

The Role of the Jordanian Universities in Developing the Concepts of the Jordanian Civil Society from the Students' Points of View

Mohammed Awamreh

Faculty of Arts, Educational Sciences Department
Al-Zaytounah University, Amman, Jordan - 11733
E-mail: awamreha@yahoo.com

Jamal Al-Khaldi

(Corresponding Author)
Faculty of Arts, Educational Sciences Department
Al-Zaytounah University, Amman, Jordan - 11733
E-mail: jkhalidi@hotmail.com

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Abstract

This study aim at recognizing the role of the Jordanian universities in developing the concepts of the Jordanian civil society from the students' points of view in light of some demographic variables. For that end, the researchers designed a 26-paragraph questionnaire and applied it to a random sample of 1521 students who were enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2012/2013 at different Jordanian universities. The study revealed that the role of the universities in developing the concepts of the Jordanian civil society was mediocre. In addition, there were significant differences that were attributed to the place of residence, major field of study, and the student's year at the university (freshman, sophomore...). By contrast, gender was not a decisive variable. The study concluded with some suggestions and recommendations that could contribute to enhancing the role of universities in developing the concepts of the civil society.

Keywords: Concepts of civil society, the role of universities, Human rights, Voluntary work.

1. Introduction and Related Studies

Universities are one of the most important institutions of the civil society. They play an essential role in serving the society and making it progress. They seek promoting thinking and developing the students awareness of human concepts such as liberty, equity and justice. They also deepen the concepts of human rights and human dignity so that students can transfer these ideas beyond the walls of the university and ultimately achieve comprehensive societal development.

Daxner (2003), Moosmayer & Siems (2012), and Winter & O'Donohue (2012) assure the vital role of universities in enhancing students' independent behavior as an aspect of qualifying

logical knowledge. The researchers also assert the role of universities in instilling the concepts of civil society and translating these concepts to practices in daily life. They also maintain that the rules, regulations and different activities contribute to promoting principles of discussion, showing respect for others' opinions, entrenching concepts of liberty, equity, justice, cooperation and effective participation, assuming responsibility, making decisions, accepting and solving differences in a trustful, tolerating, respectful and friendly atmosphere. These all constitute the basics of civil society.

Working independently of the state authority, the civil society encompasses political, economic, social and cultural institutions that work in different fields to achieve political, cultural and social purposes (Kamruzzaman, 2013; McQuarrie, 2013). However, the main objective of these institutions is to serve people's issues and sub-issues as well as related issues (Ehmke, 2011). For these reasons, it was called 'The civil society' since belonging to it surpasses belonging to the family, tribe or clan. In addition, citizens belong to the institutions of the civil society equally regardless of family, gender, color or religion. (Eto, 2012; Ruzza, 2010).

Accordingly, the civil society can be defined as a group of social and civil institutions through which modern society expresses its interests and aims, and defends itself against the domination of the political authority of the state (Amr & Abu Sackour, 2010; Dryzek, 2012). The civil society also refers to a group of political, economic, social, cultural and lawful organizations which subsume a complex network of practices and relations between social unions in the society (Jensen, 2006). All of this happens dynamically and constantly through a number of voluntary institutions that exist and work independently of the state. (Kumar, 2008). The civil society forms its entity, preserves its laws, moulds its principles and distinctive social values that make it unique so as to enable individuals to benefit from the common good and facilities without the intervention or immediacy of the government (Anheier, 2007).

Tragardh (2010) defined the civil society as a group of free voluntary organizations that are formed to achieve the interests of its individuals, to provide citizens with some services, and to practice various human activities. These organizations are committed to certain standards and concepts of respect, tolerance and participation. They also confirm citizens' free will, attract them to make historical events and get them effectively involved in achieving great changes so as not to leave the dictator groups govern everything.

Depending on the previous definitions, the civil society organizations assume five responsibilities: drawing together the interests and common views, bringing struggles to an end and solving them, improving living conditions, preparing new leaders, and making democracy and human rights commonly known to everyone.

