International Journal of Educational Studies
ISSN: 2641-533X
Volume 8, Issue 2, pp. 139-150
2025
DOI: 10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.348
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Palestinian Arab Teachers' Quality of Work Life in a Divided Educational System in Israel

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the quality of work life (QWL) among Palestinian Arab high school teachers in Israel. QWL significantly influences individual well-being, health, social values, effectiveness, productivity, and overall organizational outcomes. A total of 1,245 Palestinian Arab high school teachers participated in a QWL survey. The confirmatory factor analysis identified six key dimensions of QWL: (1) autonomy and positive working relationships; (2) fringe benefits; (3) job security and skills utilization; (4) open communication and resource balance; (5) equitable compensation; and (6) training and professional development. The findings indicate that Palestinian Arab high school teachers experience a moderate level of QWL, with autonomy and positive working relationships being the most highly valued factors, while fringe benefits and fair wages ranked the lowest. Additionally, variations in the perception of specific QWL dimensions were noted based on gender, age, and teaching experience*.

Key words*: Educational segregation, High school, Israel, Palestinian Arab teachers, Quality of work life.*

1. Introduction

The present study aims to systematically examine and assess the quality of work life (QWL) among educators within the Palestinian Arab educational framework in Israel. QWL plays a pivotal role in influencing individual well-being (Holman, 2013) and health (Campos and Rueda, 2017), as well as social well-being and values (Findlay et al., 2013). It also impacts effectiveness, productivity, and organizational outcomes (Campos and Rueda, 2017). As a multifaceted construct (De Bustillo et al., 2011), QWL has attracted significant interest from scholars in the social sciences and policymakers within the labor market. However, most QWL research has predominantly focused on Western industrial organizations (Ilgan et al., 2015; Koonmee et al., 2010). There is a scarcity of studies addressing QWL in the educational sector (Baleghizadeh and Gordani, 2012; Louis, 1998), which have primarily concentrated on aspects such as teachers' employment conditions, salary trends, and working hours while overlooking other essential factors that affect teachers' QWL (Green, 2021). Notably, there is a lack of research on QWL among educators in systems serving minority or indigenous populations.

The highly centralized Israeli educational system exerts control over the Palestinian Arab educational system, which encounters numerous challenges, including insufficient funding, limited resources, low achievement levels, and high student dropout rates (Abu-Saad, 2011; Haddad Haj Yahya et al., 2021a; Zedan, 2016). Recent trends indicate an increase in teacher dropout rates, particularly in post-primary education (CBS press release 088/2022), coupled with a decline in motivation among Palestinian Arab educators (Arar and Masri-Harzallah, 2016). Despite these adversities, teaching is perceived as a prestigious profession within Palestinian Arab society, leading to an oversupply of teachers in the Israeli labor market (Agbaria, 2011).

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DOI: *10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.348*

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Research suggests that many educated Palestinian Arabs pursue careers in teaching due to discrimination in the Israeli labor market, which restricts their employment prospects (Haddad Haj Yahya et al., 2021b; Mi'ari et al., 2011a). Additionally, wage disparities persist between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian Arab minority, with the former receiving higher remuneration (Haddad Haj Yahya et al., 2021b; Mi'ari et al., 2011b).

Therefore, it is imperative to investigate the QWL of Palestinian Arab educators within the Arab educational system in Israel to identify its various components and analyze variations in QWL based on diverse demographic variables.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teachers' Quality of Work Life (QWL)

Quality of Work Life (QWL) is conceptualized as the degree to which employment factors contribute to favorable employee outcomes, particularly regarding their mental and physical well-being (Green, 2021; Walton, 1973). It encompasses the cultivation of positive workplace attitudes, which not only enhance organizational performance but are also recognized in psychological literature as essential conditions for employee retention, fostering a sense of identification (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Louis, 1998), motivation (Baleghizadeh and Gordani, 2012; Esser and Olsen, 2012), job satisfaction (Green, 2006; Holman, 2013), and organizational commitment (Bogler and Nir, 2015; Louis, 1998).

