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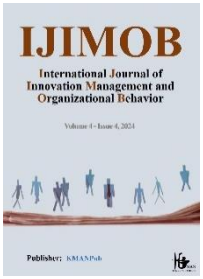

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Predicting the Gap Between Intended and Implemented Curriculum Based on Teachers' Quality of Work Life

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A B S T R A C T

Objective: The aim of this study is to predict the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum based on the components of the quality of work life of mathematics teachers in the education districts of Tabriz city.

Methodology: The research is applied in nature and employs a correlational survey method. The statistical population includes 290 middle school mathematics teachers from the five educational districts of Tabriz city in the 2020-2021 academic year. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan table, 166 individuals were selected as the sample using stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the Quality of Work Life Questionnaire by Ilgan et al. (2014) and a researcher-made questionnaire on the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum. The face and content validity of the tools were confirmed by experts. Reliability was obtained using Cronbach's alpha, with 0.89 for the Quality of Work Life Questionnaire and 0.92 for the curriculum gap questionnaire.

Findings: The results of regression analysis indicated that the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum in mathematics can be predicted based on the quality of work life components (healthy work environment, organizational support and development, fair pay, and job opportunities) of teachers at a significance level of less than 0.05. The component of relationships with colleagues was not significantly predictable.

Conclusion: The findings contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the critical role of QWL in curriculum implementation. They suggest that enhancing QWL through job opportunities, fair pay, colleague relationships, and organizational support can effectively reduce the curriculum gap. This supports the view that holistic approaches to improving teachers' work environments are necessary for educational success.

Keywords: *Mathematics teachers, curriculum gap, quality of work life.*

1 Introduction

One of the essential tools for the survival of any organization and achieving its goals is human resources. Human resources are considered the most critical asset and the primary source of competitive advantage for any organization (Seifi et al., 2024; Shariati et al., 2024). The necessity of a strategic approach to human resources is undeniable, and environmental changes further emphasize its importance (Tavbulatova et al., 2022). Excellent organizations execute their mission and vision by developing organizational strategies focused on stakeholder interests. These organizations pay attention to their employees, communicate with them, and encourage and reward them in a way that motivates and commits them to utilize their skills and knowledge for organizational benefits (Touriano et al., 2023; Vishlaghi et al., 2021). In these organizations' strategies, long-term goals and plans are defined, aiming to acquire and utilize the necessary resources to maintain their competitive edge in the market (Zhang, 2023).

Among organizational strategies, human resource strategies are of significant importance. The importance of human resource management (HRM) strategies lies in their ability to improve the organization's competitive position and enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. Organizations can cultivate and develop specific characteristics and behaviors in their employees through effective HRM strategies, which are essential for the organization's success (Jackson, 2014). In other words, HRM strategies facilitate human resource development to meet the overall organizational strategy requirements, making the organization's goals and missions attainable (Touriano et al., 2023; Vishlaghi et al., 2021). One program significantly impacting the organization's strategic HR goals is employee productivity.

Although HRM cannot directly influence how other resources are utilized in the organization, considering the human factor's presence and involvement in all organizational aspects, HRM can play a crucial role in the organization's survival and efficiency by designing programs and systems for the proper utilization of human resources (Ahammad et al., 2020). To employ and retain diverse, competent, and qualified personnel through strategies and policies, human resource managers, especially given resource limitations, must pay particular attention to the processes of selection, recruitment, training, and development of competent human resources because competent and efficient employees are considered the primary asset of any organization. The operational task of HR managers is to identify and subsequently create conditions that allow these employees' potential talents to flourish and strengthen their loyalty to the organization based on their individual differences (Hutahayan, 2020; Iqbal, 2019).

Productivity is the effective and optimal use of various resources and inputs such as labor, capital, materials, energy, and information. In other words, productivity is the optimal use of input factors to achieve higher outputs (Salamat et al., 2019). The importance of productivity is so significant that in many countries, productivity and the correct and optimal use of all production factors, including goods and services, have become a national priority. Efforts have been made to institutionalize the idea that the survival of any society without attention to productivity is challenging and sometimes impossible (Aghel Azad et al., 2023). While planning to improve productivity at various organizational, regional, national, and even personal levels is essential, improving productivity in today's highly competitive world is one of the most critical goals and strategies for any organization's success. Productivity improvement has been a subject of discussion since the dawn of humanity and in all economic and political systems (Casu et al., 2021). Belief in productivity improvement means having a strong conviction in human progress. The International Labour Organization defines productivity as "the ratio of output to one of the factors of production (land, capital, labor, and management)." Any method to improve organizational productivity must address employee-related issues, as humans are the ones performing the work. Much of the work related to employees, HRM, and productivity focuses on how to motivate employees to increase productivity (Davoudi et al., 2018; Emami et al., 2024).