Thus, the most important basics of civil society that institutions seek developing and consider fundamental concepts and main start points to build a civil society aim at developing the following concepts:

- Human rights; including political, civil, individual, and group rights.
- Democracy which represents freedom of expression, the right for effective participation in making and taking decisions, and enjoying equity and justice.
- Voluntary work which enhances the spirit of belonging and social solidarity among citizens.
- Citizenship which plays a major role in preserving properties and increases feelings of belonging to the Arab and Islamic nation and its scientific and cultural achievements.

1.1 Research Questions

Because of the belief in the important role that universities play in serving the society, this study endeavors to uncover the role of universities in developing the students' concepts of civil society from their own points of view. The researchers chose Al-Zaytounah University and Isra' University as homes for culture and education since they are the biggest High Education institutions in the south of the capital city of Jordan. The aim was to recognize the role of both universities in developing the concepts of civil society from the perspectives of the students' themselves. Therefore, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of Jordanian universities in developing the students' concepts of civil society?
2. Are there any significant differences (at $\alpha=0.05$) between the students' mean responses about the role of Jordanian universities in developing the students' concepts of civil society that could be attributed to 'gender'?
3. Are there any significant differences (at $\alpha=0.05$) between the students' mean responses about the role of Jordanian universities in developing the students' concepts of civil society that could be attributed to 'place of residence'?
4. Are there any significant differences (at $\alpha=0.05$) between the students' mean responses about the role of Jordanian universities in developing the students' concepts of civil society that could be attributed to 'major field of study'?
5. Are there any significant differences (at $\alpha=0.05$) between the students' mean responses about the role of Jordanian universities in developing the students' concepts of civil society that could be attributed to students' 'year at the university'?

1.2 The Importance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in seeking the role of Jordanian universities in developing the concepts of civil society because universities are not only educational institutions, but also important sources for positive change and reform in society. The results of this study are expected to be a real contribution for researchers, universities' administrators and those who are interested in this field. In addition, the study will provide internet search engines and International and Arab library with a sample of the status, ability and role of Jordanian universities in developing the concepts of civil society.

1.3 Study Limitations

The study was limited to students who were enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2012/2013 at Al-Zaytounah University and Isra' University.

1.4 Terminology

- **Civil society:** A number of social and civil institutions through which the society expresses its interests and goals. These institutions ensure that individuals get their civil rights such as democracy, freedom and taking part in decision making.

- **The role:** represents the standard expectations related to the capability of Jordanian universities to develop the concepts of the Jordanian civil society. The 'role' can also be defined structurally as the degree of the respondent's attainment of the tool used to measure the universities' role in enhancing the concepts of civil society.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Subjects

The study community was the (14237) students at Al-Zaytounah University and Isra' University in the academic year 2012/2013. The subjects of the study were limited to (1521) students who were chosen randomly. Table (1) summarizes some demographic facts:

Table (1): Subjects' demographics

Variables		number
Gender	male	680
	female	841
Place of residence	city	830
	rural areas	484
	refugee camps	207
Major field of study	educational and human sciences	671
	accounting and economic sciences	520
	engineering and health sciences	258
	others	72
Year of study	freshman	412
	sophomore	391
	junior	332
	senior	386

2.2 Study Tool

After reviewing some related studies, the researchers designed a questionnaire that basically had 30 paragraphs centering around the role of Jordanian universities in developing the students' concepts of civil society.

2.3 Tool Reliability

The preliminary questionnaire was judged by (10) experienced referees. Only articles that were 80%-100% agreed upon were accepted. Changes were made according to the referees remarks. Accordingly, the questionnaire finally consisted of 26 paragraphs that aim at measuring the role of universities in developing the concepts of civil society.

2.4 Tool Validity

To authenticate the tool credibility and validity, the 'Internal Consistency' method was used. The questionnaire was first tested on a pilot group that consisted of (43) students. The

coefficient of internal consistency was derived by using 'Cronbach Alpha' equation. The overall coefficient was (0.90). This value was considered acceptable for the study.

3. Methodology

For the purposes of this study, the researchers used the survey descriptive method which relies on using a specific questionnaire.

