

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS TO ENHANCE THEIR OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACHIEVING SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

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Abstract:

This study aimed to explore the role of the school in developing students' life and professional skills in ways that enhance their opportunities to achieve social mobility in the city of Jerusalem. To achieve the study objectives, a descriptive-analytical approach was adopted using a qualitative design. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten participants (four principals and six teachers) from schools in East Jerusalem. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to extract the main patterns and themes.

The study found that the essential skills required include teamwork, critical thinking, psychological resilience, and problem-solving, in addition to context-specific skills related to Jerusalem such as psychological steadfastness. Schools contribute to developing these skills primarily through extracurricular activities, integrating skills into the curriculum, and creating a supportive school environment, with the teacher playing a central role as a role model and mentor. However, schools face significant challenges, including political and social pressures, rigidity of imposed curricula, lack of resources, difficult economic conditions, and insufficient professional training for teachers.

The study demonstrated a strong and direct relationship between skill acquisition and the achievement of social mobility through four pathways: educational mobility, professional mobility, economic mobility, and active community participation, supported by real-life evidence from graduates' stories who achieved tangible progress. Based on the findings, the study presented comprehensive recommendations directed to the Ministry of Education, school administrations, teachers, and the local community, focusing on curriculum flexibility, continuous professional development, strengthening extracurricular activities, and building effective partnerships with all relevant stakeholders.

Keywords: Life skills, professional skills, social mobility, education in Jerusalem, role of the school.

INTRODUCTION:

Education constitutes one of the most important structural drivers for promoting sustainable development and supporting social mobility. Its role is no longer limited to the transmission of academic knowledge; rather, it has expanded to include the development of life and professional skills that enable students to adapt to the demands of contemporary life and the labor market. Recent educational literature confirms that schools integrating life and social-emotional skills into their educational practices contribute to improving academic achievement, enhancing self-efficacy, and building more equitable pathways for social mobility, particularly among marginalized groups (Cipriano et al., 2024; Tagat et al., 2025).

In light of the rapid transformations in the knowledge economy and labor market, schools are now required to redefine their educational functions by shifting from rote-based instruction to active, student-centered learning that focuses on critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, decision-making, and psychological resilience (Wang et al., 2024). Recent studies indicate that these skills represent a fundamental link between school experience and later opportunities for social and professional integration, thereby enhancing prospects for upward social mobility through education (Buscha et al., 2023; Priulla et al., 2025).

Through interactive curricula, extracurricular activities, and educational guidance, schools play a central role in developing students' life and professional skills. Recent Arab studies have shown that school activities and school administration effectively enhance leadership skills, teamwork, communication, and self-confidence, which positively reflect on students' community participation and readiness for the future (Al-Saadi & Khair Al-Din, 2025; Arar, 2021). Broad systematic reviews have also confirmed that comprehensive school-based social-emotional learning programs achieve positive and comparable effects at both primary and secondary levels, particularly when teachers serve as the main implementers of these programs (Cipriano et al., 2024).

The teacher's role emerges as central in transforming theoretical objectives into tangible educational practices through teaching strategies, classroom interaction, and psychological and social support for students. Recent literature

indicates that teachers directly contribute to developing decision-making skills, time management, and professional aspirations—skills closely linked to later opportunities for social mobility (Wang et al., 2024; Tagat et al., 2025). This issue gains heightened importance in the Jerusalem context, where Arab schools operate within a highly complex political, social, and economic environment. Structural constraints, limited resources, and psychological and social pressures directly affect the quality of education and the school's ability to perform its developmental roles. Recent reports and studies indicate that education in Jerusalem represents one of the few available pathways for youth to enhance resilience and improve their opportunities for social mobility within a multidimensional restrictive reality (Abu-Saad, 2019; Jamal, 2020).

Despite the growing interest in developing life skills in international and Arab literature, studies examining the actual role of schools and teachers in developing these skills and linking them to social mobility in the city of Jerusalem remain limited. Hence, the significance of the present study lies in its attempt to examine this role and to explore the extent to which Arab schools in Jerusalem contribute to developing students' life and professional skills in ways that enhance their opportunities for social mobility within their specific context.