Multiple factors influence productivity, which Sumanth categorizes into four groups: technology-based, material-based, personnel-based, and task-based. Correspondingly, productivity enhancement techniques can be classified into three groups: hardware factors, software factors, and humanware factors. Among these three factors, the human factor and labor force are the most critical and influential factors in production and productivity. Humanware refers to the ability and motivation to perform work and all factors related to these two elements, such as training, interest, morale, insight, and people's attitude towards their work. It encompasses topics related to human abilities and behaviors, such as skills, interest, and job satisfaction. Humanware-

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related factors can be equated to empowerment, meaning utilizing knowledge and increasing employee motivation by management, ultimately allowing the organization to achieve its goals (Gholizadeh et al., 2022; Golabchi et al., 2024; Kashtidar et al., 2024).

The necessity and importance of productivity are also understood in governmental organizations, where achieving and enhancing productivity levels is considered a priority by policymakers. This is evidenced by the enactment of laws, directives, and guidelines related to productivity. However, it must be noted that merely issuing directives and guidelines does not lead to productivity improvement. In governmental organizations and other institutions, the primary element for creating productivity is human resources. The significance and superiority of the human factor compared to directives and guidelines lie in the fact that these directives and guidelines must be implemented and executed by humans. Therefore, humans are the cornerstone of productivity, and the most attention and planning in the productivity domain must be directed towards the human factor. In the Islamic system, productivity is also noteworthy. The main organization responsible for this crucial indicator (i.e., justice) in the country is the judiciary. Judges handle complaints and resolve people's legal issues. Given the high value of the judicial position in Islamic jurisprudence, specific and challenging characteristics are prescribed for judges. Productivity in the judiciary is essential, with the number of cases and their qualitative and quantitative handling being noteworthy aspects of productivity. Thus, the main objective of this study is to evaluate the judicial human resources productivity model using structural equations based on the stated points.

2 Methods and Materials

2.1 Study Design and Participants

The research is quantitative in nature, descriptive-correlational in method, and applied in terms of its objective. The statistical population includes all ninth-grade middle school mathematics teachers in the five educational districts of Tabriz city, totaling 290 individuals in the 2020-2021 academic year. Using the Krejcie and Morgan table, a stratified random sample of 166 individuals (83 women and 83 men) was selected. Two questionnaires were used for data collection in this study.

2.2 Data Collection

The Quality of Work Life Questionnaire by Ilgan et al. (2014) with 24 items: This questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often) scored from 1 to 5. Its dimensions include job opportunities, fair pay, healthy work environment, colleague relationships, and organizational support and professional development. This questionnaire was localized, reviewed, and used after confirmatory factor analysis. Manju (2014) used this questionnaire in a study titled "Quality of Work Life Perceived by School Teachers" and reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92. Ilgan et al. (2014) also used this questionnaire and estimated the Cronbach's alpha for its dimensions (Jaruphan, 2021; Javadi et al., 2019).

A researcher-made questionnaire on the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum: This questionnaire uses a 6-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree) scored from 1 to 6. Its dimensions include goals, content, learning activities, student grouping, educational space, teaching time, teaching and learning methods, evaluation, and educational materials. The research instrument was developed based on a systematic review (content analysis) of documented sources in the literature and previous research. Initially, a questionnaire with 37 questions in 9 dimensions and a 6-point Likert scale was prepared for the gap between the intended and implemented mathematics curriculum. Seven education experts and professors were asked to provide feedback on the questionnaire's writing, question alignment with research objectives, difficulty level (understanding phrases and words), appropriateness (suitability and relevance of phrases with questionnaire dimensions), and ambiguity (potential misunderstandings or insufficient clarity of meanings). Based on their feedback, the questionnaire's face and content validity were confirmed. To calculate the reliability of the research instrument, 30 questionnaires were distributed and collected from ninth-grade mathematics teachers who were not included in the main study. Using Cronbach's alpha, the overall reliability for the gap between the intended and implemented mathematics curriculum questionnaire was found to be 0.92.

2.3 Data Analysis

After final data collection, the primary research question was tested using multiple regression analysis, and data were analyzed using SPSS software.

