

Public Policy Alignment of Higher Education Institutions with Youth Empowerment Requirements: A Case Study of the Local Labor Market in Gaza".

Abstract

This study aimed to identify the alignment level of public policies in higher education institutions with youth empowerment requirements within the local labor markets of Gaza City. To achieve this objective, the researcher employed a **descriptive-analytical approach**. Data were collected using study instruments applied to a simple random sample of (353) employees across higher education institutions in Gaza, selected based on variables of gender, academic degree, and years of service during the second half of the 2022 academic year.

The results revealed that the overall level of public policies in higher education institutions was "**High**," while the level of youth empowerment in the local labor market was "**Medium**." The findings further indicated a **statistically significant positive correlation** at the significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between higher education public policies and youth empowerment requirements. Additionally, the study found **no statistically significant differences** in the respondents' perceptions regarding both public policies and youth empowerment attributable to the variables of gender, academic degree, or years of service.

Keywords: Higher Education Policies, Youth Empowerment, Local Labor Markets, Gaza Strip.

1. Introduction

The Palestinian context is characterized by unique structural complexities resulting from the intersection of political, economic, and social factors established since the Oslo Accords. The forced dependency of the Palestinian economy on its Israeli counterpart has restricted self-sustained growth and deepened structural crises. These challenges have intensified acutely in the Gaza Strip due to a continuous blockade spanning over fifteen years, causing fundamental imbalances in the labor market and pushing unemployment to record levels. Despite this constrained operating environment, Palestinian society—specifically in Gaza—emerges as an exceptional global model characterized by intensive investment in human capital, where education remains the primary strategic choice and a core driver of identity and development.

While this study monitored the reality of these policies through field research in the second half of 2022, its significance has doubled in light of the profound transformations that followed. Aligning education is no longer merely a developmental luxury; it has become an existential necessity to redefine economic empowerment tools in the post-prolonged-crisis phase. This necessitates urgent inquiries into the effectiveness of educational outputs under these pressing conditions.

Education is a globally recognized pillar of human existence. History demonstrates that advanced nations are those that embraced knowledge and technology, while others declined due to ignorance. Higher education, in particular, plays a vital role in societal continuity by preparing the workforce and establishing social progress.

Advanced universities do not merely respond to market demands; they actively shape economic trends as partners in innovation. Higher education is the tool through which societies domesticate technology and lead cultural and social change. Consequently, aligning higher education outputs with labor market needs has shifted from a technical matter to a top national policy priority.

2. Research Problem and Questions

The research problem is magnified by the existential variables currently affecting the Gaza Strip. The gap between educational outputs and the labor market has transformed from a developmental flaw into a systemic survival crisis. With the destruction of educational and economic infrastructure, tens of thousands of graduates (exceeding 23,000 annually according to 2022 statistics) face a total lack of traditional employment opportunities. This reality demands a radical shift in higher education policies; alignment must now mean "Resilient Empowerment" through digital economy skills, remote work, and crisis entrepreneurship.

The Primary Question: What is the level of alignment between higher education public policies and youth empowerment requirements in the local labor markets of Gaza City?

Sub-Questions:

1. What is the level of public policy implementation in higher education institutions in Gaza?
2. To what degree are youth empowerment requirements available in Gaza's local labor market?
3. What is the relationship between higher education public policies and youth empowerment requirements?
4. Are there statistically significant differences in responses regarding public policies attributable to variables (Gender, Academic Degree, Years of Service)?
5. Are there statistically significant differences in responses regarding youth empowerment requirements attributable to variables (Gender, Academic Degree, Years of Service)?

3. Hypotheses

Research Hypotheses:

- **H1:** There is no alignment between the level of higher education public policies and youth empowerment requirements.
- **H2:** The level of higher education public policies is low.
- **H3:** The level of youth empowerment requirements is high.

Statistical Hypotheses:

- **Null Hypothesis 1:** There is no statistically significant relationship ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between public policy levels and youth empowerment requirements.
- **Null Hypothesis 2:** There are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in responses toward public policies based on Gender, Academic Degree, or Years of Service.

- **Null Hypothesis 3:** There are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in responses toward youth empowerment requirements based on Gender, Academic Degree, or Years of Service.

4. Objectives

1. Determine the alignment level between public policies and youth empowerment.
2. Assess the current state of higher education policies in Gaza.
3. Identify the availability of youth empowerment requirements in the local market.
4. Clarify the correlation between policies and empowerment.
5. Explore the impact of demographic variables (Gender, Degree, Service) on both policy and empowerment levels.

5. Significance of the Study

- **Theoretical Significance:** Contributing to a theoretical framework that explains education alignment dynamics in **Constrained Economies**, a field lacking globally. It also sociologically roots "Youth Empowerment" as a tool for economic resistance in conflict zones.
- **Applied Significance:** Providing a data-driven roadmap for Palestinian institutions to restructure specializations toward **Remote Work** and digital markets. It also provides international organizations with accurate data on skill gaps to design efficient training programs.

6. Study Limitations

- **Temporal:** Second half of 2022.
- **Spatial:** Higher education institutions in Gaza City (Islamic University, Al-Quds Open University, Al-Aqsa University, Gaza Community College for Tourism Studies).
- **Human:** Employees of these institutions across various academic ranks.
- **Procedural:** Limited to the validity and reliability of the developed scales and the statistical treatments used.

7. Operational Definitions

- **Higher Education:** Systematic academic or vocational study in a recognized institution for at least one year post-high school. *Operationally:* The provision of programs to supply society with high-level competencies.
- **Public Policies:** The established guide used to reach desired goals. *Operationally:* The set of regulations governing the work of universities and their role in society.
- **Youth Empowerment:** Granting youth the autonomy and confidence to participate in decision-making and developing their skills. *Operationally:* The score obtained on the empowerment scale, reflecting the ability to possess digital and traditional market alignment skills.
- **Labor Market:** Meeting the needs of governmental, private, and NGO sectors with qualified cadres. *Operationally:* The ability of institutions to align their specializations with market needs.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed presentation of the theoretical framework and previous studies. The first section addresses the two primary pillars of the research by exploring the main study variables: **the public policies of higher education institutions** and the **challenges facing these institutions**, which have resulted in fundamental issues affecting national policies related to higher education and scientific research.

The second pillar focuses on **youth empowerment** by identifying the requirements for empowering young people within local labor markets. The second section of this chapter reviews **previous studies** relevant to the current research, organized chronologically from oldest to newest.

Here is the formal academic translation of the text provided:

2.1.1 Public Policies of Higher Education Institutions

Higher education plays a fundamental role in the development of human societies; indeed, it is one of the most significant factors influencing social change and evolution. It shapes the present and maps out the future by forming the intellectual and scientific foundation of human societies. Furthermore, it plays a prominent role in fostering national and ethnic belonging and preparing diverse human cadres across various levels (Abu Sakour, 2013: 16).

Educational policy represents the organized efforts exerted to achieve specific goals, whether immediate or long-term. As such, it reflects the fundamental choices made by society through its individuals, which are then reinforced and committed to by the state (Ben Isbaa, 2014: 57). However, every educational system in any society—whether academic or vocational—faces numerous problems and obstacles that present challenges, rendering it unable to achieve the optimal expected response (Mohammad, 2008: 125). Therefore, implementing an educational policy based on practical application and technical use enables the graduation of qualified cadres capable of driving production with high efficiency (Abdel Salam et al., 2016: 1).

The political and economic conditions experienced by the Palestinian people have directly impacted the educational process, as the opportunities for universities to obtain the necessary resources to develop their technical, administrative, and educational capacities have diminished (Abu Rukba, 2021). **The researcher believes** that higher education policies reflect societal demands for modernizing education in alignment with the labor market.