Statement of the Problem:

Recent educational literature indicates that the school is no longer merely an institution for transmitting academic knowledge; rather, it has become a key social actor in developing life and professional skills that enable students to adapt to the demands of contemporary life and enhance their opportunities for social mobility. Recent international studies have confirmed that the absence of such skills limits the capacity of education to generate a tangible impact on improving students' social and economic trajectories, particularly in fragile or marginalized contexts (Cipriano et al., 2024; Tagat et al., 2025).

Despite this global orientation, studies reveal a growing gap between the traditional knowledge content delivered by educational institutions and the life and professional skills that students actually need, including skills related to the labor market, decision-making, psychological resilience, and the development of future aspirations. This gap constrains the genuine developmental role of the school in promoting social mobility (Buscha et al., 2023; Priulla et al., 2025).

This gap is further exacerbated in environments characterized by political, social, and economic complexities, as is the case in the city of Jerusalem. Arab schools operate under structural constraints that include limited resources, weak infrastructure, and administrative and political restrictions, in addition to the social and economic pressures faced by students and their families. Recent reports and studies indicate that these combined factors negatively affect the ability of schools and teachers to implement systematic educational programs and school activities that effectively contribute to the development of students' life and professional skills (Ir Amim, 2023; Abu-Saad, 2019).

The core of the study problem lies in the gap between the urgent need to develop life and professional skills among Jerusalemite students as a fundamental pathway to social mobility, and the actual role played by schools and teachers in this field under the constraints imposed upon them. The weak integration between curricula, teaching methods, school activities, and professional support for teachers limits the school's ability to perform its developmental and social role, thereby weakening students' opportunities to build educational and professional pathways that enable them to improve their future social conditions.

Accordingly, the central problem of the current study revolves around the following main question: To what extent do Arab schools in the city of Jerusalem, through the role of teachers, contribute to developing students' life and professional skills in ways that enhance their opportunities for social mobility within the specific political, social, and economic context of the city? The study seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by providing a realistic scientific analysis that links the educational role of the school with social mobility in the Jerusalem context.

Research Questions:

What is the role of the school in developing students' life and professional skills in ways that enhance their opportunities to achieve social mobility in the city of Jerusalem?

The following sub-questions emerge from this main question:

1. What are the essential life and professional skills that students in the city of Jerusalem need in order to achieve social mobility?
2. What is the current role of schools in developing these skills among students in the city of Jerusalem?
3. What are the main challenges facing schools in Jerusalem in developing these skills?
4. What is the relationship between the development of life and professional skills and the achievement of social mobility among students in Jerusalem?
5. What strategies and mechanisms are proposed to enhance the role of the school in developing these skills?

Objectives of the Study:

1. To identify and classify the essential life and professional skills required for students in the city of Jerusalem, with a focus on the city's specific context.

2. To examine the role of the school in developing life and professional skills through the curriculum, activities, teaching methods, and school administration.
3. To identify the main challenges facing schools in developing these skills at all levels.
4. To explore the relationship between the development of life and professional skills and the achievement of social mobility among students in the city of Jerusalem.
5. To propose practical strategies for the role of the school in developing life and professional skills in a manner consistent with the realities of the city of Jerusalem.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

First: Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of this study stems from its endeavor to contribute to enriching the Arab educational literature in the field of developing life and professional skills, particularly within educational contexts characterized by political and social complexity. The study deepens the scientific understanding of education as a social mechanism capable of enhancing social mobility, rather than merely serving as a channel for transmitting academic knowledge. It also seeks to develop an integrated theoretical framework that links the development of students' life and professional skills with opportunities for social mobility, drawing on contemporary approaches in educational psychology and social development.

This theoretical contribution gains particular importance through its focus on the city of Jerusalem as a unique educational context, where political, social, and economic challenges intersect with the educational process. Such a focus enriches the theoretical discussion on education in fragile and marginalized environments. Moreover, the study provides an organized knowledge base that can benefit researchers and academics interested in issues of education and development in complex settings, and it opens the door for subsequent comparative studies in similar Arab and international contexts.

Second: Practical Significance

The practical significance of the study lies in its ability to provide scientific evidence that can support educational decision-makers in formulating more effective policies and strategies for developing the educational system in the city of Jerusalem, in alignment with students' real needs and the requirements of social mobility. The study also provides school administrations and teachers with practical guidelines and applicable tools to enhance their educational practices in developing students' life and professional skills.

In addition, the study findings help students and parents recognize the importance of these skills and their role in shaping future educational and professional pathways. Furthermore, local community institutions may benefit from the study results in building supportive partnerships with schools, thereby contributing to enhancing students' opportunities for social integration and achieving more equitable and sustainable social mobility.