Interest in QWL research emerged in the 1950s (Walton, 1980) based on the premise that improving the quality of an employee's work life is vital for enhancing organizational productivity (Campos and Rueda, 2017). The literature characterizes QWL as a multidimensional construct, attracting considerable attention across various disciplines. Economists often focus on employee compensation (Clark, 2005), sociologists examine job autonomy (Gallie, 2007), psychologists investigate job satisfaction (Holman, 2010), and human resource specialists analyze job roles and evaluations to establish appropriate compensation levels (Milkovich and Newman, 1993). Additionally, they explore factors influencing turnover, the organizational climate, and job satisfaction (Handel, 2005; Wu et al., 2021). Most QWL studies have been conducted within industrial organizations (Ilgan et al., 2015; Ishak et al., 2018) and predominantly in developed nations and Western cultures (Ilgan et al., 2015; Koonmee et al., 2010). Conversely, research focusing on QWL among educators or within the teaching profession remains relatively limited (Baleghizadeh and Gordani, 2012; Barbieri et al., 2019; Liu and Meyer, 2005; Louis, 1998).

Teachers play a crucial role in school operations, and the effectiveness of any educational system is significantly influenced by the quality of its educators and their work (Aboud-Halabi and Mi'ari, 2018; Barber and Morshad, 2007; Manju, 2014). Research consistently demonstrates that teachers contribute more to variations in student achievement than any other school-related factor (Hirsch and Emerick, 2006). Consequently, studies in education have generally aimed to highlight the importance of QWL as a metric for assessing teacher effectiveness in the classroom and as a critical factor influencing their decision to remain in the educational system (Ladd, 2009). Louis (1998) proposed several strategies for enhancing teachers' working conditions to foster more effective schools: implementing career-development programs, involving teachers in developing school curricula and policies, promoting team development, offering incentives for innovation, and providing competitive salaries. The primary outcomes of improving teachers' attitudes and behaviors include enhanced teaching practices, increased student engagement (Louis, 1998; Newmann et al., 1992), and improved student achievements (Ni, 2012). For instance, research conducted in elementary schools indicated that students who perceive their teachers as caring about them and their performance are more likely to exert significant effort (Louis, 1998; Newmann et al., 1992). Bryk and Driscoll (1988) demonstrated that teachers' commitment to their work enhances student engagement (Louis, 1998).

Furthermore, studies have identified teachers' enthusiasm and commitment as significant factors influencing students' learning motivation (Baleghizadeh and Gordani, 2012). Davidson (2007) emphasized that motivation is a critical factor affecting the quality of teaching. Passionate educators who possess both knowledge and skills, along with a strong sense of mission and organizational commitment, are dedicated to facilitating meaningful learning experiences for students, including those who may be challenging or unmotivated (Day, 2012; Day and Leithwood, 2007; Guskey and Passaro, 1994). Similarly, Dworkin (1987) found that students taught by teachers who report low levels of solidarity and satisfaction tend to have lower achievement levels and higher rates of absenteeism. Other studies have shown that teachers' lack of

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commitment to their work negatively impacts student achievement. Exhausted teachers are less supportive of students, exhibit reduced tolerance for classroom failures, and are more likely to experience fatigue and anxiety (Dworkin, 1987; Farber, 1984; Firestone and Pennell, 1993). The significance of teachers' work is underscored by their role in cultivating future leaders, which, in turn, contributes to societal advancement. Consequently, researchers widely acknowledge that teachers are crucial drivers of economic and social growth (Iwu et al., 2018).

However, studies across different cultures indicate that teaching is one of the most stressful professions (Barbieri et al., 2019; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2009; Stoeber and Rennert, 2008), particularly in the 21st Century (Gu and Day, 2007; Kyriacou, 2000; Nash, 2005). Stress occurs when an individual encounters demands that exceed their available resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). It encompasses negative emotions or states of mind resulting from working conditions and the environment, which include various unpleasant and adverse feelings related to work (Kyriacou, 2001). Researchers emphasize the significance of working conditions as environmental factors that contribute to numerous stressors (Zedan, 2016). Consequently, many teachers experience burnout and low job satisfaction, leading some to opt for early retirement (Cano-García et al., 2005; Hakanen et al., 2006). Key stressors include increased workload, problematic student behavior, issues in parent-teacher relationships, conflicts with colleagues, lack of support from school administration, and insufficient autonomy (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2007, 2009). Conversely, support from management, greater autonomy, and positive relationships with administration and parents can enhance teachers' job satisfaction and mitigate the risk of burnout (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2009).