2.1.1.1 Objectives of Higher Education

According to the Official Al-Muqtafi Website (1998), higher education aims to achieve the following:

1. Opening the field for all qualified students to enroll in higher education and tracking/developing scientific competencies both domestically and abroad.
2. Encouraging authorship, translation, and scientific research movements, and supporting continuing education programs.
3. Enabling Palestinian society to engage with, invest in, and develop scientific, technological, and informational advancements.

4. Contributing to meeting the needs of Palestinian society for qualified human cadres in various scientific and cultural fields.
5. Strengthening frameworks for scientific cooperation with international and scientific bodies.

2.1.1.2 The Concept of Higher Education Policies

Ben Isbaa (2014: 13) defines the concept of higher education policies as follows:

"The general rules, principles, and objectives set by official state bodies and institutions responsible for the higher education sector. Through these, the general framework of this type of education is defined in terms of its philosophy, goals, stages, types, and levels. This entails defining legislation, laws, and organizational mechanisms, as well as the various material means and resources through which technical, administrative, pedagogical, and social work is directed to achieve qualitative and quantitative formation. This aims to prepare the human element and equip them with various skills and expertise to become an effective member of society and a fundamental pillar in achieving comprehensive development."

2.1.1.3 Elements of Education Policy for Development

Education policy for development is based on a set of elements (Sabah, 2014: 157):

1. Any education policy for development must recognize that education must be part of a comprehensive development plan.
2. Any education policy for development must be based on scientific, planned foundations.
3. The investment strategy must take into account the manpower requirements within the country and the levels of education capable of satisfying these demands.
4. The policy must consider social and cultural factors in education that contribute to economic development and provide them with a place in educational planning.

The researcher suggests the development of a comprehensive development plan for all sectors of society, resulting in clear policies that achieve the desired development.

Here is the formal academic translation of the text into English:

2.1.1.4 Fundamental Challenges Facing Palestinian Universities

Abu Rukba (2021: 9-13) identifies the core challenges hindering Palestinian universities as follows:

- **Challenge I: Weakness and fragility of the Palestinian labor market in absorbing graduates:** The problem lies in the inability of the labor market components to absorb the vast number of job seekers. Approximately 40,000 individuals enter the Palestinian labor market annually—one-third of whom are youth—while the market can provide a maximum of only 8,000 job opportunities.
- **Challenge II: The funding crisis and its impact on university capacities:** Funding and expenditure constraints are among the most prominent obstacles hindering higher education institutions from responding to local labor market requirements.
- **Challenge III: Globalization and international competition:** Many scholars agree that while globalization offers advantages that must be maximized, it also carries negative effects that must be countered by adopting measures to immunize

society. The higher education system is one of the most influential institutions in this regard (Sabah, 2014: 99).

The researcher believes it is essential to provide specialized programs that emphasize practical and applied aspects to empower graduates within the local labor market.

2.1.1.5 Key Issues Affecting National Policies for Higher Education and Scientific Research

Abu Aisha et al. (2020: 23-27) outline the primary issues affecting high-level national policies as follows:

Issue I: Suboptimal Quality of Higher Education Outputs

Quality in higher education is defined as the ability of the educational product's characteristics to meet the requirements of the student, the labor market, society, and all stakeholders. This includes the quality of students, faculty, curricula, facilities, and university administration (Ghantiwi&Kabouya, 2020: 19). The National Commission for Accreditation and Quality (2022) quoted the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Prof. Dr. Mahmoud Abu Mouis, stating: "There is still a gap between higher education outputs and labor market needs in terms of competencies, knowledge, and skills."

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2022), the unemployment rate among graduates (ages 19-29) with an intermediate diploma or higher reached approximately 48% (27% in the West Bank vs. 75% in the Gaza Strip). Obstacles to improving quality include:

1. Weak internal and external evaluation of programs and a lack of alignment with labor market needs.
2. Lack of standardized tools, national reports, and studies to measure and monitor learning processes.
3. Absence of policies to activate e-learning and blended learning.
4. Reliance on traditional, direct instruction methods.
5. Lack of a multilingual national matrix describing every academic program.
6. Limited global perspective and expertise among quality unit personnel.
7. Underfunding of quality-related processes such as self-assessment.
8. Unprepared infrastructure and academic staff for distance learning.

Issue II: Exclusion of Vulnerable and Deprived Groups

Marginalized groups are defined as individuals excluded or deprived of rights, resources, or services available to others, leading to the dominance of one group over another (Ali, 2019: 29). There has been a 3.2% decrease in the number of graduates compared to the previous year (Statistical Yearbook of Higher Education in Gaza, 2021/2022). General barriers to access include:

1. Absence of admission policies that consider student capabilities, desires, and national needs.
2. Infrastructure and policies unsuited for students with disabilities.

3. Lack of policies to diversify student bodies (geographically, by gender, or special groups).
4. Weak institutional communication with the local community and private sector.
5. Insufficient financial resources to support needy students.
6. Geographical movement restrictions in the West Bank and between Gaza and the outside world.

Issue III: Limited Role of Scientific Research in Sustainable Development

The Palestinian community faces significant challenges due to economic, social, and political factors (Ali, 2013: 56). Although the number of published research papers in Palestine rose from 21 in 1996 to 843 in 2018—improving Palestine's global rank from 150th to 100th—weaknesses persist due to:

1. Limited ability of researchers to write competitive global research proposals.
2. Weak networking between researchers and local/regional companies.
3. Inconsistent and unsustainable funding sources.
4. Lack of applied research output from faculty and students.
5. Absence of laws linking research results to societal problems.
6. Prioritization of teaching over research within institutions.
7. Research conducted primarily for the purpose of academic promotion.
8. Scarcity of specialized national scientific journals and international database subscriptions.

Issue IV: Low Attractiveness of Technical Education Programs

Technical education provides individuals with skills and technical behaviors that qualify them for the labor market post-high school (Hijab, 2020: 9). High unemployment is partly due to the lack of skilled workers; vocational training in Palestine still faces growth-stunting problems (General Union of Palestinian Economists, 2017). Higher education faces a crisis of overlapping majors and a continued shift toward academic rather than technical tracks (which account for only 13% of enrollment). Reasons for this low attractiveness include:

1. High unemployment among graduates and misalignment with market needs.
2. Perceived low quality in technical fields, especially in applied aspects.
3. Negative social stigma toward technical education.
4. High costs of developing technical infrastructure and equipment.
5. Lack of essential courses, such as entrepreneurship, in technical bachelor's programs.
6. Shortage of academic and technical staff in specialized fields.

Issue V: Incomplete Governance and Administrative Systems

Governance is a system of laws and decisions aimed at achieving excellence through effective methods and managing relationships between stakeholders (Al-Awadhi, 2020: 33). The relative youth of the sector as an independent program has limited its development. Weaknesses in institutional aspects include:

1. Absence of national policies for continuous capacity building of administrative and academic staff.
2. Weak incentive and reward systems and a lack of policies to attract national or regional talent.
3. Weak accountability and transparency mechanisms.
4. Administrative overburdens on departments.
5. Limited employee participation in decision-making.
6. Heavy reliance on student tuition fees to fund institutions.

The researcher believes it is necessary to conduct benchmarking with countries that have overcome similar difficulties and emphasizes the need to integrate scientific research foundations into pre-university education levels.

Section II

2.1.2 Youth Empowerment in the Local Labor Markets of Gaza City

Introduction: Palestinian society in general, and the Gaza Strip in particular, suffers from widespread unemployment, specifically among young graduates. This has had profound psychological, social, and familial repercussions. Key drivers include a lack of harmony between higher education policies and employment policies, the difficulty of forecasting labor market needs—often leaving the burden of unemployment on the graduate alone—and the weak contribution of the private sector in absorbing new talent. Furthermore, the focus remains on quantity rather than the quality of specializations required by the market.