3.1 Statistical Analysis

In accordance with Likert scale, there was a five-choice response for each paragraph. These choices were given the values 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. The responses were given the following scale: 1-2.33 low, 2.34-3.67 mediocre/ average, and 3.67-5 high, taking into consideration the fact that the paragraphs of the questionnaire were distributed randomly before applying them to the target group. After that, the data were analyzed using the statistical analysis program SPSS.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results Related to the First Question

To obtain the results related to the pivotal question 'what is the role of the Jordanian universities in developing the concepts of civil society from the students' points of view', the mean and the Standard Deviations (STD) were calculated as shown in table (2):

Table (2): Mean and Standard Deviation for each paragraph in the questionnaire

P	Paragraph	Mean	STD
13	Universities allow students to express their ideas and thoughts	3,95	1,06
6	Universities create positive attitudes towards voluntary work	3,89	1,01
8	Universities develop human relationship between students and professors	3,84	1,12
11	Universities familiarize students with their national rights and duties	3,83	1,01
21	Universities familiarize students with the characteristics of the Jordanian society	3,81	1,11
9	Universities contribute to protecting and preserving public properties	3,79	1,12
5	Universities spread health, social and cultural awareness	3,66	1,21
12	Universities develop and enhance students' awareness of the family	3,62	1,18
4	Universities create political characters that can take up leadership	3,61	1,20
10	Universities encourage interconnection, intimacy and friendship among students	3,60	1,17
22	Universities develop the willingness to sacrifice oneself for country and righteousness	3,59	1,07
14	Universities instill principles of expressing one's own opinions and accepting others' opinions	3,58	1,11
19	Universities develop concepts and positive social habits	3,55	1,28

7	Universities develop students' acquisition of scientific method in solving problems	3,53	1,12
15	Universities train students to invest the country's resources	3,50	1,09
1	Universities develop concepts of pride and belonging to the Arab and Islamic nation	3,49	1,15
3	Universities enhance team work, and constructive cooperation in society	3,46	1,13
16	Universities make students familiar with their national history and the most important achievements of their nation	3,45	1,03
2	Universities enhance one's care of safety and stability of their home	3,44	1,19
23	Universities enhance group interest over selfish and individual interest	3,41	1,29
18	Universities contribute to creating young leaders	3,37	1,27
24	Universities instill the concepts of equity between individuals regardless of their race, religion or affiliation	3,33	1,19
26	Universities spread the concepts of love, brotherhood and cooperation among students	3,29	1,29
20	Universities establish discussion as a basis for solving struggles and	2,81	1,52
25	Universities contribute to decreasing societal violence	2,69	1,35
17	Universities fight against racial, sectarian and regional calls	2,51	1,12
	Total	3.48	1.01

The data in table (2) above indicates that the role of Jordanian university in developing the concepts of civil society was mediocre since the overall mean average was (3.48). The most common role was that 'the university allows students to express their ideas and thoughts', then 'it creates positive attitudes towards voluntary work'. After that comes 'university develops human relationship between students and professors' and finally 'university familiarizes students with their national rights and duties'.

The researchers find that it is reasonable to have these four articles the most common ones since Jordanian universities create study atmosphere through which students can highly express themselves and can develop good and constructive relationships with their professors. This, in turn, forms a positive aspect which reflects the universities' ability to spread democracy and freedom culture, as well their ability to spread the concepts of human relations at campus. This is supported by similar previous studies like Amr & Abu Sackour (2010), Vishnevskii, Trynov & Shapko (2010), and Snider & Kiplinger's (2013).

By contrast, the least common concepts were the incapability of universities to fight against racial, sectarian and regional calls; the inability to decrease societal violence; and the inefficiency in establishing discussion as a basis for solving struggles and fights. This result was very disappointing since universities could not uproot egotism, sectarianism and racism. This suggests that social, political and educational status are built on a number of tribal and clan norms, which enhance the societal division especially when taking violence and domination as a means for imposing opinions and thoughts. It is also likely that the diversity of races, religions and origins in Jordan is a main cause for such a division particularly in the absence of a supporting political entity that aims at unifying diverse races. In addition, the ethical crisis and the breaking of Islamic morals play a major role in the emergence of such a result.

4.2 Results Related to the Second Question 'Gender'

To investigate whether there was a role for the universities in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to the variable 'Gender', a *t*-test was conducted as shown in table (3).