Delimitations of the Study

Spatial Delimitations: Schools in the city of Jerusalem at all educational levels.

Temporal Delimitations: The academic year 2024–2025.

Human Delimitations: Teachers and administrators in schools in the city of Jerusalem.

Thematic Delimitations:

- The role of the school (teachers, administration, curriculum, activities).
- Life skills (critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, self-management, psychological resilience).
- Professional skills (technical, digital, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning).
- Social mobility (educational, professional, economic).

Definition of Terms

First: Social Mobility

Social mobility is defined as the ability of individuals or groups to move between different social, economic, or professional positions over time, whether upward or downward, and either vertically or horizontally. It encompasses educational, professional, and economic dimensions. Contemporary literature considers social mobility an indicator of equality of opportunity and the capacity of educational systems to reduce structural inequalities and redistribute opportunities among different social groups (Buscha et al., 2023; Priulla et al., 2025).

In this study, social mobility refers to the extent to which school education and the development of life and professional skills contribute to improving students' opportunities in the city of Jerusalem to transition to better educational and professional pathways in the future, as perceived by teachers and administrators. It is measured through indicators such as educational aspirations, professional readiness, opportunities for higher education enrollment, and expectations of improving professional and social status.

Second: Life Skills

Life skills refer to a set of psychological, social, and emotional abilities that enable individuals to deal positively and effectively with the demands and challenges of daily life. These include critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, communication, self-management, and building social relationships. Recent literature emphasizes that these skills form the foundation of social and emotional learning (SEL) and contribute to improving psychological adjustment, academic achievement, and social integration, especially among students in fragile environments (Cipriano et al., 2024; Tagat et al., 2025).

In this study, life skills are defined as the set of behaviors and competencies that teachers and schools in the city of Jerusalem seek to develop among students, including critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, teamwork, self-management, and psychological resilience. Their level is measured through participants' estimations of the extent to which these skills are present in educational practices and school activities.

Third: Professional Skills

Professional skills are defined as a set of cognitive, technical, and behavioral competencies that enable individuals to integrate effectively into the labor market. These include digital skills, the ability to engage in lifelong learning, adaptability to professional changes, entrepreneurship skills, and teamwork. These skills are considered central to building human capital and enhancing employability and professional sustainability in modern economies (OECD, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2024).

In this study, professional skills refer to the level of readiness of students in the city of Jerusalem to acquire skills related to the future labor market, such as technical and digital skills, professional thinking, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning, as perceived by teachers and administrators. This is measured through the extent to which these skills are integrated into curricula, activities, and teaching methods.

Fourth: Role of the School

The role of the school is defined as the set of educational, instructional, and social functions performed by the educational institution through its various components, including curricula, teaching methods, classroom and extracurricular activities, school administration, and the learning environment, with the aim of developing the student's personality cognitively, socially, and emotionally, and preparing them for life, citizenship, and work (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Fullan, 2023).

In this study, the role of the school refers to the extent to which Arab schools in the city of Jerusalem, through teachers, administration, curricula, and activities, contribute to developing students' life and professional skills, as measured by participants' responses regarding educational and organizational practices that support these skills.

Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

Concept of Social Mobility

Social mobility is defined in contemporary literature as the movement of individuals or groups between different social, economic, or educational positions over time, whether this movement is horizontal within the same social class or vertical between different social classes upward or downward. Social mobility is considered a key indicator of equality of opportunity within society and its ability to enable individuals to improve their social and economic conditions through education and work (Buscha et al., 2023; Priulla et al., 2025).

Recent studies indicate that social mobility should not be understood merely as an individual phenomenon, but rather as the outcome of a complex interaction between social structure, the educational system, the labor market, and public policies. Societies that provide inclusive and equitable educational systems contribute to reducing class gaps and enhancing opportunities for upward mobility, whereas structural constraints lead to the reproduction of social inequality across generations (OECD, 2023).

In this context, school education is regarded as one of the most important channels of social mobility, as the level of educational attainment and the quality of acquired skills are linked to the ability to access better educational and professional opportunities in the future. However, comparative studies confirm that education does not automatically lead to social mobility unless it is supported by the development of life and professional skills that are applicable in social and economic reality (Cipriano et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

Concept of Life Skills

Life skills are defined as a set of psychological, social, and emotional abilities that enable individuals to deal positively and effectively with the demands and changing challenges of daily life. These skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, effective communication, self-management, and building supportive social relationships. Contemporary literature emphasizes that life skills constitute the core of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and contribute to enhancing psychological adjustment, academic achievement, and social integration (Cipriano et al., 2024).