Addressing this requires development projects that integrate modern technology into higher education, professional specializations that provide graduates with essential skills, and the participation of all community institutions in shaping educational policy. Empowerment must also include providing small and medium-sized loans and ensuring adequate training for students—both during and after their studies—to enable the practical application of their knowledge as a national and religious responsibility.

2.1.2 Youth Empowerment in Local Labor Markets

Economic empowerment represents an effective step toward economic integration by strategically incorporating targeted groups into the local economic cycle. This applies to various social segments, including refugees, who can be transformed from an economic burden into a human resource that drives local growth and provides household stability (Omar, 2020: 9).

Unemployment is a primary indicator of general imbalance in the national economy, with negative impacts extending to social and political stability (Zandiq, 2017: 40). The unemployment rate among young graduates (ages 19-29) holding an intermediate diploma or higher reached **53%** (representing 27% of all unemployed individuals). By gender, this rate is **66% for females** compared to **39% for males**. Geographically, the rate is **36% in the West Bank** compared to **74% in the Gaza Strip** (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Graduate unemployment is a particularly sensitive and costly issue; it represents a significant waste of human energy intended for nation-building and leads to severe psychological and social distress for the graduate (Al-Dalu, 2016).

Consequently, youth empowerment is a priority in the Gaza Strip, as youth are the most valuable human asset and the primary engine for development (Idris et al., 2019: 102). **The researcher emphasizes** the need for coordination between all local, governmental, and active societal forces to make decisions based on scientific research that facilitates youth employment.

2.1.2.1 Definition of Unemployment

Khasawneh, Shamia, Mahbak, and Sabih (2017: 283) define unemployment according to International Labour Organization (ILO) standards as: all individuals of working age (15+ in Palestine) who did not work during the reference period, but were available for and actively seeking work through methods such as checking newspapers, registering with employment offices, or inquiring with friends. **The researcher operationally defines graduate unemployment as:** All graduates who did not work during the data collection period but were available and actively seeking employment.

2.1.2.2 Causes of Graduate Unemployment

Abdel Salam et al. (2016: 42) summarize the causes as follows:

1. Lack of harmony between educational and employment policies.
2. Difficulty in forecasting labor market and production needs.
3. Rapid population growth in Gaza leading to an oversupply of graduates without matching economic growth.
4. Shifting the responsibility of graduate unemployment solely to the public sector.

2.1.2.3 Development Projects and the Importance of Empowerment

There is a close relationship between the environment, development, and the human element. Humans are social beings who thrive on organized interaction to satisfy socio-economic needs (Idris et al., 2019: 104). Development work must be comprehensive, extending beyond economic aspects to social, cultural, and health dimensions to boost morale, especially among youth. **The researcher argues** that higher education policies should prioritize societal interest over purely financial returns.

The **Digital Economy** plays a crucial role here, focusing on infrastructure, software, and e-commerce. As the ICT sector forms the core of the digital economy, the region must enhance its competitiveness to address challenges like unemployment and poverty (ESCWA, 2017).

2.1.2.4 Requirements for Providing Job Opportunities

The Nabaa Information Network (2019) outlines essential requirements:

1. **Linking Education to Market Needs:** Graduating cadres capable of driving development through modern technology. Modern technologies improve education by fostering active participation, diversifying experiences, and providing access to global scientific information (Al-Olayan, 2019: 274).

Universities in Gaza must focus on in-demand specializations through mandatory training and a five-year strategic plan developed by the Ministry of Higher Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy (Masarat, 2022).

2. **Modern Vocational Schools:** Providing the intellectual and professional skills necessary for decent, stable work. The dynamic nature of the labor market requires the continuous development of two types of skills (Abu Rukba, 2021: 14):

- **Specialized Skills:** Directly related to the major (e.g., Engineering, Psychology, Accounting).
 - **Soft or Entrepreneurial Skills:** * *Specific Skills:* Advanced analytical/critical thinking and the ability to write with logical sequence.
 - *Personal Attributes:* Teamwork, problem-solving, and organizational skills.
3. **Empowering Youth through Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs):** Providing micro-loans for projects that generate income. The Japanese experience serves as a model for how SMEs can transform a struggling economy into a global giant (Ahmed & Barham, 2012: 71).
- **Importance in Palestine:** SMEs absorb the labor force, transform creative ideas into projects, and provide low-cost goods (Zandiq, 2017).
 - **Obstacles in Gaza:** Funding gaps, complex government procedures, taxes, and high competition (Al-Flit, 2011).
4. **Enhancing National Coordination:** Strengthening policies and programs in cooperation with the private sector and NGOs. Universities must not be passive knowledge providers but active partners in social change and economic innovation (Naqd&Tanweer Center, 2020).
5. **Diverse Training Forms:** Addressing limited skills upon leaving formal education. This includes government-supported training centers and financial support for private sector facilities (Research Center, 2018; Masarat, 2022).

The researcher believes the Palestinian authorities must fulfill their national responsibilities by facilitating graduate employment—prioritizing older graduates—supporting small projects, and coordinating access to external markets.

MEAL Perspective (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning)

From a MEAL perspective, the researcher argues that the effectiveness of higher education public policies should not be measured merely by "Quantitative Outputs" (number of graduates or programs). Instead, we must shift toward measuring "**Sustainable Impact**" through **Empowerment Indicators**.

These indicators include:

- **Graduate Competitiveness.**
- **Successful Transition Rate** from education to the digital or freelance labor market.
- **Economic Resilience:** The ability of youth to adapt to market shocks in volatile environments.

Adopting **Results-Based Management (RBM)** in educational policy ensures that alignment is not just an administrative procedure, but a genuine empowerment tool measured by the graduate's actual impact on the local and global economic cycle.

2.2 Previous Studies

This section presents a review of relevant previous studies identified through the theoretical framework. These studies are categorized into three pillars: **Higher Education Public Policies**, **Youth Empowerment in Local Labor Markets**, and **The Relationship between the Two Variables**. The studies are arranged chronologically from most recent to oldest, reflecting the growing nature of graduate unemployment in the Gaza Strip.

2.2.1 Studies Related to Higher Education Public Policies

- **Hijab (2020):** This study explored the obstacles hindering technical colleges in the West Bank from contributing to economic development. Using a **mixed-method approach** (quantitative and qualitative) on a stratified random sample of **(120)** individuals, the study found that the role of technical colleges was **high**. No statistically significant differences ($\alpha \geq 0.05$) were found based on gender regarding the labor market and technical fields.
- **Al-Awadi (2020):** This research proposed a framework for **governance in higher education** to meet competitive requirements. Using a **descriptive-analytical approach** and a sample of **(325)** employees, the study found that governance practices were rated at a "**Medium**" level. No significant differences were found attributable to gender or academic qualification.
- **Ali (2019):** Focused on the concept of **marginalized groups** and educational exclusion. Using a **descriptive approach**, the study concluded that despite efforts to educate these groups, they remain insufficient compared to their numbers and specific needs.
- **Al-Muhtasib (2016):** Aimed to measure the application of **sustainable quality principles** in Palestinian universities. Through a descriptive-analytical approach and disproportionate stratified random sampling, the study revealed a **high level** of sustainable quality practices, which significantly impacted university performance.
- **I'ebyan (2012):** Investigated the role of Gaza's universities in **supporting scientific research** from the faculty's perspective. On a sample of **(151)**, the study found the support level to be "**Medium.**" No significant differences were found based on academic rank, gender, or years of service.