In professional literature, two primary approaches are employed to define and measure employees' QWL: objective and subjective (Brown et al., 2007; De Bustillo et al., 2009; Green, 2021; Holman, 2013). The objective approach refers to external aspects of work quality, including employment contracts that cover salary and financial benefits, job scope (Loughlin and Murray, 2013), job security, working hours, and career-development programs (De Bustillo et al., 2011; Gallie et al., 2012). The subjective approach focuses on internal aspects of work quality, such as autonomy (Esser and Olsen, 2012), work engagement (Gallie, 2013), opportunities to utilize skills, workload, and the social environment, including positive relationships with superiors and friendly colleagues. It also encompasses the physical work environment (Brown et al., 2007; De Bustillo et al., 2009, 2011; Holman, 2013) and factors such as initiative, variety, and interest in work tasks (Gallie et al., 2012). Further studies indicate a strong relationship between external and internal measures of work quality (Gallie et al., 2012).

2.2. Indigenous Palestinian Arab Society in Israel

Following the establishment of the state of Israel, a significant portion of the Indigenous Palestinian Arab population faced displacement, resulting in a minority that lacked effective political and social leadership. The absence of the community's cultural and political elite intensified its vulnerability to Western Jewish cultural and economic influences (Abu-Saad, 2004, 2019; Agbaria, 2018; Kraus and Yonay, 2018). Indigenous Palestinian Arabs represent approximately 20% of Israel's population (Central Bureau of Statistics CBS, 2023) and experience considerable residential segregation from Israeli Jews, alongside systemic discrimination (Abu-Saad, 2004, 2023; Tanous et al., 2023). This situation has resulted in significant disparities between the Palestinian Indigenous Arab minority and the Jewish majority in Israel across nearly all aspects of life, including economic development, education, infrastructure, housing, health and human services, social services, and political capital (Agbaria, 2018; Abu-Saad, 2019; Kraus and Yonay, 2018; Tanous et al., 2023). More than 45% of Indigenous Palestinian Arab families and over 57% of their children live in poverty, in stark contrast to 13% and 21%, respectively, among the Jewish population (Hadad Yahya-Haj et al., 2021).

2.3. The Indigenous Palestinian Arab Educational System in Israel

Israel's public education system is characterized by a bifurcation into two primary categories: a Jewish system encompassing both secular and religious schools and an Arab system. This division is evident even in municipalities with mixed Jewish and Arab populations, such as Haifa, Acre, Lod, Ramle, and Jaffa. The two systems exhibit substantial differences in the language of instruction, curriculum—particularly in the humanities and social sciences—and budget allocations (Agbaria, 2018; Abu-Saad, 2023, 2019; Al-Haj, 1995; Kraus and Yonay, 2018; Mar'i, 1978; Swirski, 1999). While the existence of these distinct systems may imply

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educational pluralism, a more nuanced analysis indicates that they reinforce physical, ideological, and socioeconomic barriers between the Jewish majority and the Indigenous Palestinian Arab minority (Abu-Saad, 2023, 2019; Al-Haj, 1995; Kraus and Yonay, 2018; Mar'i, 1978; Swirski, 1999).

Jewish, Hebrew-language schools predominantly serve Jewish students, providing them with cultural capital and advanced knowledge that enhance their socioeconomic prospects. Conversely, schools for Palestinian Arab minority students are positioned at the lowest tier of the educational hierarchy, offering limited opportunities that hinder their development and perpetuate socioeconomic inequality within Israeli society (Abu-Saad, 2019, 2023; Agbaria, 2018; Nasser-Abu Alhija and Israelashvili, 2021).

At the elementary level, teacher training occurs in colleges and programs that, unlike other higher education pathways, continue to segregate Palestinian Arab and Jewish citizens. In contrast, high school teacher training is conducted in Israeli Jewish universities, as there are no Palestinian universities in Israel. Students complete a subject-specific bachelor's degree and a teacher certification program (Abu-Saad, 2018). Teacher training across all levels in Israel emphasizes technical and subject-matter expertise in isolation from cultural and social contexts, neglecting the development of critical thinking, creativity, initiative, and social and civic engagement (Abu-Saad, 2018, 2019; Agbaria, 2018; Peled-Elhanan, 2012).