Recent international studies indicate that developing life skills in the early and middle school stages is a decisive factor in building a balanced personality capable of coping with pressures, making sound decisions, and participating positively in society, particularly in contexts characterized by instability or marginalization (Tagat et al., 2025).

Life skills are also viewed as cross-disciplinary skills that are not tied to specific cognitive content, but rather are formed through daily educational practices, interactive teaching methods, school activities, and human relationships within the school environment (UNICEF, 2023).

Concept of Professional Skills

Professional skills refer to a set of cognitive, technical, and behavioral competencies that enable individuals to integrate effectively into the labor market and maintain employability amid rapid transformations in the nature of professions. These skills include digital and technical skills, the ability to engage in lifelong learning, professional adaptability, entrepreneurship skills, and teamwork (World Economic Forum, 2024).

Recent reports emphasize that professional skills are no longer limited to mastering specific job tasks; instead, they are associated with flexibility, innovation, analytical thinking, and the ability to transition between multiple career paths, making their development from the school stages an educational necessity rather than an additional option (OECD, 2023).

Professional skills are also considered a natural extension of life skills, as both dimensions integrate in building human capital capable of achieving professional stability and social mobility (Wang et al., 2024).

The Role of the School in Developing Life and Professional Skills

The school is a central social institution in preparing students for life, as its role extends beyond providing academic knowledge to developing their personalities and refining their life and professional skills. Contemporary educational literature indicates that an effective school is one that integrates cognitive learning with skills development through an interactive learning environment, flexible curricula, and active teaching methods (Fullan, 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Curricula based on project-based learning, problem-solving, and cooperative learning contribute to linking theoretical knowledge with practical reality and enhancing critical thinking, teamwork, and decision-making skills. School and extracurricular activities also constitute an essential space for practicing leadership, building self-confidence, and expanding students' social experiences (Eccles et al., 2023).

In fragile environments such as the city of Jerusalem, the school acquires an additional dimension as a supportive space for psychological and social resilience, a place for reproducing cultural identity, and strengthening the sense of belonging, thereby contributing to empowering students and confronting the effects of structural marginalization (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2022).

The Role of the Teacher in Shaping Students' Personality and Developing Their Skills

The teacher is considered the most influential educational actor in developing students' life and professional skills, as their role goes beyond transmitting knowledge to building the learner's integrated personality. Recent studies indicate that a teacher who employs active learning strategies and creates a safe and stimulating classroom environment contributes to enhancing students' motivation, self-confidence, and their ability to communicate and solve problems (Hattie, 2023).

Social learning theories also confirm that the teacher's personality and professional behavior serve as a model to be emulated and directly influence students' attitudes and behavior (Bandura, 2022). In the Jerusalem context, the teacher assumes a dual role as a source of psychological and social support, fostering students' resilience and encouraging critical thinking and positive community participation (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2022).

Challenges Facing the School in Promoting Social Mobility

Despite the vital role of the school in empowering students and enhancing their opportunities for social mobility, schools—particularly in marginalized environments—face a range of structural challenges. These challenges include limited financial resources, weak infrastructure, shortage of qualified staff, pressure on teachers, and administrative and political constraints that limit educational flexibility (Abu-Saad, 2019; OECD, 2023).

Recent studies also indicate that reliance on traditional teaching methods and weak partnerships with families and the local community exacerbate the limited impact of schools in developing skills and promoting social mobility. The literature confirms that effective school leadership, investment in teacher development, and the establishment of community partnerships represent key approaches to addressing these challenges and strengthening the developmental role of the school (Harris & Jones, 2023).

Previous Studies

The study by Al-Saadi and Khair Al-Din (2025) aimed to identify the role of managing school activities in developing life skills among post-basic education students in the Sultanate of Oman. The study adopted the descriptive approach, using interviews as a tool for collecting data from a sample of specialists and those concerned with school activities. The results showed that school activities represent an effective educational framework for directing students' energies and developing their life skills, particularly communication skills, leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making. The study also indicated that participation in clubs and activities enhances self-confidence and develops students' leadership abilities through real-life situations that simulate reality. The results confirmed the role of activities in building positive role models and enhancing dialogue skills and the expression of opinions. The study recommended supporting school activities financially and organizationally, incorporating them into the weekly timetable, and qualifying teachers and activity supervisors in the field of life skills development.