2.2.2 Studies Related to Youth Empowerment

- **Omar (2020):** Investigated the **economic empowerment of Syrian refugees** and obstacles to labor market integration. On a sample of **(450)**, the study revealed a **statistically significant inverse correlation** between employment and both educational level and humanitarian services provided by NGOs.
- **Idris et al. (2019):** Identified environmental and social variables associated with **youth empowerment in development projects** in rural and urban Egypt. Using social survey methods and **SPSS** analysis, the study confirmed a significant relationship between both social/environmental characteristics and youth empowerment.
- **Salama (2018):** Examined the causes of **graduate unemployment in Nablus**. Using a descriptive survey on a purposive sample of **(180)**, the study found that unemployment-related problems were "**High.**" No significant differences were found based on demographic variables.

- **Zindiq (2017):** Analyzed **unemployment rates and the reality of SMEs** in Palestine. Based on official data and a sample of **(130)** projects, the study found a **4.7% increase** in unemployment (2007–2015) and identified frequent border closures as the primary obstacle for projects in Tulkarm.

2.2.3 Studies Related to the Relationship between the Variables

- **Rawashdeh (2020):** Explored the relationship between **strategic planning** and the alignment of educational outputs. Using a **descriptive-correlational approach** on **(400)** subjects, the study found the alignment level to be **"Medium."** Significant differences were found favoring males, humanities colleges, and those with over 10 years of service.
- **Al-Dalu (2016):** Proposed a strategy to align higher education with the Palestinian labor market. On a sample of **(200)**, the study revealed a **significant gap** between acquired university learning and workplace requirements, with differences favoring males in alignment perceptions.

Commentary and Originality of the Current Study

The analytical review shows a cumulative research interest in higher education policies and youth empowerment (2012–2020), predominantly using the descriptive-analytical approach with sample sizes ranging from **120** to **400**. However, the researcher identifies a knowledge and contextual gap that this study aims to fill:

1. **Alignment under Pressure:** Unlike previous literature focusing on stable contexts, this study examines policy formulation within a **"Constrained Economy"** and the exceptional conditions of the Gaza Strip, adding a qualitative dimension to the theoretical model of public policy.
2. **Impact over Outputs:** This study adopts a **MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning)** perspective. It views alignment not just as an administrative task but as an empowerment tool measured by **"Economic Resilience"** and cross-border digital skills.
3. **Contextual Recency:** Capturing rapid shifts and existential challenges post-2022, this study serves as a **prognostic document** exceeding the traditional findings of studies that concluded by 2020.

Benefits derived from previous research:

- Identifying influential classification variables (e.g., years of service, academic degree).
- Developing and refining measurement instruments (questionnaires) according to rigorous scientific standards.
- Selecting advanced statistical treatments that move beyond description to **correlation and impact analysis**.

This chapter details the methods and procedures followed, including the study methodology, the population and sample, and the practical steps taken to construct the study instruments. It also covers the psychometric properties and variables of these tools, the implementation procedures, and the statistical tests used for data analysis.

3.1 Study Methodology

This study utilizes the **descriptive-analytical method**. This approach allows the researcher to describe various scientific phenomena and problems, address research questions, and analyze collected data to extract meaningful explanations and results. Furthermore, the descriptive-analytical method enables the researcher to compare similar phenomena to identify differences and similarities—a key feature that distinguishes it from other scientific methods (Arab Journal of Sciences and Research Publishing, 2022).

The researcher selected this method for its ability to go beyond mere quantitative description. It extends to measuring **Effect Size** using the **Eta Squared (η^2)** coefficient to determine the extent to which the public policies of higher education institutions explain the variance in youth empowerment levels. This provides the findings with **Practical Significance** that transcends abstract statistical significance.

3.2 Study Population and Sample

First: Study Population

The research population consists of all full-time employees—categorized by academic degree (High School, Intermediate Diploma, Bachelor's, Master's, PhD)—in higher education institutions in Gaza City. The total population is **4,344** employees, as detailed in the following table based on the Annual Statistical Yearbook (2021/2022: 25):

Table (3.1): Distribution of the Study Population by Academic Degree and Gender

Variable	Level	Male	Female	Total
Academic Degree	PhD	1,007	104	1,111
	Master's	720	247	967
	Bachelor's	750	278	1,028
	Intermediate Diploma	406	61	467
	High School or less	720	51	771
Total		3,603	741	4,344

Second: Study Sample

The sample consisted of **353** full-time employees. Data was collected through both manual and electronic distribution of the scales. The sample size was determined

using the **Stephen Thompson Formula**, representing a ratio of (0.08126) of the total population. A **simple random sampling** method was used.

Table (3.2): Distribution of the Research Sample by Academic Degree and Gender

Variable	Level	Male	Female	Total
Academic Degree	PhD	23	24	47
	Master's	26	29	55
	Bachelor's	89	96	185
	Intermediate Diploma	25	27	52
	High School or less	7	7	14
Total		170	183	353

According to Bishmani (2014), the sample size must be determined via a statistical formula.

Figure (3.1): Stephen Thompson Formula

The formula used is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N \times p(1-p)}{(N-1) \times (d^2 / z^2) + p(1-p)}$$

Table (3.3): Internal Consistency Validity for the Higher Education Institutions Public Policies Scale.

Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation	Item-Total Correlation
The governance and management system for the higher education and scientific research sector is incomplete.		The lack of attractiveness of technical education programs for high school graduates.		The limited role of scientific research		The exclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups from enrolling in higher education institutions.		The quality of higher education institutions' outcomes						

.590 **	.741 **	1	.527 **	.642 **	1	.536 **	.572 **	1	.563 **	.682 **	1	.550 **	.695 **	1
.635 **	.797 **	2	.542 **	.680 **	2	.646 **	.676 **	2	.398 **	.579 **	2	.487 **	.602 **	2
.664 **	.752 **	3	.138 **	.249 **	3	.589 **	.645 **	3	.503 **	.638 **	3	.522 **	.641 **	3
.624 **	.691 **	4	.540 **	.647 **	4	.540 **	.598 **	4	.454 **	.573 **	4	.525 **	.653 **	4
- 0.07 4	.432 **	5	.578 **	.653 **	5	.558 **	.646 **	5	.532 **	.568 **	5	.122 *	.196 **	5
.530 **	.380 **	6	.541 **	.648 **	6	.375 **	.474 **	6	0.09 8	.352 **	6	.546 **	.662 **	6
			.609 **	.702 **	7	.149 **	.228 **	7				.478 **	.590 **	7
			.584 **	.595 **	8	.556 **	.614 **	8				.213 **	.268 **	8
			.594 **	.665 **	9	.539 **	.605 **	9						
						.622 **		1 0						
						.631 **		1 1						
Total score for the dimension = .812**			Total score for the dimension = .852**			Total score for the dimension = .893**			Total score for the dimension = .764**			Total score for the dimension = .792**		

(*) Statistically significant at the level ($p < .05$)

(**) Statistically significant at the level ($p \leq .01$)

Table (4.3): Internal Consistency Validity for the Youth Empowerment Scale:

Item-Axis Total Correlation	Item	Item-Axis Total Correlation	Item
Requirements for Empowering Youth in Local Labor Markets in Gaza City			
.615**	9	.606**	1
.546**	10	.660**	2
.491**	11	.657**	3

.662**	12	.733**	4
.193**	13	.670**	5
.618**	14	.688**	6
.706**	15	.669**	7
		.567**	8

(*) Statistically significant at the significance level ($p < .05$)

(**) Statistically significant at the significance level ($p \leq .01$)

It is noted from the data provided in Tables (3.3) and (4.3) that the correlation coefficient for **Item (6)** of the second dimension, as well as **Item (5)** of the fifth dimension, were not statistically significant; therefore, they were excluded. As for the remaining items, they are statistically significant. Abu Samra and Al-Titi (2019: 68) state that the researcher adopts items that obtain statistically significant correlation coefficient values; consequently, no other items were deleted from the scale.