Table (3): A *t*-test for the role for the universities in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to 'Gender'

Gender	Number	Mean	STD	df	<i>t</i> -value	Significant difference
Male	680	5.66	0.65	1519	1.763	0.073
Female	841	5.59	0.76			

The data in the table above indicate that there were no significant differences (at $\alpha=0.05$) for the role of universities in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to 'Gender' since the significant difference was bigger than ($\alpha=0.05$). This assures that the systems of universities in Jordan do not differentiate between males and females, and that both sexes receive the same activities, lectures, seminars and different educational services that are held at campus by the university administration or by the students' councils.

4.3 Results Related to the Third Question 'Place of Residence'

To investigate whether there was a role for the universities in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to the variable 'Place of Residence', an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as shown in table (4)

Table (4): An analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the role of Al-Zaytounah University and Isra' University in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to 'Place of residence'

Source of variance	Number of squares	df	Mean of squares	df	Significant difference
Intra-groups	12.583	2	5.643	11.307	0.000
Inter-groups	561.579	1518	0.570		
Total	574.162	1520			

The data in the table (4) indicate that there was a significant difference (at $\alpha=0.05$) for the role of the universities in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to the variable 'Place of Residence'. To find out the source of such a difference, a Tukey-test was carried out for pairwise comparison as shown in table (5).

Table (5): A tukey test of post pairwise comparisons for the role of Al-Zaytounah University and Isra University for developing the concepts of civil society according to 'Place of residence'

Comparisons	Rural areas	Refugee camps
City	*0.01890	- 0.2350

Rural areas		- *0.03997
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The data in the table above points out that the role of universities in developing the concepts of civil society was lower for students living in the city compared to those living in the rural areas or in refugee camps. In order to compare the differences between students in table (5), the means and standard deviations were calculated:

Table (6): Means and standard deviations for the differences in the role of Al-Zaytounah University and Isra' University in developing the concepts of civil society according to 'Place of Residence'

Place of Residence	Mean	STD
city	5.81	0.72
Rural areas	5.39	0.79
Refugee camp	5.78	0.79

It is evident from the table that there was an impact of 'Place of residence' on the differences between students. Students living in the city were the most inclined to accept the role of Jordanian universities in developing the concepts of civil society. Students living in refugee camps came in the second place followed by those living in the rural areas in the last place. The relatively high mean for city students may be attributed to the good life conditions most city students live such as the availability and accessibility to books, electronic and journalistic services, social media, as well as the activities that take place in the city such as the cultural, political and social seminars that contribute to familiarize students with the concepts of civil society.

Table (6) also showed a high mean for students living in Palestinian refugee camps. The researchers believe that those students still endure the setback that the Palestinian people suffered; the painful living conditions; feeling of injustice due to their loss of their homes, properties, lands and families; and their constant thinking of coming back to their occupied territories especially when living in an unfriendly societal environment. All these conditions make them fully aware of the role that universities have to play in developing the concepts of civil society. Those students feel that they have the right to live freely and in dignity as all world nations.

As for the students living in the rural areas, their suffering from the lack of books, electronic services etc, as well as the spread of the tribal and clan concepts may have been behind their low awareness of the role of universities in developing the concepts of civil society.

4.4 Results Related to the Fourth Question 'Major Field of Study'

To investigate whether there was a role of the universities in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to the variable 'Major Field of Study', an analysis of variance ANOVA was conducted as shown in table (7).

Table (7): An analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the role for the Al-Zaytounah and Isra' University in developing the concepts of civil society that are attributed to 'Major Field of Study'

Source of variance	Number of squares	df	Mean of squares	df	Significant difference
Intra-groups	5.011	3	1.321	2.605	0.05
Inter-groups	570.686	1517	0.572		
total	575.697	1520			

The data in the table (7) indicate that there was a significant difference (at $\alpha=0.05$) for the role of the universities in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to the variable 'Major Field of Study'. To find out the source of such a difference, a Tukey-test was carried out for post pairwise comparison as shown in table (8):

Table (8): A tukey test of post pairwise comparisons for the role of Al-Zaytounah University and Isra University for developing the concepts of civil society according to the 'Major Field of Study' variable

Comparisons	Accounting and economic sciences	Engineering and health sciences	Others
Educational and human sciences	0.1881	-0.0556	0.0130
Accounting and economic sciences		*0.02537	-0.1883
Engineering and health sciences			0.0699

The data in the table above points out that there were differences between students according to 'Major Field of Study'. In order to compare the differences between students, the means and standard deviations were calculated as shown in table (9).