Educators are instilled with a sense of 'professionalism' that compels them to operate in an apolitical and non-social manner. This approach aims to produce educators who can impart a detached body of knowledge to their students while lacking a sense of connectedness, social values, or responsibility for their community's development (Abu-Saad, 2018, 2019; Agbaria, 2013, 2018).

The behavior of Indigenous Palestinian Arab teachers in Israel is shaped by enduring Western legacies introduced during the British colonial period, which have established a Western, individualistic framework within the education system (Abu-Saad, 2019). The Palestinian Arab educational system remains subject to political criteria and has never been granted autonomous control (Abu-Saad, 2006, 2018, 2023; Al-Haj, 1995; Mar'i, 1978; Swirski, 1999). It has not been permitted to set its own goals, objectives, or curricula, nor has it been given the authority to make decisions (Abu-Saad, 2006, 2019, 2023; Agbaria, 2018).

Since the establishment of the state, the Palestinian Arab educational system has faced neglect, harsh conditions, and discrimination in resource allocation, including physical infrastructure and classroom availability (Haddad Haj Yahya et al., 2021a), as well as teaching and enrichment hours (Abu-Saad, 2011; Agbaria et al., 2015). Additionally, security services interfere with the appointment of Palestinian Arab teachers and principals by disqualifying qualified educators involved in political activities that contradict government policy (Abu-Saad, 2006, 2011). Consequently, many Palestinian Arab academics resort to teaching as a fallback option due to limitations imposed by the Israeli labor market (Agbaria, 2011), resulting in a significant surplus of Palestinian Arab teachers in this market (Wininger, 2020), contrary to global trends in recent years (Agbaria, 2011).

Furthermore, only 63% of Palestinian Arab teachers who participated in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) in 2013 and 2018 agreed with the statement: "If I could decide again, I would still choose to work as a teacher." Notably, 21% of Palestinian Arab teachers in Israel expressed regret over their decision to enter the profession. They report lower satisfaction and enjoyment in their work compared to their Jewish counterparts, despite the teaching profession being more highly regarded in Palestinian Arab society than in Jewish society and OECD countries (Knesset, 2019). Studies indicate a decline in motivation among Palestinian Arab teachers (Arar and Masri-Harzallah, 2016), reflected in complaints, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and organizational misbehavior, which have profound implications for the educational system's functioning (Agbaria, 2013; Arar and Abu Asbah, 2013).

Thus, the Palestinian Arab educational system in Israel confronts numerous challenges and barriers that restrict educational practices and adversely affect educational outcomes and mobility.

The primary objectives of this study are to:

- Assess the quality of work life (QWL) experienced by high school teachers within the Palestinian Arab educational system in Israel.
- Investigate variations in teachers' QWL based on gender, age, and years of teaching experience.

3. Methodology

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3.1. Participants and Procedure

A multistage sampling method was employed to select the study sample. Initially, two out of five educational districts in Israel were chosen, ensuring a broad representation of the diverse Palestinian Arab population in the country (Ministry of Education, 2020). Subsequently, schools within each district were selected based on student body size, including only those with more than 200 students. The third stage involved considering the number of high schools of appropriate size in the locality: if there were up to two schools, both were included; if there were more than two, the smallest and largest schools were selected. Ultimately, the sample comprised 1,245 Palestinian Arab high school teachers from 60 schools across the two districts in Israel: the northern district, which included 998 teachers from 50 schools, and the southern district, which included 247 teachers from 10 schools. The study was conducted during the 2019–2020 academic year.

3.2. Instrument

The survey consisted of two distinct parts. In the first section, participants provided demographic details, such as gender, age, education level, and religious beliefs. The second section featured a rating scale assessing teachers' perceptions of Quality of Work Life (QWL), comprising 50 items developed by Swamy et al. (2015). This scale evaluated nine dimensions of QWL: work environment, organizational climate and culture, relationships and collaboration, training and development, remuneration and compensation, facilities, job security and satisfaction, autonomy in the workplace, and resource adequacy. The questionnaire demonstrated a high overall reliability level of 0.88.