Reliability of Study Scales

To verify the internal consistency reliability of the "Higher Education Institutions Public Policies Scale" and the "Youth Empowerment in Local Labor Markets Scale," the study instrument was administered to a random sample of 353 employees in higher education institutions in Gaza City. The researcher utilized **Cronbach's Alpha** coefficient on the sample data. Following the validity measures, the final scales consisted of 38 items for the first scale and 15 items for the second. The results are presented in Table (5.3):

Table (5.3): Reliability Coefficients for the Higher Education Institutions Public Policies Scale and the Youth Empowerment Scale using Cronbach's Alpha

No.	Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Quality of Higher Education Institution Outputs	8	0.632
2	Exclusion of Vulnerable and Deprived Groups from HEIs	5	0.654
3	Limited Role of Scientific Research in Sustainable Development	11	0.796
4	Inattractiveness of Technical Education Programs for Graduates	9	0.783
5	Incomplete Governance and Management System for the HE Sector	5	0.808

No.	Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
-	Total Scale Score	38	0.921
	Scale: Youth Empowerment in Local Labor Markets in Gaza City		
1	Requirements for Youth Empowerment in Local Labor Markets	15	0.872

It is evident from Table (5.3) that the Cronbach's Alpha values for the dimensions of the Public Policies scale ranged between **0.632 and 0.808**. The total reliability coefficient for the scale reached **0.921**, while the reliability for the Youth Empowerment scale was **0.872**. These values are considered high and close to **1**, indicating strong internal consistency.

3.4 Statistical Treatment

Data analysis was conducted using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)**, utilizing the following methods:

- **Relative Weight** based on the 5-point Likert scale.
- **Arithmetic Means** and relative weights to calculate the average responses of the study sample.
- **t-test** and **One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** to test the significance of differences between mean responses attributable to study variables.
- **Pearson Correlation Coefficient**.
- **Eta Squared (η^2)** formula to measure effect size.

3.5 Study Criterion (Measurement Scale)

The study adopted a **5-point Likert Scale**, assigning weights to items as follows: **Strongly Agree (5)**, **Agree (4)**, **Neutral (3)**, **Disagree (2)**, and **Strongly Disagree (1)**. Negative items (Item 5 in Dimension 1, Item 5 in Dimension 5 of the Public Policies scale, and Item 13 in the Youth Empowerment scale) were reverse-scored.

To interpret the arithmetic means and determine the level of Public Policies and Empowerment requirements, the scores were categorized into three levels (Low, Medium, High) based on the following classification:

Table (6.3): The Adopted Criterion for the Study

Statement	Weighted Mean Range	Interval Length	Level
Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.79	0.79	Low

Statement	Weighted Mean Range	Interval Length	Level
Disagree	1.80 – 2.59	0.79	Low
Neutral	2.60 – 3.39	0.79	Medium
Agree	3.40 – 4.19	0.79	High
Strongly Agree	4.20 – 5.00	0.79	High

4. Findings and Discussion

Results related to the main research question: "What is the level of alignment between the public policies of higher education institutions and the requirements for youth empowerment in the local labor markets of Gaza City?"

To answer the main question, the following sub-questions were formulated and addressed:

4.1.1 Results related to the first sub-question: "What is the level of higher education institutions' public policies in the local labor markets of Gaza City?"

To answer this question, the following research hypothesis was formulated and tested:

"The level of higher education institutions' public policies in the local labor markets of Gaza City is low."

To test the first hypothesis, arithmetic means, standard deviations, and percentages were calculated for the Higher Education Institutions Public Policies Scale. Table (1.4) illustrates these metrics for each dimension and the overall scale, ranked in descending order:

Table (1.4): Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Weight for each dimension of the Public Policies Scale and the total score (Ranked Descendingly)

Rank	Dimension No.	Dimension	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	3	Limited Role of Scientific Research in Sustainable Development	3.47	0.54	69.4	High
2	4	Inattractiveness of Technical Education Programs for Graduates	3.46	0.58	69.2	High

Rank	Dimension No.	Dimension	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
3	1	Quality of Higher Education Institution Outputs	3.36	0.49	67.2	Medium
4	2	Exclusion of Vulnerable and Deprived Groups from HEIs	3.36	0.63	67.2	Medium
5	5	Incomplete Governance and Management System for the HE Sector	3.28	0.75	65.6	Medium
-	-	Total Mean for Public Policies	3.40	0.48	68.0	High

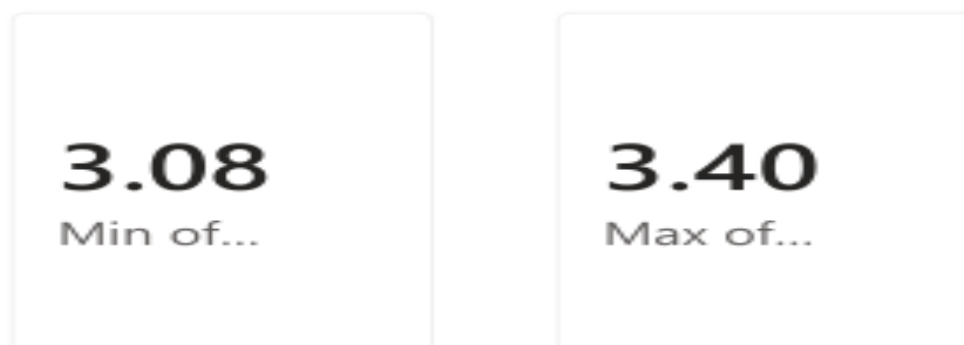


Figure (1)

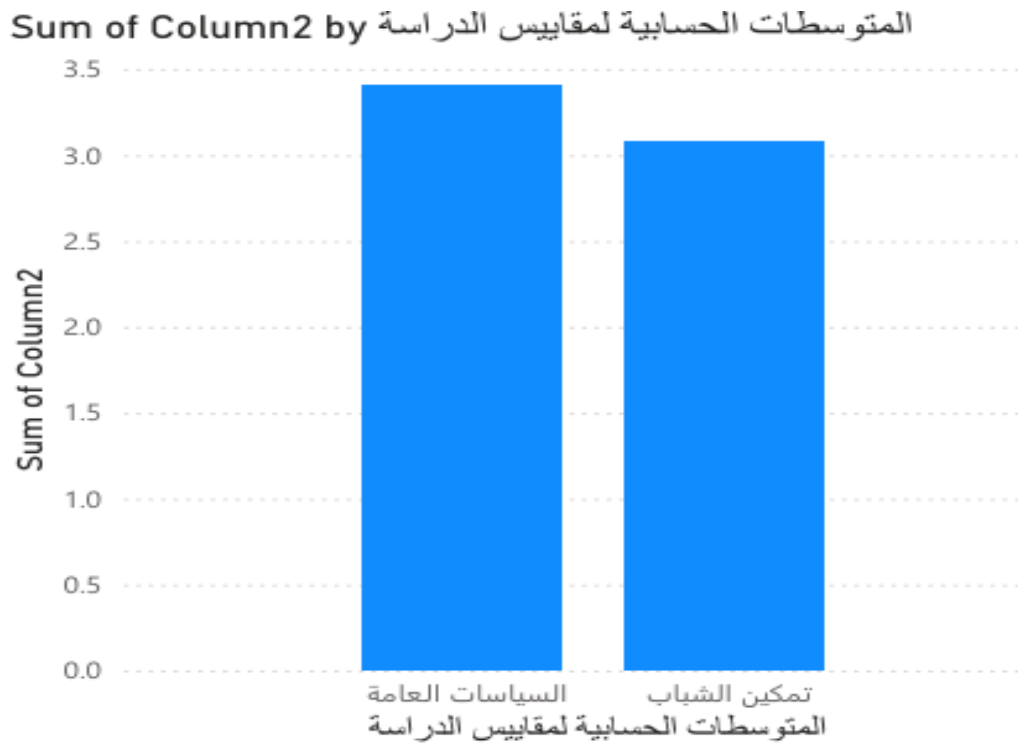


Figure (2)

It is evident from **Table (1.4)**, **Figure (1)**, and **Figure (2)** that the arithmetic mean of the study sample's estimations for the Public Policies Scale as a whole reached 3.40, with a relative weight of 68%, which is considered a **High** level. The arithmetic means for the individual dimensions of the scale ranged between 3.28 and 3.47.