Table (9): Means and standard deviations for the differences in the role of Al-Zaytounah University and Isra' University in developing the concepts of civil society according to 'Major Field of Study'

Major Field of Study	Means	STD
Educational and human sciences	5.59	0.65
Accounting and economic sciences	5.35	0.88
Engineering and health sciences	5.52	0.63
Others	5.39	0.74

It is noted that the students of educational and human sciences were the most understanding for the role of universities in developing the principles and concepts of civil society. The result is reasonable since the fields of educational and human sciences study the concepts of civil society through the elective and compulsory courses they take. Add to that the discussion

evolving around the concepts of freedom and rights that take place in the classrooms and seminars.

The students of health and engineering sciences came in the second place. The researchers see that the high GPA that students in these major fields of study get help them grasp ideas and notions easier than students in others fields. In addition, students of health and engineering have good political conceptual background related to democracy, freedom, voluntary, partisan and union works. All these merits help them look positively at the role of universities in developing the concepts of civil society.

On the other hand, all the points mentioned above justify the opposite for the students in accounting economic sciences and other fields of study since they do not have the positive attitude towards the role of universities in developing the concepts of civil society.

4.5 Results Related to the Fifth Question 'Student's Year at University'

To investigate whether there were differences in the role of universities in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to the variable 'Student's Year at University', an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as shown in table (10).

Table (10): An analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the role for the Al-Zaytounah University and Isra' University in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to 'Student's Year at University'

Source of variance	Number of	df	Mean of squares	df	Significant
Intra-groups	25.841	3	9.839	17.014	0.000
Inter-groups	534.229	1517	0.601		
total	560.07	1520			

The data in the table (10) indicate that there was a significant difference (at $\alpha=0.05$) for the role of the universities in developing the concepts of civil society that could be attributed to the variable 'Student's Year at University'. To find out the source of such a difference, a Tukey-test was carried out for post pairwise comparison as shown in table (11):

Table (11): Tukey test of post pairwise comparisons for the role of Al-Zaytounah University and Isra' University for developing the concepts of civil society according to the 'Student's Year at University' variable

Comparisons	sophomore	junior	senior
freshman	0.1702	0.03988*	0.0610
sophomore		0.02396*	0.1103
junior			0.03412*

The Tukey test of post pairwise comparisons indicate that there were differences between freshman and junior students. Specifically, freshman students found the role of universities in developing the concepts of civil society significantly higher.

There were also differences between junior and senior students in favor of the senior students. To find out these differences, the means and standard deviations were calculated as in table (12).

Table (12): Means and standard deviations for the differences of the role of Al-Zaytounah University and Isra' University in developing the concepts of civil society according to 'Student's Year at University'

Year of Study	Means	STD
freshman	5.73	0.72
sophomore	5.61	0.81
junior	5.30	0.83
senior	5.34	0.67

Table (12) makes it clear that freshman students had the highest mean, followed by sophomore, then seniors students. Junior students had the lowest mean. The researchers attribute the high means for freshman and sophomore students in comparison with the low means for the junior and senior students to the fact that freshman students are premature and hurried when they start studying at university especially because they feel free from the high school regulations that they left behind. Moreover, they become fascinated by the university atmospheres that tolerate voluntary work and political and factional parties as well as allow practicing most of the rights that were absent during the high school stage.

Such an attitude fades out in the next academic years as in the case of junior and senior students since they become more involved with graduation projects, field training and worrying about their GPA. All these factors distract junior and senior students from getting involved and participating in the activities of the civil society.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- Jordanian Universities contribute moderately to developing the students' concepts of civil society.
- There is a necessity to establish the concepts of civil society for the students of the Jordanian universities particularly with the constant violation of most basic human rights.
- In order to develop the role of Jordanian universities, it is necessary to activate the concepts of freedom, dignity, human rights, respect for others' opinions and instill the notions of brotherhood and love in students.
- It is also necessary to activate the role of study courses, benefit from the university atmosphere, activities, conferences, seminars and students' unions so as to work in an integrated collaboration to develop the concepts of civil society.

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