

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-57132

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

Recommendation:

Accept as it is
 Accept after minor revision.....
 Accept after major revision
 Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	...			
Techn. Quality		...		
Clarity	...			
Significance	...			

Reviewer's ID: JPR-180

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The research paper titled “**Public Policy Alignment of Higher Education Institutions with Youth Empowerment Requirements: A Case Study of the Local Labor Market in Gaza**” addresses a highly relevant and context-sensitive issue. The study is grounded in the socio-economic realities of Gaza, where political instability, economic blockade, and structural labor market weaknesses significantly influence higher education outcomes. The introduction effectively establishes the urgency of aligning higher education policies with labor market demands, particularly under crisis conditions. The author successfully contextualizes the study within a broader global and regional framework, emphasizing education as a driver of development and resilience. The research problem is clearly articulated, highlighting the widening gap between higher education outputs and labor market requirements. The formulation of the main research question and sub-questions is logical and comprehensive, covering policy evaluation, empowerment levels, and the relationship between the two. The hypotheses are appropriately framed, although some appear slightly contradictory (e.g., assuming low policy levels but high empowerment), which may reflect an exploratory intent. Nevertheless, the objectives are well-defined and aligned with the study's central theme.

The theoretical framework is extensive and demonstrates a strong engagement with existing literature. The discussion on higher education policies, challenges faced by Palestinian universities, and youth empowerment is thorough and analytically rich. The integration of previous studies adds depth and credibility, while the identification of a research gap particularly the focus on “constrained economies” enhances the originality of the study. The inclusion of the MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning) perspective is particularly noteworthy, as it shifts the focus from output-based evaluation to impact-driven assessment. Methodologically, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, which is appropriate for examining relationships and perceptions. The sample size of 353 participants, selected through random sampling, is adequate and statistically justified. The use of established tools such as Likert scales, Pearson correlation, t-tests, and ANOVA strengthens the reliability of the analysis. Moreover, the calculation of effect size using Eta Squared adds depth to the statistical interpretation. The reliability and validity of the instruments are well-supported through Cronbach's Alpha and internal consistency measures, indicating strong methodological rigor.

The findings of the study are clearly presented and systematically analyzed. One of the key results is that higher education public policies were rated at a high level, while youth empowerment was only at a medium level. This contrast reveals a critical gap between policy formulation and practical outcomes. The study also identifies a strong positive correlation between higher education policies and youth empowerment, suggesting that policy improvements can significantly influence empowerment outcomes. However, the discussion rightly highlights the “policy versus reality paradox,” where strong institutional frameworks fail to translate into tangible labor market opportunities due to external constraints. The dimension-wise analysis provides valuable insights. For instance, the

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prominence of e-learning reflects adaptive strategies in crisis contexts, while the lack of funding for quality assurance highlights systemic weaknesses. Similarly, the finding that research is often conducted for academic promotion rather than societal impact raises important concerns about the relevance of academic output. The analysis of technical education and governance further reveals structural inefficiencies, particularly in labor market absorption and participatory decision-making.

The recommendations provided are practical and policy-oriented. The emphasis on funding, participatory governance, support for small enterprises, and strengthening research infrastructure aligns well with the study's findings. The suggestion to link education with digital economy opportunities and remote work is particularly relevant in the context of Gaza's restricted physical economy. Additionally, the proposed research agenda opens avenues for future scholarly work, enhancing the study's long-term academic value. In conclusion, this paper makes a significant contribution to the fields of higher education policy and youth empowerment, especially within conflict-affected and resource-constrained settings. Its strength lies in combining empirical analysis with contextual understanding and forward-looking policy insights. However, the study could be further strengthened by incorporating qualitative data (e.g., interviews) to capture deeper lived experiences, and by expanding its scope beyond institutional employees to include students and graduates. Overall, the research is well-structured, methodologically sound, and highly relevant for policymakers, educators, and researchers.