The researcher attributes this result to the fact that higher education and scientific research in the Gaza Strip face fundamental challenges. These include the weakness and fragility of the local labor market and its inability to absorb the vast number of graduates—whether in the public or private sectors—due to the Palestinian political division, the occupation and its policies, among other challenges.

Consequently, higher education has been impacted by several factors: the quality of institutional outputs has not reached the desired level, and the role of scientific research in sustainable development remains limited. Its focus has shifted toward purely academic purposes (such as promotion) rather than addressing crises of employment and empowerment.

This finding is consistent with the study by **Hijab (2020)** and differs from the study by **Rawashdeh (2020)**. Below is a detailed presentation of the results according to the scale's dimensions:

First Dimension: Table (2.4) Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Weight for the First Dimension

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	2	E-learning is activated through higher education	3.63	0.79	72.6	High

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
		policies.				
2	8	Higher education institutions rely on traditional teaching methods for knowledge production.	3.59	0.91	71.8	High
3	1	Higher education institutions possess sufficient infrastructure for distance learning.	3.52	0.94	70.4	High
4	6	There are standardized tools and criteria for measuring teaching and learning processes in HEIs.	3.51	0.84	70.2	High
5	4	Staff in quality units at higher education institutions possess sufficient expertise.	3.50	0.91	70.0	High
6	7	Higher education programs are linked to labor market needs.	3.28	1.09	65.6	Medium
7	5	Higher education institutions suffer from a lack of funding for quality issues, such as internal and external evaluation.	2.33	1.00	46.6	Low
-	-	All Items	3.36	0.49	67.2	Medium

Table (2.4) shows that the arithmetic means for responses regarding the **Quality of Higher Education Outputs** dimension ranged between (2.33–3.63). The item "E-learning is activated through higher education policies" ranked first with a mean of (3.63) and a relative weight of (72.6%), rated as **High**. The researcher attributes this top ranking to Gaza's HEIs adopting e-learning alongside traditional methods to overcome spatial and temporal barriers, specifically following the COVID-19 pandemic. This aligns with **Hijab (2020)** and differs from **Rawashdeh (2020)**. Conversely, the item "lack of funding for quality issues" ranked last (Mean: 2.33, Weight: 46.6%, Level: Low). The researcher notes that the prominence of e-learning

(72.6%) against the sharp decline in quality funding (46.6%) suggests a "forced digital transformation" necessitated by circumstances, yet lacking the financial sustainability to ensure global quality standards. This result aligns with **Al-Awadi (2020)** and differs from **Al-Muhtasib (2016)**.

Second Dimension: Table (3.4) Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Weight for the Second Dimension

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	2	Policies followed by HEIs align with the needs of students with disabilities.	3.59	0.87	71.8	High
2	4	There is communication between HEIs and private sector institutions.	3.44	0.98	68.8	High
3	3	HEI policies help diversify admitted students based on gender.	3.40	0.97	68.0	High
4	1	Policies followed by HEIs take into account national needs related to vulnerable groups.	3.33	0.94	66.6	Medium
5	5	Available financial resources in HEIs are sufficient to fund students in need.	3.04	1.12	60.8	Medium
-	-	All Items	3.36	0.63	67.2	Medium

Table (3.4) illustrates that the mean scores for the 'Exclusion of Vulnerable Groups' ranged between 3.04 and 3.59. Notably, the item pertaining to 'students with disabilities' secured the highest rank (Mean = 3.59, Weight = 71.8%). This high ranking underscores the effectiveness of institutional facilities and support systems tailored for this demographic, a finding that corroborates the work of Hijab (2020). Conversely, 'sufficiency of financial resources' ranked lowest (Mean = 3.04, Weight = 60.8%). This outcome likely reflects the systemic funding crisis within the Gaza Strip, where ambitious inclusive policy goals frequently collide with severe budgetary constraints and ongoing economic deterioration. This disparity between policy and practice aligns with the observations of Ali (2019).

Third Dimension: Table (4.4) Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Weight for the Third Dimension

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	7	Most research in HEIs is conducted for promotion purposes.	3.79	0.94	75.8	High
2	1	Researchers have the ability to write competitive research proposals for global programs.	3.65	0.84	73.0	High
3	6	HEIs focus on the teaching aspect versus the research aspect.	3.63	0.92	72.6	High
4	11	Master's and Doctoral theses are linked to community problems in Gaza.	3.59	1.00	71.8	High
5	5	HEI policies encourage linking research results to community problems.	3.50	0.94	70.0	High
5	9	HEIs subscribe to global research databases.	3.50	0.85	70.0	High
6	4	University professors in the Gaza Strip produce applied research.	3.46	0.97	69.2	High
7	10	The majority of research output is issued by universities in the Gaza Strip.	3.45	0.94	69.0	High
8	8	There are specialized national scientific journals sufficient for publishing research.	3.31	1.05	66.2	Medium
9	2	There is strong communication between	3.26	0.91	65.2	Medium

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
		researchers in the Gaza Strip.				
10	3	Scientific research enjoys sustainable funding sources in the Gaza Strip.	3.01	1.02	60.2	Medium
-	-	All Items	3.47	0.54	69.4	High

As shown in Table (4.4), the mean scores for the 'Limited Role of Scientific Research' ranged from 3.01 to 3.79. The item 'research for promotion purposes' emerged as the primary driver (Mean = 3.79, Weight = 75.8%). This suggests that scientific productivity is largely motivated by academic advancement requirements rather than societal development—a trend that aligns with the findings of Al-Muhtasib (2016). Conversely, the 'sustainability of funding' received the lowest ranking (Mean = 3.01), indicating that research initiatives often struggle to achieve long-term developmental goals due to precarious financial support. This outcome is consistent with I'bayan (2012), highlighting a persistent gap in research financing."

Fourth Dimension: Table (5.4) Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Weight for the Fourth Dimension

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	3	Unemployment rates among technical education graduates in Gaza are high.	3.80	1.03	76.0	High
2	4	Society views technical education positively.	3.65	0.99	73.0	High
3	5	Technical HEIs enhance programs through guidance and counseling.	3.52	0.84	70.4	High
4	6	Costs of developing technical programs are proportional to development needs.	3.39	0.93	67.8	Medium

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
4	7	Essential courses for technical HEIs meet students' needs.	3.39	0.91	67.8	Medium
4	1	Technical education specialties in Gaza suit the local labor market.	3.39	0.99	67.8	Medium
5	9	Number of technical staff matches the needs of technical HEIs.	3.34	0.98	66.8	Medium
5	2	Practical applied fields in technical specialties suit changing market needs.	3.34	0.92	66.8	Medium
6	8	Number of academic staff matches the needs of technical HEIs.	3.33	0.97	66.6	Medium
-	-	All Items	3.46	0.58	69.2	High

Table (5.4) illustrates that the mean scores for the 'Inattractiveness of Technical Education' ranged from 3.33 to 3.80. 'Unemployment rates among graduates' emerged as the most significant factor (Mean = 3.80). This finding aligns with the socio-economic reality in the Gaza Strip, where the number of unemployed graduates has exceeded 350,000, creating a deterrent effect for prospective technical students. This result is consistent with Al-Dalu (2016). On the other hand, the 'number of technical staff' ranked lowest (Mean = 3.33), suggesting that the primary challenge lies in the external labor market absorption rather than the internal availability of instructional personnel.