3.3. Statistical Analysis

The data analysis was carried out in multiple stages utilizing SPSS and AMOS software. Descriptive statistics were computed, including distributions, averages, and standard deviations (SD). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) employing the Varimax Rotation method and eigenvalues greater than 1, along with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), was executed to identify dimensions and establish a valid and reliable measurement model of Quality of Work Life (QWL) pertinent to the study population. Two indices were utilized to evaluate the model fit: the comparative fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The CFI (Bentler, 1990) assesses model fit by comparing it to a null model that posits no relationships among the observed variables. CFI values range from 0 (indicating no fit) to 1 (indicating perfect fit), with values of 0.9 and above deemed adequate (Bentler, 1990; Hinkin, 1998). The RMSEA (Browne and Cudeck, 1993) quantifies the extent of error in the model and reflects the proportion of unexplained variance, with a RMSEA of 0.08 or less considered satisfactory (Browne and Cudeck, 1993; Shaul and Yair, 2013). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed, and measurement invariance was assessed to address variations in perceptions of the variables' dimensions or values in the study based on differing demographic characteristics.

4. Results

Among the 1,245 participating teachers, 759 were female, and 476 were male, with approximately 84% being married. The age distribution revealed that 19% of the teachers were aged 20–29, 37% were 30–39, 26% were 40–49, and the remaining teachers were 50 years or older. Regarding educational qualifications, most teachers were university graduates: 507 held a Master's degree, 445 had a Bachelor's degree, 117 possessed a Bachelor of Education degree, and 30 earned a Ph.D. Approximately 83% of the teachers were employed full-time, while the rest worked part-time. Regarding seniority, 54% of the teachers had between 5 and 20 years of experience, with 333 teachers having 5 to 10 years and 341 having 11 to 20 years of seniority. Additionally, 261 teachers had less than 5 years of experience, and the remaining had over 20 years of experience.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) identified nine factors that accounted for approximately 54.7% of the total variance. The overall reliability of the model, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha (α), was 0.94. The first dimension, comprising 16 items, explained about 29.34% of the variance (α = 0.92); the second dimension (6 items) accounted for 6.9% of the variance (α = 0.85); the third dimension (7 items) explained approximately 3.57% of the variance (α = 0.81); the fourth dimension (4 items) explained about 3.46% of the variance (α = 0.84); the fifth dimension (5 items) accounted for 2.6% of the variance (α = 0.74); the sixth dimension (3 items) explained 2.36% of the variance (α = 0.55); the seventh dimension (4 items) accounted for 2.3% of the

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variance (α = 0.50); the eighth dimension (2 items) explained 2.11% of the variance (α = 0.75); and the ninth dimension (3 items) explained 2.05% of the variance (α = 0.52). Notably, the reliability scores for the sixth, seventh, and ninth dimensions fell below 0.60, indicating insufficient internal consistency according to social science standards. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) index, which assesses the adequacy of the sample size for factor analysis, was 0.957, indicating excellent suitability. Additionally, Bartlett's test, which evaluates the statistical significance of the correlations between variables, yielded a significant result (χ^2 = 26,014.63; p < 0.001), confirming the data's suitability for factor analysis.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and subsequent adjustments—such as removing indicators with loadings lower than 0.6 to enhance the strength of relationships with the factors—resulted in a final optimal model with the following fit indices: CFI = 0.91, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.05, and root mean square residual (RMR) = 0.05. This model comprised six factors with a total of 34 items: autonomy and good working relations (X = 2.9, SD = 0.51; 14 items); fringe benefits (X = 2.41, SD = 0.59; 6 items); job security and skills utilization (X = 2.77, SD = 0.54; 5 items); open communication and balance of resources (X = 2.7, SD = 0.61; 4 items); fair wage (X = 2.46, SD = 0.64; 3 items); and training and skills development (X = 2.76, SD = 0.65; 2 items).

The Quality of Work Life (QWL) dimension perceived as highest among Palestinian Arab high school teachers was autonomy and good working relations, with a mean score of X = 2.9 and SD = 0.51. Conversely, the dimension perceived as lowest was fringe benefits, with a mean score of X = 2.41 and SD = 0.59. Overall, the general perceived QWL among high school teachers was moderate, with a mean score of X = 2.67 and SD = 0.46.