The study by Abu Al-Haija, Jabrān, and Tawālbeh (2024) aimed to reveal the role of school principals in developing leadership life skills among students from the perspective of principals and teachers within the Green Line. The study used the descriptive survey approach and adopted a questionnaire as a tool for collecting data from a simple random sample of (432) principals and teachers from the northern regions within the Green Line. The results showed that the overall role of school principals in developing leadership life skills among students was at a moderate level. The results also indicated that social skills ranked first, followed by administrative skills, then emotional skills, and finally affective skills. The study pointed to statistically significant differences in the respondents' estimates attributed to the job title variable in favor of teachers. In contrast, no statistically significant differences appeared attributed to the variables of gender and school level.

The study by Tagat, Balaji, and Kapoor (2025) aimed to evaluate the impact of life skills education programs on social-emotional development and school outcomes among adolescents in India. The study adopted a longitudinal pre-post design using panel data collected at three time points within the (Childhood to Livelihood) program. The sample included short-term analyses for (1898) students and long-term analyses for (5582) students from five different sites. The results showed significant improvement in school attendance, educational aspirations, self-efficacy, psychological resilience, and positive gender attitudes. The study also indicated that the impact of the programs extends over the long term, with a noticeable increase in the likelihood of school retention. The findings confirm the effectiveness of integrating life skills education into school curricula, especially in low-resource contexts. The study highlights the role of the school as a nurturing environment for enhancing life skills and psychosocial development among students.

The study by Cipriano et al. (2024) aimed to conduct a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of comprehensive Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs implemented in American schools, with particular attention to students from marginalized groups. The study adopted the systematic review and meta-analytic approach, analyzing the results of (90) studies representing (47) educational programs, involving more than (20,000) students from grades (K–12). The results showed statistically significant improvements in academic achievement, social and emotional skills, positive behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions of a safe school climate. The findings also indicated that program effectiveness was similar across primary and secondary levels and increased when teachers were the primary implementers of the programs. The study pointed to particularly positive effects among students from racial and ethnic minorities, despite limited data regarding other marginalized groups. The study concluded with the need to enhance program sustainability and expand partnerships with families and communities to achieve long-term impact.

The study by Wang, Li, and Wang (2024) aimed to provide a systematic review of career interventions directed at secondary school students in terms of theoretical frameworks, intervention types, evaluation mechanisms, and program outcomes. The study adopted the Systematic Review approach, analyzing (25) selected studies out of (419) studies collected from three databases according to specific inclusion criteria. The results showed that the most frequently used theoretical frameworks were career construction theory, social cognitive career theory, and cognitive information processing theory. The findings also indicated that interventions most often relied on group counseling, with an average of (8) sessions of (45) minutes each. The evaluation was primarily based on quasi-experimental designs using pre- and post-measurements. The study concluded that career interventions effectively contribute to developing career adaptability and decision-making skills among students, emphasizing the need for integrated school-based career guidance models.

The study by Buscha, Gorman, and Sturgis (2023) aimed to investigate the impact of school system selectivity on promoting intergenerational social mobility through examining the transition from selective education to comprehensive education in England. The study adopted a longitudinal quantitative approach, utilizing census data linked with data on enrollment in selective schools across different time periods and geographic areas. The results showed no statistical evidence that reducing selective education contributed to improving social mobility. Advanced analyses and robustness tests confirmed that the type of school system alone is insufficient to reduce class gaps. The study indicates that broader structural factors, such as socio-economic background, remain more influential than the form of school organization. These findings highlight the limitations of relying solely on structural school reforms to achieve effective social mobility.

The study by Zamrani (2022) aimed to review and analyze Arab and foreign experiences in integrating life skills into curricula and educational programs, with the aim of benefiting from them in developing the Moroccan experience as an emerging model in this field. The study adopted the exploratory and descriptive analytical approaches, relying on document analysis and relevant previous studies. The results indicated that educationally advanced countries adopt systemic approaches to integrating life skills across different educational stages. The study also showed that successful integration is linked to teacher and trainer preparation and the provision of supportive educational guides for learners, teachers, and families. The findings emphasized the importance of linking life skills to the educational value system and the local cultural context. The study recommended adopting the mother tongue in developing life skills to ensure effectiveness and dissemination and encouraging scientific research and academic specialization in this field.