Fifth Dimension: Table (6.4) Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Weight for the Dimension

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	1	HEIs develop the capabilities of administrative/academic staff through national	3.50	0.94	70.0	High

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
		policies.				
2	4	HEIs follow clear policies for staff accountability.	3.37	0.99	67.4	Medium
3	3	HEIs follow fair policies for attracting national talent.	3.21	1.03	64.2	Medium
4	2	Staff in the higher education sector are encouraged through incentive systems.	3.18	0.98	63.6	Medium
5	5	Employees in HEIs participate in decision-making.	3.14	1.02	62.8	Medium
-	-	All Items	3.28	0.75	65.6	Medium

3.47

Max of المتوسط...

3.08

Min of المتوسط...

Figure (3)

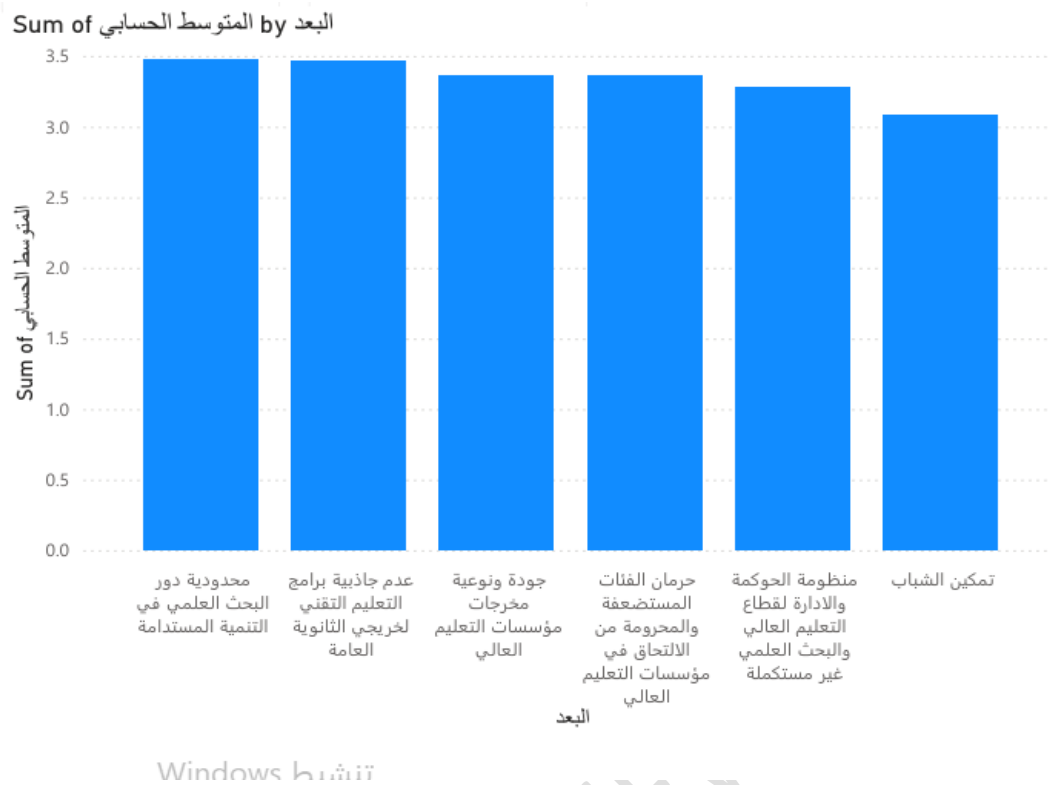


Figure (4)

Table (6.4) illustrates the mean scores for the 'Governance' dimension, with values ranging from 3.14 to 3.50. While 'Staff Development' emerged as the primary focus (Mean = 3.50), 'Involvement in Decision-Making' trailed at the bottom (Mean = 3.14). This creates a **structural gap**—visualized in **Figure (3)** and **Figure (4)**—indicating a 'Top-Down Development' trajectory. This suggests that HEIs prioritize technical capacity building over structural empowerment, reflecting a centralized bureaucratic culture. These findings align with Al-Awadi (2020) and Hijab (2020), while further highlighting the persistence of traditional management models in modern higher education contexts.

4.1.2 Results related to the second sub-question: "What is the level of youth empowerment requirements in the local labor markets of Gaza City?"

Research Hypothesis: "The level of youth empowerment requirements in the local labor markets of Gaza City is high."

Table (7.4): Arithmetic Means, Standard Deviations, and Relative Weight for the Youth Empowerment Scale

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
1	11	HEIs develop student skills through compulsory	3.55	0.96	71.0	High

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
		training during study stages.				
2	9	Educational methods used by HEIs enable diversification of student experiences.	3.42	0.97	68.4	High
3	10	Universities enable graduates to link theoretical and practical aspects.	3.39	1.04	67.8	Medium
3	8	Universities enable graduates to acquire specialized skills.	3.39	1.05	67.8	Medium
4	6	HEIs graduate cadres capable of development responsibility through modern technology.	3.33	1.02	66.6	Medium
5	7	There is coordination between labor market users and educational institutions.	3.18	1.06	63.6	Medium
6	14	Government regulations organize small projects in Gaza.	3.14	1.05	62.8	Medium
7	5	HEIs focus on specialties required by labor market needs.	3.11	1.08	62.2	Medium
8	12	The private sector contributes to providing job opportunities for graduates in Gaza.	3.04	1.14	60.8	Medium
9	3	Government in Gaza offers rehabilitation/training programs to address unemployment.	2.97	1.23	59.4	Medium
10	4	HEI policies harmonize with labor market	2.94	1.01	58.8	Medium

Rank	No.	Item	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Level
		requirements.				
11	2	National youth policies contribute to economic development.	2.88	1.07	57.6	Medium
12	1	Increase in graduates is matched by equal growth in the Palestinian economy.	2.84	1.37	56.8	Medium
13	15	Government provides financial support to enable the private sector to offer training.	2.68	1.24	53.6	Medium
14	13	Small projects in Gaza face funding difficulties.	2.39	1.28	47.8	Low
-	-	All Items	3.08	0.67	61.6	Medium

As illustrated in **Table (7.4)**, the mean scores for the Youth Empowerment dimensions ranged from **2.39 to 3.55**. While '**Compulsory Training**' emerged as the most prominent dimension, '**Funding difficulties for small projects**' yielded the lowest mean (\$M = 2.39\$), identifying a critical financial bottleneck. These results accentuate a **structural misalignment** between educational outputs and contemporary labor market demands, a gap further widened by the private sector's constrained capacity for workforce absorption.

4.1.3 Relationship between Public Policies and Youth Empowerment Requirements

H0: There is no statistically significant relationship ($\alpha \leq .05$) between HEI public policies and youth empowerment requirements.

Table (8.4): Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Public Policies and Youth Empowerment (N=353)

Dimension	Youth Empowerment Correlation
Quality of HEI Outputs	.558**
Exclusion of Vulnerable Groups	.547**

Dimension	Youth Empowerment Correlation
Limited Role of Scientific Research	.566**
Inattractiveness of Technical Education	.607**
Incomplete Governance/Management	.704**
Public Policies (Total Score)	.714 **

The statistical analysis reveals a robust positive correlation ($r = .714^{**}$), indicating a strong structural link between institutional policies and youth empowerment. However, the researcher argues that this correlation exists within a '**Paradox of Policy vs. Reality.**' While the high correlation reflects a solid internal policy framework, the staggering **75% unemployment rate** among graduates (PCBS, 2022) exposes a critical **decoupling** between policy design and labor market absorption. This gap suggests that even 'high-quality' educational policies in Gaza are being stifled by external macroeconomic constraints and the lack of a functional 'bridge' to an embattled local economy.