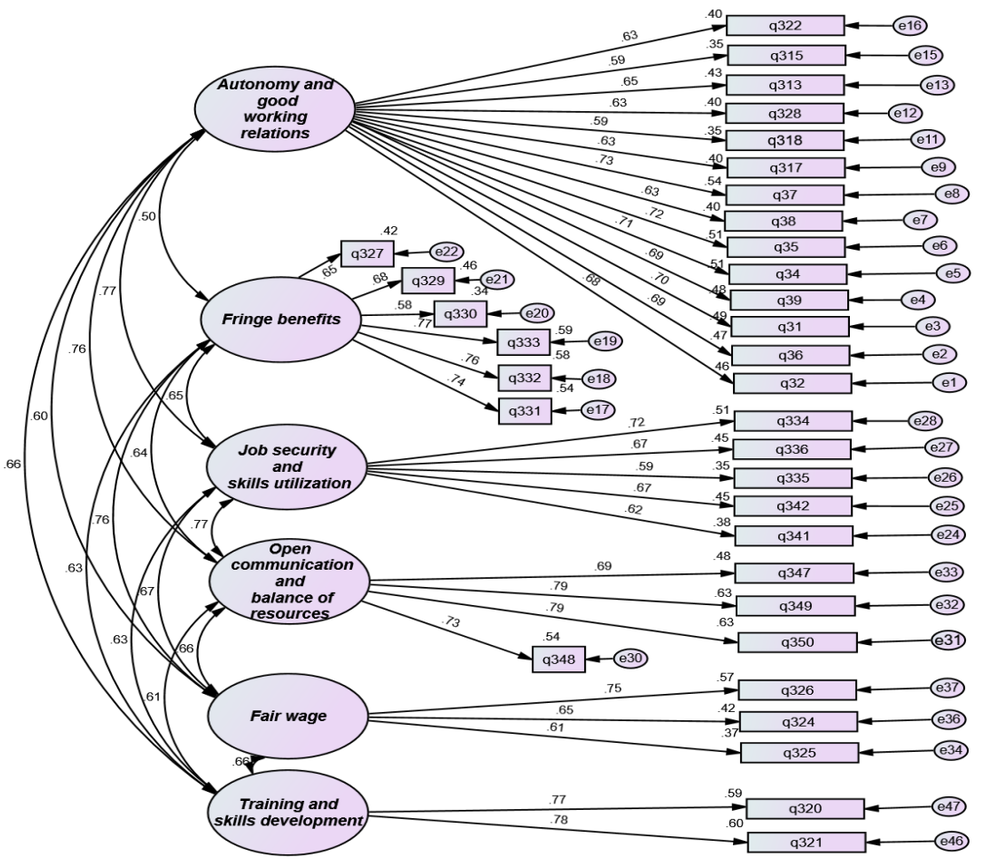


Figure 1. Quality of work life model as determined by confirmatory factor analysis.

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Female teachers perceived the fringe benefits dimension as 0.081 points higher than their male counterparts. Additionally, younger teachers in the 20–29 age group (X = 2.54) viewed fringe benefits more positively than older teachers in the 40–49 age group (X = 2.35; p = 0.003) and those over 50 years of age (X = 2.32; p = 0.001). Teachers with over 20 years of seniority regarded autonomy and good working relations as more important (X = 2.98; p = 0.027) compared to those with 6–10 years of seniority (X = 2.85). Furthermore, younger teachers with up to 5 years of experience (X = 2.56) rated fringe benefits higher than veteran teachers with 11–20 years of experience (X = 2.36) and those with over 20 years of seniority (X = 2.3; p = 0.000). A notable difference also emerged in the perception of job security and skills utilization between teachers with 6–10 years of experience (X = 2.7) and those with over 20 years of experience (X = 2.83; p = 0.039).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of this study present a comprehensive and reliable model for assessing the Quality of Work Life (QWL) among high school teachers within the Palestinian Arab educational system in Israel. This model identifies six key dimensions: (1) autonomy and positive working relationships, (2) fringe benefits, (3) job security and skills utilization, (4) open communication and resource balance, (5) fair wages, and (6) training and skills development. Teachers prioritized autonomy and positive working relationships as the most critical dimension, while fringe benefits were rated the least significant. Overall, the results indicate a moderate perception of QWL among Palestinian Arab high school teachers, which is consistent with the research conducted by Ilgan et al. (2014) and Baleghizadeh and Gordani (2012), yet contrasts with findings from the USA (Mertler, 2016) and the UK (Edwards et al., 2009), where secondary school teachers reported dissatisfaction with their working conditions and levels of control, often citing work-related stress.

