (48)	0.285
Personal accomplishment	39.4, 6.4 (46)	36.0, 9.1 (48)	0.036 *

Note: each cell contains "mean, SD (number of non-missing values)"

ATTITUDES TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT AND EMP. SKILLS TRAINING (ESSO) SCORE: Baseline and Post-Assessment

Employability Scale ESSO	Baseline Mean score	Follow-up Mean score	Paired t test (p=<0.05)
Volunteer group (n=53)	54.5	57	0.019*
Control group (n=50)	54.6	56.2	0.055

*Significant difference mean score between baseline and post assessment (< p=0.05)

ATTITUDES TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT AND EMP. SKILLS TRAINING (ESSO) MEANS: Baseline and Post-Assessment

Statement	Vol (n=54)			Control (n=51)		
	Baseline	Follow-up	p value	Baseline	Follow-up	p value
There are plenty of job opportunities in my field	2.5	2.9	P=0.02 *	4	4	P=0.7
There is equal access to job opportunities regardless of gender	2.1	2.7	P=0.02 *	2.2	2.4	P=0.86
There is equal access to job opportunities regardless of social, religious affiliation	2.2	2.6	P=0.02 *	2.4	2.5	P=0.53
There is a gap between the job market and labor force skills	3	3.3	P=0.15	3.1	3.1	P=0. 47
There is a gap in linking job seekers with job opportunities	3.2	3.3	P=0.8	3.2	3.3	P=0.86

*Significant difference mean score between baseline and post assessment (< p=0.05)

TYO VOLUNTEER EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS TRAINING COMPONENTS

Components	Vol Baseline n=54 (1-4)			Vol Follow -up n=41 (1-4)		
Completed a volunteer period with TYO					p=value	
Comprehensive orientation	3.6	18		3.5	41	P=0.17 4
Professional development training	3.9	18		3.6	41	P=0.33 6
Resume writing training	3.6	18		3.3	41	P=0.43 5
Job interviewing training	3.4	18		3.4	41	P=0.21 8
More confident in job interviewing skills	3.2	18		3.4	40	P=0.08 9
Built a professional network	3.2	18		3.4	41	P=0.3 02
Built a network of friends	3.8	18		3.3	41	P=0.43 5
Proficiency in English	2.8	18		2.3	41	P=0.16 5

*Significant difference mean score between baseline and post assessment (< p=0.05)

EMOTIONAL FACTORS: Mean Comparisons 3-month Post-Assessment

Feeling Statements at 3 -month follow-up	VOL n=54	CONTROL n=51	
	Mean at 3 month f/u	Mean at 3 month f/u	P-value
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Never 2. Sometimes 3. Often 4. Always 			
PROTECTIVE FACTORS			
You felt calm and rested during the last 2 weeks	2.8	2.3	0.03 5*
You felt active and energized during the last 2 weeks	3.0	2.5	0.04 3*
You woke up feeling energized and rested during the last 2 weeks	2.8	2.3	0.04 8*
You felt that the days had many enjoyable things during the last 2 weeks	2.7	2.4	0.13 7
You felt happy and in a good mood during the last 2 weeks	2.8	2.4	0.04 7*

Protective Factors



*Significant difference mean score between baseline and post assessment ($p < 0.05$)

EMOTIONAL FACTORS: Mean Comparisons 3-month Post-Assessment

Worry & Fear



Feeling Statements at 3-month follow-up	VOL n=54	CONTROL n=51	
	Mean at 3 month f/u	Mean at 3 month f/u	P-value
1. Never			
2. Sometimes			
3. Often			
4. Always			
WORRY and FEAR (about self and family)			
How much fear do you feel for yourself in your daily life	2.5	2.3	0.278
How much fear do you feel for your family in your daily life	3.0	3.0	0.732
How much do you feel worry/fear from the possibility of not being able to provide the basic needs for your family	2.8	3.0	0.984
How much do you feel worry/fear from losing your source of income or your family’s source of income	3.0	3.1	0.738
How much do you feel worry/fear from losing your home	2.0	2.0	0.973
How much do you feel worry/fear from displacement or deportation	1.8	1.9	0.489

*Significant difference mean score between baseline and post assessment ($p < 0.05$)

EMOTIONAL FACTORS: Mean Comparisons 3-month Post-Assessment- continued..

Worry & Fear



Feeling Statements at 3 - month follow - up	VOL n=54		CONTROL n=51	
	Mean at 3 month f/u	Mean at 3 month f/u	P - value	
1. Never				
2. Sometimes				
3. Often				
4. Always				
WORRY and FEAR (about self and family)				
How much do you feel worry/fear about your future and the future of your family	3.1	2.9	0.43 0	
How much do you fear for your personal safety	2.6	2.6	0.9 48	
How much do you fear for the safety of your family	2.7	2.7	0.7 87	
How much does your family fear for your personal safety	3.1	3.2	0.56 1	
To what extent do you feel worry	2.6	2.3	0.06 3**	
To what extent do you feel frustration/ lack of determination	2.3	2.0	0.04 2 *	
To what extent do you feel helpless	2.0	1.7	0.07 1 **	
To what extent do you feel insulted (humiliated)	1.5	1.4	0.6 7 8	
To what extent do you feel lonely	2.2	2.5	0.5 69	
To what extent do you feel worry	2.5	2.5	0.8 48	
To what extent do you feel sad	2.3	2.2	0.5 00	
To what extent do you feel angry	2.2	2.1	0.33 0	

*Significant difference mean score between baseline and post assessment (< p=0.05)

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS – SURVEYS

“What worries you most?”