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3 Findings and Results

The study sample comprised 183 participants, equally divided between men (50%) and women (50%). The educational qualifications were diverse, with 9 participants holding doctoral degrees (5%), 88 with master's degrees (48%), and 85 with bachelor's degrees (47%). Age distribution was as follows: 27 participants were over 50 years old (15%), 76 were between 40-50 years old (42%), 59 were between 30-40 years old (32%), and 20 were under 30 years old (11%).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Curriculum Gap	3.50	0.70
Quality of Work Life	3.85	0.65
Job Opportunities	3.70	0.75
Fair Pay	3.55	0.60
Healthy Work Environment	3.45	0.80
Colleague Relationships	3.90	0.55
Organizational Support and Development	3.75	0.70

Descriptive statistics in Table 1 indicate the mean and standard deviation for each variable. The mean for the Curriculum Gap is 3.50 (SD = 0.70), while the mean for Quality of Work Life is 3.85 (SD = 0.65). Job Opportunities have a mean of 3.70 (SD = 0.75), Fair Pay has a mean of 3.55 (SD = 0.60), Healthy Work Environment has a mean of 3.45 (SD = 0.80), Colleague Relationships have a mean of 3.90 (SD = 0.55), and Organizational Support and Development has a mean of 3.75 (SD = 0.70).

The second criterion is examining the composite reliability of each construct. Composite reliability, also known as combined reliability, is considered a more modern measure of reliability compared to Cronbach's alpha. This reliability is obtained through the Dillon-Goldstein coefficient, and values greater than 0.70 are acceptable. The third criterion is the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (convergent validity). The AVE criterion indicates the average variance shared between each construct and its indicators. In essence, this criterion shows the correlation of a construct with its indicators, where higher correlations indicate better model fit. Values greater than 0.70 indicate suitable construct validity.

Table 2 presents the CR and AVE criteria for the study's constructs.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix

Variable	r	p
Quality of Work Life	-0.50	0.001
Job Opportunities	-0.48	0.002
Fair Pay	-0.45	0.003
Healthy Work Environment	-0.10	0.300
Colleague Relationships	-0.35	0.020
Organizational Support and Development	-0.40	0.010

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients and p-values between the dependent variable (Curriculum Gap) and each independent variable. Quality of Work Life has a significant negative correlation with Curriculum Gap (r = -0.50, p = 0.001). Job Opportunities (r = -0.48, p = 0.002), Fair Pay (r = -0.45, p = 0.003), Colleague Relationships (r = -0.35, p = 0.020), and Organizational Support and Development (r = -0.40, p = 0.010) also have significant negative correlations. However, Healthy Work Environment shows an insignificant correlation (r = -0.10, p = 0.300).

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Table 3

Summary of Regression Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p
Regression	45.00	5	9.00	0.70	0.49	0.45	11.25	0.001
Residual	46.50	160	0.29					
Total	91.50	165						

The summary of regression results in Table 3 indicates a significant model predicting the Curriculum Gap from the independent variables, $F(5, 160) = 11.25$, $p < 0.001$. The model accounts for approximately 49% of the variance in the Curriculum Gap ($R^2 = 0.49$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.45$).

Table 4

Multivariate Regression Results

Predictor Variable	B	Standard Error (SE)	β	t	p
Constant	5.00	0.40		12.50	0.001
Quality of Work Life	-0.25	0.07	-0.30	-3.57	0.001
Job Opportunities	-0.20	0.06	-0.28	-3.33	0.001
Fair Pay	-0.18	0.07	-0.23	-2.57	0.011
Healthy Work Environment	-0.05	0.06	-0.07	-0.83	0.410
Colleague Relationships	-0.15	0.06	-0.20	-2.50	0.014
Organizational Support and Development	-0.22	0.07	-0.27	-3.14	0.002

The multivariate regression results in Table 4 indicate that Quality of Work Life ($B = -0.25$, $SE = 0.07$, $\beta = -0.30$, $t = -3.57$, $p = 0.001$), Job Opportunities ($B = -0.20$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = -0.28$, $t = -3.33$, $p = 0.001$), Fair Pay ($B = -0.18$, $SE = 0.07$, $\beta = -0.23$, $t = -2.57$, $p = 0.011$), Colleague Relationships ($B = -0.15$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = -0.20$, $t = -2.50$, $p = 0.014$), and Organizational Support and Development ($B = -0.22$, $SE = 0.07$, $\beta = -0.27$, $t = -3.14$, $p = 0.002$) are significant predictors of the Curriculum Gap. However, Healthy Work Environment ($B = -0.05$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = -0.07$, $t = -0.83$, $p = 0.410$) is not a significant predictor.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to predict the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum based on various components of teachers' quality of work life (QWL) in the educational districts of Tabriz. The results indicated significant correlations between the curriculum gap and several QWL components, including job opportunities, fair pay, colleague relationships, and organizational support and development, while the healthy work environment did not show a significant impact.