The high levels of perceived autonomy and positive working relationships reported by teachers align with numerous studies in the field (Baroudi et al., 2020; Cetinkanat and Kosterelioglu, 2016; Ilgan et al., 2014). This outcome supports Firestone and Pennell's assertion (1993) that teachers generally enjoy significant autonomy in selecting teaching methods and managing classrooms within a broad framework defined by the goals and expectations of management, colleagues, the public, and students. Furthermore, autonomy is frequently linked to collaboration, as both aspects relate to teachers' influence in decision-making. A lack of collaboration or participation in decision-making may make teachers feel disconnected from management and colleague expectations, potentially undermining their effectiveness or conflicting with the school's objectives if their views on effective teaching diverge (Johnson, 1990; Lortie, 1975). Research by Ellis and Bernhardt (1992) indicates that, on average, teachers possess more autonomy than individuals in most other professions with similar educational backgrounds. Conversely, Ballet et al. (2006) highlighted a global trend of diminishing teacher autonomy (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2009).

Participant teachers expressed high satisfaction with their working relationships, which were closely linked to the specific nature of their roles and the general characteristics of the teaching profession. Teaching inherently involves social interactions, encompassing relationships between teachers and students, parents, administrators, and colleagues. Research indicates that relationships with administrators and peers significantly influence the effectiveness of teachers' interactions with students (Johnson et al., 2012). Therefore, fostering positive working relationships within schools is essential for teachers, administrators, and students, as a supportive work environment enhances student achievement (Johnson et al., 2012; Ladd, 2009). Additionally, a supportive network among teachers provides valuable learning opportunities, particularly for novice teachers and their more experienced colleagues (Johnson, 1990; Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989). This finding reflects the collectivist social nature of Palestinian Arab society, which shapes workplace relationships. In collectivist cultures, teamwork is highly emphasized (Mancheno-Smoak et al., 2009), including cooperation (Sabri, 2012) and maintaining positive relationships with management and colleagues. Harmony and conflict avoidance are greatly valued (Chiu and Kosinski, 1999), with individuals often demonstrating greater loyalty to people within an organization than to the tasks themselves (Sabri, 2004). This collectivist orientation is also evident in the hierarchical structure of schools, where the principal is at the top, followed by the vice-principal, counselors, coordinators, and teachers. The operational model of schools heavily relies on teamwork, with cooperation and coordination among all members essential for achieving the goals set by the Ministry of Education. This structure fosters the development of positive working relationships, which is crucial for the effective functioning of educational institutions.

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Approximately 77% of the teachers in the sample reported a strong sense of belonging to the educational system, and around 84% expressed pride in their work at the school. These findings may stem from several factors. The limited opportunities and instances of discrimination faced by Palestinian Arabs in the Israeli labor market could heighten their commitment to their current roles. Furthermore, the teaching profession is highly esteemed in Palestinian Arab society, largely due to cultural and religious influences, particularly from Islam, which underscores the significance of education and the educator's role.

The dimensions of perceived QWL that received the lowest rankings were fringe benefits and fair wages. These findings are consistent with most studies in the field and across regions (Baroudi et al., 2020; Cetinkanat and Kosterelioglu, 2016; Erdem, 2014; Geiger and Pivovarova, 2018; Ilgan et al., 2014), where teachers generally express dissatisfaction with their salaries (Baroudi et al., 2020; Geiger and Pivovarova, 2018; Ilgan et al., 2014), despite acknowledging that teaching is a highly altruistic profession vital for societal advancement (Leithwood and McAdie, 2007). The low ranking given by participant teachers to the perception of fair wages and fringe benefits can be attributed, first, to comparisons with other occupations. Teachers often evaluate their salaries and benefits against those in other professions, including traditional fields such as medicine, law, engineering, and newer high-tech sectors. These comparisons reveal a significant wage gap, with high-tech and other prestigious fields offering salaries that far exceed the average in the economy. This disparity contributes to teachers' dissatisfaction with their compensation. The second explanation arises from limited alternatives.