The study by Abu Samhadana and Al-Zaanin (2021) aimed to explore the relationship between life skills and psychological resilience in challenging environments. The study followed the descriptive analytical approach. The population consisted of secondary school students in the Gaza Strip, and a cluster sample of 350 male and female

students was selected from governmental and UNRWA schools in Gaza. The researchers used a life skills scale consisting of 42 items and a psychological resilience scale consisting of 25 items, and they also relied on personal interviews with 30 students. This study examined the relationship between developing life skills and enhancing students' ability to achieve psychological resilience under the exceptional conditions experienced in the Gaza Strip. The study focused on five basic life skills: stress management, positive thinking, creative problem-solving, effective communication, and psychological resilience. The results showed a strong positive relationship between the level of life skills and psychological resilience rates among students. Students who possessed advanced life skills demonstrated greater ability to cope with psychological trauma and daily challenges. The study also found that students who participated in practical school activities related to life skills showed greater resilience in facing external pressures. The study by Arar (2021) aimed to identify the role of learning modules in developing life skills among basic stage students (1–4) in governmental schools in Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorate from teachers' perspectives and ways to develop them. The study adopted the qualitative descriptive analytical approach, using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of learning module documents. The results showed that learning modules effectively contribute to developing the twelve life skills according to the UNICEF classification (MENA, 2017) through the four-dimensional learning model (cognitive, instrumental, individual, and social). The study also indicated that learning modules contribute to developing teachers' professional performance and improving the quality of students' learning by considering individual differences and achieving justice and equity. The findings pointed to a shift in educational practice from rote instruction to student-centered learning. The study emphasized the importance of employing the Palestinian context in developing students' life skills.

The study by Al-Makhariz, Al-Badu, and Al-Saudi (2020) aimed to reveal the role of the "My School" initiative in developing life skills and good citizenship values among students from the perspective of staff in schools included in the initiative in Mafraq Governorate. The study adopted the descriptive analytical approach and used a questionnaire as a tool for collecting data from a random sample of (343) male and female teachers. The results showed that the role of the My School initiative was high in developing both life skills and good citizenship values. The results also indicated statistically significant differences in developing life skills attributed to the variables of gender and school level. In contrast, no significant differences appeared in developing citizenship values attributed to gender, school level, or experience. The study highlights the importance of national school initiatives as an effective approach to enhancing life skills and civic values among students.

The study by Mustafa (2018) aimed to identify methods for developing the professional performance of social workers to equip preparatory school girls with life skills. The study adopted the descriptive approach using social survey methodology and applied a questionnaire to a sample of (52) female social workers working in preparatory schools for girls in Fayoum Governorate. The results showed that the school environment effectively contributes to developing life skills through practical training, helping students face life pressures, and enhancing social interaction and time management skills. The study also demonstrated the role of school activities in supporting the practice of hobbies and building balanced personalities among students. The findings confirmed that the type of school and its organizational culture are influential factors in the effectiveness of the social worker's professional performance. The study recommended adopting a periodic evaluation system for the professional performance of social workers and intensifying continuous professional training programs to enhance their role in developing students' life skills.

Commentary on Previous Studies:

Previous studies, both Arab and international, demonstrate a clear consensus on the positive impact of the school and its various programs in developing students' life and professional skills, and the reflection of this on multiple aspects such as social integration, professional readiness, and psychological resilience. Numerous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of school activities, interactive curricula, and social and emotional learning programs in enhancing communication skills, leadership, problem-solving, and decision-making. Longitudinal and experimental studies have also highlighted that acquiring these skills directly contributes to improving opportunities for social mobility, especially among students from marginalized backgrounds. In contrast, some structural studies indicate that educational system reforms alone are insufficient to achieve social mobility without focusing on the quality of acquired skills. Despite this research momentum, it appears that most studies have addressed the school context in relatively stable environments or focused on specific programs without providing a comprehensive analysis of the school's role as an integrated system. Hence, the research gap emerges in the scarcity of studies addressing the role of the school and teachers in developing life and professional skills as a pathway to social mobility within the Jerusalem context, characterized by its complex political and social specificity.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

This section aims to present the methodological framework adopted by the current study in addressing the research problem and answering its questions and testing its hypotheses, by clarifying the approach followed, the study population and sample, data collection tools, their implementation procedures, and methods of analysis. This

presentation is intended to ensure clarity of the research steps followed and to enhance the reliability and accuracy of the results. The following is a detailed presentation of the study methodology and its procedures.