4.1.4 Results regarding Gender, Degree, and Service Years

H0 (Gender): No significant differences based on gender.

Table (9.4): Means, Standard Deviations, and T-values for Gender

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev	T-Value	Sig. Level
Total Mean	Male	170	3.40	0.49	-0.13	0.90
	Female	183	3.41	0.48		

The null hypothesis is accepted as $\text{Sig} > 0.05$.

H0 (Degree): No significant differences based on Academic Degree.

Table (10.4) & (11.4): ANOVA results show $\text{Sig} = 0.92$ for the total score, accepting the null hypothesis for the overall scale. However, a difference was found in the **First Dimension (Quality of Outputs)** ($\text{Sig} = 0.01$).

Table (12.4): LSD Test for First Dimension by Degree

Level	Mean	Intermediate Diploma	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD
Intermediate Diploma	3.51	-	.217*	-	-

Level	Mean	Intermediate Diploma	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD
Bachelor's	3.29	-.217*	-	-	-.191*

The differences in the **Quality of HEI Outputs** dimension are in favor of the **Intermediate Diploma** holders (Mean: 3.51) over Bachelor's holders. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for this specific dimension only.

To determine the effect size of the "Academic Degree" variable on the dependent variable ("Youth Empowerment Requirements in the Local Labor Markets in Gaza City"), the researcher used the **Eta Squared (η^2)** formula. The results showed a **low** effect size of **.012** for the academic degree variable on the dependent variable.

Third Statistical Hypothesis:

H₀: There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq .05$) toward the level of youth empowerment requirements in the local labor markets in Gaza City attributable to the **Years of Service** variable.

To verify the existence of differences attributable to the years of service variable, a **One-Way ANOVA** was used to determine the significance of differences between groups. Table (14.4) illustrates the results:

Table (14.4): One-Way ANOVA Results for Differences in Youth Empowerment Requirements Based on Years of Service

Variables	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	Calculated "F"	Significance Level
Youth Empowerment Requirements in the Local Labor Markets in Gaza City	Between Groups	1.50	3.00	0.50	1.13	0.34
	Within Groups	154.24	349.00	0.44		
	Total	155.7	352.00			

It is evident from Table (14.4) that the calculated significance value for the total score of the "Youth Empowerment Requirements in the Local Labor Markets in Gaza City Scale" was greater than the specified significance level for the study ($\alpha \leq .05$). Consequently, **there are no significant differences** regarding youth empowerment requirements in the local labor markets attributable to the years of service variable.

The reason for the discrepancy with other studies may be due to the spatial or geographical dimension, which led to cultural and intellectual differences, resulting in varying findings between studies. Alternatively, the difference may be attributed to the temporal dimension; for instance, the **Rawashdeh (2020)** study was conducted two years prior to this study, and subsequent intellectual, cultural, and economic developments likely caused the variation in results.

This result is consistent with the study by **Salameh (2018)** and differs from the study by **Rawashdeh (2020)**.

5.1 Results of the Study

1. The study revealed that the level of **Public Policies** for higher education institutions in Gaza's local labor markets was **High** overall.
2. The overall level of **Youth Empowerment** requirements in Gaza's local labor markets was **Medium**.
3. **E-learning** is actively implemented through higher education policy frameworks.
4. Policies followed by higher education institutions are well-aligned with the needs of **Students with Disabilities**.
5. Most scientific research in higher education institutions is conducted primarily for **Academic Promotion** purposes.
6. There is a **High Unemployment Rate** among technical education graduates in the Gaza Strip.
7. Higher education institutions develop the capacities of their administrative, academic, and research staff through **National Policies**.
8. Institutions enhance students' skills through **Mandatory Training** during their stages of study.
9. Educational tools used in higher education institutions enable the **Diversification of Student Experiences**.
10. A **Statistically Significant Correlation** ($r = .714$, $p \leq 0.05$) exists between public policies of higher education institutions and youth empowerment requirements in Gaza.
11. There are **No Statistically Significant Differences** ($p \leq 0.05$) in respondents' perceptions of public policies based on **Gender, Academic Degree, or Years of Service**.
12. Significant differences were found in perceptions of **Quality of Outputs** based on the Academic Degree variable, in favor of **Associate Diploma** holders.
13. No significant differences were found in perceptions of **Youth Empowerment requirements** based on demographic variables (Gender, Academic Degree, or Years of Service).
14. The effect size of the **Academic Degree** variable on the public policies scale was **0.003**, and on the quality of outputs was **0.036**; both are considered **Low** according to the **Eta Squared** formula.
15. The effect size of the **Academic Degree** variable on youth empowerment requirements was **0.012**, which is also **Low** according to the **Eta Squared** formula.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Prioritize **funding for quality assurance** in higher education institutions, including both internal and external evaluations.
 2. Ensure that staff within higher education institutions are actively involved in **Decision-Making processes**.
 3. Secure financial resources to provide **scholarships and aid** for students in need.
 4. Establish **sustainable funding sources** for scientific research in the Gaza Strip.
 5. Recruit specialized **technical staff** for technical programs to match the actual needs of technical higher education institutions.
 6. Facilitate and simplify **financing procedures for small projects** in the Gaza Strip.
 7. The government must provide **financial support to the private sector** to enable them to offer training facilities for graduates.
-

Research Agenda and Initiatives

I. Future Research Agenda

- **Quality & Finance:** "The Impact of Public-Private Partnerships in Funding Quality and Accreditation Centers in Higher Education: A Comparative Study."
- **Governance:** "The Degree of Democratic Management Practice in Palestinian Universities and its Relationship with Job Satisfaction and Administrative Innovation."
- **Scientific Research:** "A Proposed Model for Funding Scientific Research in Gaza Based on Developmental Needs (A National R&D Fund)."
- **Entrepreneurship:** "Financial and Legal Obstacles Facing Youth Entrepreneurship in Gaza: A Strategic Vision."

II. Policy Actions

1. **Participatory Governance Councils:** To ensure academic and administrative staff representation in university decision-making.
 2. **University "Good Loan" Fund (Al-Qard Al-Hasan):** Based on educational endowments and international donations to support needy students with flexible repayment.
 3. **Technical Twinning Program:** Directly linking technical colleges with factories and major companies to provide trained staff and shared training facilities.
-

Conclusion

This study highlights a critical intersection between the **Public Policies** of higher education institutions and **Youth Empowerment** requirements in one of the most complex and fragile environments: **Gaza City**. The statistical analysis revealed a

strong correlation (**0.714**), confirming that youth advancement cannot be achieved in isolation from structural and fundamental reforms in the educational policy system.

The findings indicate that the political and economic realities—characterized by occupation, internal division, and labor market fragility—have created a clear gap between "**Policy Discourse**" and "**Field Impact**." While institutions have succeeded in achieving a forced digital transformation and facilitating inclusion for vulnerable groups, they still face obstacles such as centralized decision-making, lack of sustainable funding, and the diversion of scientific research toward purely academic gains rather than developmental needs.

This study, through its analysis of significance levels and effect sizes, provides a roadmap for decision-makers. It begins with strengthening **Participatory Governance**, investing in the **Quality of Outputs** and technical education, and creating an enabling environment for **Small Projects** to support the resilience and economic independence of youth.

Ultimately, the researcher hopes these results serve as a foundation for building more responsive and resilient educational policies, capable of transforming Gaza's immense challenges into opportunities for empowering a young generation that possesses the knowledge, skill, and will to contribute to **Sustainable Development**.

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