Contrary to the standard labor market argument that employees remain in their current roles as long as those roles provide better rewards compared to alternatives (Geiger and Pivovarova, 2018; Guarino et al., 2006), many Palestinian Arab teachers persist in the teaching profession despite dissatisfaction due to a lack of viable alternatives. This situation is primarily due to inequality in the Israeli labor market, where a notable disparity in employment opportunities and wage levels exists between Jews and Palestinian Arabs (Haddad Haj Yahya et al., 2021b; Mi'ari et al., 2011a). Many high-paying job opportunities, particularly in security organizations and private Jewish-owned enterprises, are inaccessible to Palestinian Arabs, either overtly or covertly, alongside a limited opportunity structure where fewer job openings align with the skills of educated individuals in Palestinian Arab localities within Israel (Haddad Haj Yahya et al., 2021b; Lewin-Epstein et al., 1994). Most Palestinian Arabs reside in less developed areas in northern and southern Israel, where infrastructure and industrial development are lacking. Consequently, the Ministry of Education emerges as a major and stable employer for educated Palestinian Arabs in these regions, often due to the scarcity of other employment options. This context elucidates why, despite perceived inadequacies in salary and benefits, many Palestinian Arab teachers continue in their roles, finding the stability the Ministry of Education offers preferable to the limited opportunities available elsewhere.

The participant teachers' reports indicated an average perception level for job security and skills utilization but a notably above-average level, specifically regarding their feelings about job security. Research suggests that teaching is generally regarded as a secure profession (Arar et al., 2013; Baroudi et al., 2020), particularly in Israel, where teaching traditionally provides substantial job security within the economy. The legal framework ensures that teachers with a teaching certificate who work in schools are granted tenure after three years. Once tenure is granted, it remains effective until retirement or voluntary departure from the system. Dismissal of a teacher is rare, typically occurring only in cases of immoral or criminal behavior (Rosenblatt and Ruvio, 2000; Taub, 1993). Despite this framework and the fact that most teachers in the study had over five years of experience and were therefore tenured, their ranking of perceived job security was not exceptionally high. This discrepancy may be attributed to various factors, including concerns about potential job stability or dissatisfaction with aspects of their employment beyond formal security.

The ongoing Jewish–Arab conflict in Israel likely exacerbates economic insecurity among Palestinian Arabs in the country. As a minority group, Palestinian Arabs often endure greater hardships during times of crisis, whether economic or security-related. This frequent exposure to instability and economic downturns renders the Palestinian Arab community more vulnerable to adverse impacts compared to other groups. This perpetual uncertainty can significantly contribute to a heightened sense of economic insecurity among Palestinian Arabs in Israel. Teachers reported a slightly above-average perception of skills utilization. This positive perception may have been influenced by the high educational qualifications of the sample: 41% held a master's degree, 3% had a doctoral degree, and the remainder possessed Bachelor's degrees. However, as previously discussed, Palestinian Arab educators, including teachers, administrators, and education experts,

Academia Publishing Group

International Journal of Educational Studies
Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 139-150
2025
DOI: *10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.348*

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have minimal influence over the content, teaching methods, or educational policies. This lack of involvement in decision-making processes can lead to frustration and dissatisfaction among highly educated teachers, who may feel that their skills and expertise are underutilized in shaping the educational framework and advancing their community. Similarly, the teachers reported a moderate perception of open communication and resource balance. This can be attributed to the patriarchal nature of Palestinian Arab society, which often places authority figures, such as managers, at the top of a hierarchical structure. This centralized organizational structure can impede the free and adequate flow of knowledge and information within schools, affecting communication and resource distribution.

Furthermore, teachers reported a moderate perception level of resource balance. This can be attributed to the limited resources allocated by the government to Palestinian Arab education compared to Jewish education. The severe underfunding of the Palestinian Arab sector's education budgets is particularly evident at higher education levels. Palestinian Arab high schools often fall into the weaker and medium-low maintenance quintiles. In contrast, the Ministry of Education's policies and budget distribution primarily benefit schools in higher maintenance quintiles, typically excluding Palestinian Arab schools (Abu-Saad, 3023; Haddad Haj Yahya et al., 2021a). Additionally, the financial difficulties faced by local Palestinian Arab authorities due to chronic budget shortages since the establishment of the state exacerbate this resource deprivation.

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DOI: *10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.348*

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