Study Method:

This study followed the descriptive analytical method, as it is one of the most appropriate approaches for studying educational and social phenomena as they exist in reality, analyzing and interpreting their various dimensions without interfering with their variables. The study adopted the qualitative approach as the main method for data collection, aiming to reach an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the role of the school in developing life and professional skills among students in the city of Jerusalem, and the extent to which this contributes to enhancing their opportunities for social mobility. This approach contributes to uncovering the meanings and educational and social contexts associated with the phenomenon under study, in alignment with the nature and objectives of the study.

Study Population:

The study population consisted of all Arab schools in East Jerusalem at all educational levels. The researchers selected this population because it represents the actual research environment through which it is possible to identify the challenges and opportunities available for developing life and professional skills.

Study Sample:

A sample consisting of (10 individuals) was selected. The sample included four school principals and six teachers representing different educational levels, in order to ensure diversity and comprehensiveness of perspectives. The sample was selected using a simple random method from the available schools that agreed to participate.

Study Instrument:

The interview was adopted as the main tool for data collection. An interview guide was prepared, including open-ended questions that allowed participants to freely express their opinions and experiences. The questions addressed key themes such as: the most important skills required for students in Jerusalem, the role of the school and teacher in developing them, successful strategies and practices, challenges faced by teachers and schools, and the support required to enhance this role.

Data Collection Procedures:

The administrations of the participating schools were contacted to obtain preliminary approval, and interview appointments were scheduled in coordination with the principals and teachers. The interviews were conducted individually in comfortable settings for participants to ensure confidentiality and freedom of expression. Each interview lasted between (30–45) minutes, and the data were documented through detailed note-taking (the interview responses were attached in the research).

Validity and Reliability of the Study Instrument:

First: Validity

To verify the validity of the study instrument, face validity and content validity were adopted. The semi-structured interview guide was presented to a group of expert reviewers specialized in educational administration, teaching methods, and educational psychology, foremost among them the supervising professor Dr. Alaa, in order to ensure the clarity of the items, their linguistic accuracy, and their suitability to the study objectives and questions. The reviewers' comments and recommendations were taken into consideration, whether in terms of rephrasing some questions, deleting those deemed inappropriate, or adding items that enhance the comprehensiveness of the instrument and its ability to measure the study concepts (the role of the school, life and professional skills, and social mobility). This procedure is considered an indicator that the instrument possesses an appropriate degree of face validity and content validity.

Second: Reliability

To verify the reliability of the study instrument, Holsti's coefficient (Holsti) was used to measure the degree of agreement between two coders. The researcher and a specialized colleague independently analyzed and categorized the responses of a sample of interviews, after which the results of the analysis were compared between the two parties. The coefficient of agreement showed a high percentage of consistency between the two classifications, indicating that the study instrument possesses an acceptable degree of reliability in the analysis of qualitative data. This procedure enhances the credibility of the extracted results and reduces subjective bias in data interpretation.

Data Analysis Method

Thematic Analysis was adopted to analyze the interview data in order to extract recurring patterns, main themes, and semantic categories that reflect participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the role of the school in developing life and professional skills and promoting social mobility. This was achieved through systematic coding of the data and grouping similar codes into interrelated thematic categories, allowing for a deep and organized understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Study

This section presents the results reached in light of the analysis of the interview data, with the aim of answering the study questions and achieving its objectives. The results were organized according to the main themes and topics derived from the thematic analysis, reflecting participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the role of the school in developing life and professional skills and promoting social mobility. The findings are presented in a descriptive analytical manner supported by qualitative examples from participants' statements.

Results of the First Question: What are the essential life and professional skills that students in the city of Jerusalem need to achieve social mobility?

The results of the interviews show a high degree of agreement among participants regarding a set of life and professional skills considered essential for enabling students in the city of Jerusalem to achieve social mobility. Teamwork ranked first at (100%), as all participants unanimously emphasized its necessity, reflecting a clear awareness of the importance of students' ability to work within teams and build supportive social relationships inside and outside the school. One principal expressed this by saying:

"Our students are in urgent need of learning how to work in a team spirit, because an individual alone cannot face all these challenges, whereas the group gives them strength and support" (Interview 3, Secondary School Principal).