VOLUNTEER

- “The social and political situation and the living circumstances”
- “Insecurity due to the stressful political situation in Palestine”
- “Not finding a job and staying at home”
- “Israeli occupation and their arbitrary barbaric actions towards us”
- “Fear for my future especially in the academic field”
- “I fear for my future if I couldn't find a stable job that matches my expectations.”
- In addition to that, the country is very unstable and there are many security threats”
- “The limited number of job opportunities”
- “In our society we are raised on violence, we see violence all the time on television and other places.”
- “We have the education of violence; we live in a circle of violence. We don't have alternatives. We are not educated on what to do in different situations. We are simple and humble people we just express our feeling”



CONTROL

- “Not being able to provide basic needs”
- “Money and occupation”
- “Economic situation and fear for professional future”
- “A job that I am not fully knowledgeable at or that I could face challenges at”
- “Chronic depression and fear for future”
- “Not getting a job after graduation, the deteriorating economic situation, and the increasing cost of living”
- “Needing to take numerous training courses to be able to get a job”
- “The occupation mainly and its consequences”

QUALITATIVE RESPONSES FROM FGs:

“What was most effective in the YSL program?”

VOLUNTEER



- “My experience met my expectations. Discovered things about myself like leadership, communication skills and ability to interact with kids.”
- “Met more than my expectations. Practiced language and communications skills. Learned things about my personality, worked on my CV, leadership and team work.”
- “Experience helped me to work with young kids, opened doors for jobs to work in kindergartens.”
- “Learned how to be myself. Learned psychosocial exercises and social work principles.”
- “Liked improving language skills and team building.”
- “Supervision helped me learn my strengths and weaknesses. Discover things about yourself.”
- “When feedback is 1-1, confidential and constructive I can deal.”
- “English language and traditions practiced in other countries.”
- “In the first two month I didn’t know what to do, but in the last month I know how to overcome.”
- “Being able to share with other volunteers was helpful.”



- **DESIRED EXPERIENCE:** Computer skills; office training; technical development in social media; interaction with others to find a job; time management; resumes(3), getting along with other personalities; to get more stable job; training in different areas; instead of complaining turn negative into positive; training in social media
- **EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES:** After 4 years of graduation still no job; take a test for a job but it has already been given to someone else; need private sector job; “wasta” (aka connections of influence); getting to Ramallah and not having transportation; one half salary goes to transportation; check points; required training is expensive
- **STATED SOLUTIONS:** I will get a government job; need more private sector jobs; need support to access VISAs; TYO should choose everyone who applies to volunteer; build factories or other businesses; support job applications

LIMITATIONS

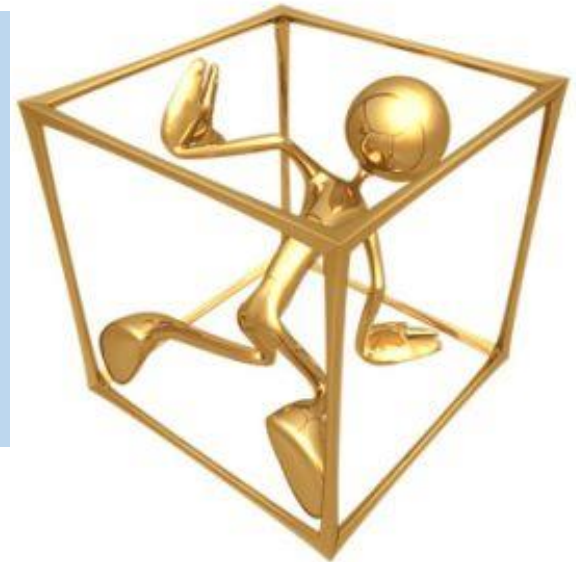
Generalizations from this pilot are made cautiously due to a small sample size

Sample drawn from a pool exclusively from the Nablus area

Non-randomization nature of the assignment and potential bias

Control group post-assessment participants being older and with more work/volunteer experience than those who did not complete the post-assessment review.

Did not look at TYO organizational factors or hierarchy, or other community structural or macro-level changes that might have occurred during this period such as economic indicators, staffing, active regional conflict, market flux, or academic initiatives impacting youth



CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The feasibility of conducting community-based participatory research in this resource-challenged area experiencing on-going regional conflicts was noted while giving evidence to support the on-going usefulness of the YSL program to address mentoring of young adult's educational and psychosocial needs in Palestine.

A strong association was identified between YSL participation at TYO and increased self-efficacy in employability skills, optimism toward potential job opportunities, a perception of gender equal opportunities in Palestine and with enhanced protective factors that may be utilized for coping with a stressful environment.

Future studies are needed to inform essential components and contextual factors for funders, policymakers, universities and non-governmental organizations designing programs to enhance critical employment readiness for young adults in Palestine and, potentially, other Middle Eastern regions

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QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION



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