The findings revealed a negative correlation between the curriculum gap and quality of work life ($r = -0.50$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting that higher QWL is associated with a smaller gap between the intended and implemented curriculum. This is consistent with previous studies that highlight the critical role of QWL in educational settings (Rasouli et al., 2022). For instance, Sajudi et al. (2022) found that better QWL contributes to improved job performance and satisfaction, which can translate into more effective curriculum implementation.

Specifically, job opportunities ($r = -0.48$, $p = 0.002$) were significantly related to the curriculum gap, indicating that teachers who perceive more opportunities in their work environment are better able to implement the intended curriculum. This aligns with prior studies (Faghfouriazar, 2023; Kourayem & Mahmoodi Nia 2021) that emphasized that professional growth opportunities enhance teachers' engagement and commitment to their educational roles.

Fair pay ($r = -0.45$, $p = 0.003$) was also a significant predictor, underscoring the importance of adequate compensation in motivating teachers to adhere to the curriculum. This finding echoes the prior works (Farhangi et al., 2017) who reported that fair remuneration is crucial for teacher motivation and performance. Moreover, organizational support and development ($r = -0.40$, $p = 0.010$) emerged as a significant factor, reinforcing the idea that supportive organizational structures are essential for curriculum fidelity (Farhangi et al., 2017).

Interestingly, the healthy work environment ($r = -0.10$, $p = 0.300$) did not significantly predict the curriculum gap, suggesting that other aspects of QWL might be more critical

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in this context. This finding contrasts with some literature (Farhangi et al., 2017; Perangin-Angin et al., 2020; Sojoodi et al., 2023) that identified a healthy work environment as a vital component of overall work satisfaction. The discrepancy could be due to the specific cultural or organizational context of the current study, highlighting the need for context-specific interventions.

Overall, the regression analysis confirmed that QWL components significantly predict the curriculum gap ($F(5, 160) = 11.25$, $p < 0.001$), with an R^2 of 0.49. This indicates that nearly half of the variance in the curriculum gap can be explained by QWL factors. The significant predictors included quality of work life ($B = -0.25$, $p = 0.001$), job opportunities ($B = -0.20$, $p = 0.001$), fair pay ($B = -0.18$, $p = 0.011$), colleague relationships ($B = -0.15$, $p = 0.014$), and organizational support and development ($B = -0.22$, $p = 0.002$). These results are consistent with prior works (Farhangi et al., 2017; Perangin-Angin et al., 2020) that highlighted that QWL is multidimensional and significantly influences job performance and satisfaction.

The findings contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the critical role of QWL in curriculum implementation. They suggest that enhancing QWL through job opportunities, fair pay, colleague relationships, and organizational support can effectively reduce the curriculum gap. This supports the view that holistic approaches to improving teachers' work environments are necessary for educational success.

Despite its significant findings, this study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causal relationships between QWL components and the curriculum gap. Longitudinal studies are needed to establish causality and understand the dynamics over time. Second, the study was conducted in a specific cultural and organizational context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other settings. Future research should consider replicating the study in different contexts to validate the results. Third, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases such as social desirability or recall bias, which could affect the accuracy of the responses. Utilizing mixed methods, including qualitative approaches, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues.

Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of QWL on curriculum implementation to establish causality and understand the long-term impacts. Additionally, studies should investigate the role of cultural and organizational contexts in shaping the relationships between QWL components and curriculum gaps. Comparative studies across different regions or countries could provide valuable insights into the contextual factors that influence these relationships. Furthermore, integrating qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could enrich the understanding of the subjective experiences of teachers and the specific challenges they face in implementing the curriculum. Finally, examining the interplay between QWL and other organizational factors, such as leadership styles or institutional policies, could offer a more holistic view of the determinants of curriculum implementation.

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations can be made. Educational administrators should focus on enhancing QWL by providing ample job opportunities, ensuring fair pay, fostering positive colleague relationships, and offering robust organizational support and development programs. These measures can help reduce the curriculum gap and improve overall educational outcomes. Specifically, creating professional development opportunities and career advancement pathways can increase teachers' engagement and commitment to their roles. Additionally, implementing fair compensation structures that reflect teachers' efforts and contributions can enhance motivation and job satisfaction. Fostering a collaborative work environment where teachers feel supported by their colleagues and organization can also contribute to better curriculum implementation. Finally, educational policies should be designed to support these initiatives, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to enhance the QWL of teachers.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of QWL in influencing the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum. By addressing the key components of QWL, educational institutions can foster a more conducive environment for teachers, leading to better educational outcomes. The findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to improving teachers' work environments. Future research should build on these findings to further explore the complex relationships between QWL and educational effectiveness, ensuring that teachers are well-supported in their vital roles.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

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In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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