Critical thinking, psychological resilience, and problem-solving skills followed with a high percentage of (90%) each, indicating that the majority of participants view these skills as essential conditions for dealing with the complex Jerusalem reality. One principal confirmed that:

"It is not enough for the student to memorize information; they must have the ability to think critically and analyze the reality they live in, otherwise they will not be able to adapt or progress" (Interview 1, Primary School Principal).

A teacher also pointed out that problem-solving has become a daily skill for students, stating: *"The student here faces real daily problems, and if we do not train them to think and solve, they will not be prepared for life" (Interview 4, Preparatory School Teacher).*

In the next rank, communication skills, digital competence, and self- and time-management skills emerged at (80%), as participants emphasized that these skills represent indispensable practical tools for academic and professional success. One teacher expressed this by saying:

"Communication skills and time management have become fundamental; a student who does not know how to express themselves or manage their time will stumble even if they are academically outstanding" (Interview 2, Secondary School Teacher).

One principal also noted that:

"Digital competence today is no longer an option, but a necessity in almost all fields" (Interview 10, School Principal – Al-Issawiya).

Psychological steadfastness was mentioned at (70%), with participants directly linking it to the specificity of the Jerusalem context. One teacher stated:

"Jerusalem students live under continuous psychological pressure, and if we do not help them build psychological resilience, they will not be able to continue or succeed" (Interview 6, Teacher – Beit Hanina).

Entrepreneurship skills ranked last at (60%); however, their mention by more than half of the participants reflects growing awareness of their importance as an alternative pathway to achieving social mobility. One teacher explained:

"We encourage students to think about entrepreneurship, because job opportunities are limited, and small projects have become a real gateway to improving economic conditions" (Interview 5, Preparatory/Secondary Teacher).

These results reflect a deep awareness among participants that social mobility for Jerusalem students cannot be achieved through academic achievement alone, but rather requires possession of an integrated system of life and professional skills. The high percentages for teamwork (100%) and critical thinking and problem-solving (90%) indicate awareness that success in a pressured and complex environment requires cooperation, analysis, and informed decision-making. The focus on resilience and psychological steadfastness (90% and 70%) indicates that psychological skills are no longer complementary, but have become survival skills in the Jerusalem context. Meanwhile, attention to digital competence and entrepreneurship (80% and 60%) reflects a practical orientation toward equipping students with contemporary tools that open alternative pathways for social mobility amid structural constraints imposed on the labor market.

These findings are consistent with the study of Al-Saadi and Khair Al-Din (2025), which confirmed that school activities contribute to developing teamwork, leadership, and communication. They also align with the findings of Cipriano et al. (2024), which showed that social and emotional learning programs produce significant improvements in students' social and emotional skills, particularly in marginalized environments. These results are further supported by Tagat, Balaji, and Kapoor (2025), who highlighted the role of life skills in enhancing psychological resilience, self-efficacy, and improving educational outcomes. The emphasis on professional skills and digital competence also corresponds with Wang, Li, and Wang (2024), who emphasized the importance of early career preparation and developing decision-making and career adaptability skills. The highlighting of psychological steadfastness as a central skill in Jerusalem clearly aligns with Palestinian studies such as Arar (2021) and Abu Samhadana and Al-Zaanin

Results

(2021), which confirmed that developing life skills in challenging environments enhances students' resilience, forming an important foundation for achieving social mobility.

Results of the Second Question: What is the current role of schools in developing these skills among students in the city of Jerusalem?

The results of the interview analysis, as shown in Table (2), indicate that schools in the city of Jerusalem contribute to developing students' life and professional skills through a variety of mechanisms; however, the level of this role varies in terms of organization and sustainability. All participants (100%) agreed that extracurricular activities represent the most present and effective tool in developing these skills, followed by the role of the teacher as an educational role model at the same percentage (100%), reflecting a strong reliance on informal practices and direct educational relationships. In contrast, more organized mechanisms such as integrating skills into the curriculum were reported at (70%), and a supportive classroom environment at (60%), while special programs and institutional initiatives declined to only (40%).

All participants agreed that extracurricular activities constitute the most prominent entry point for developing life and professional skills among students. One teacher confirmed that:

"The school contributes through extracurricular activities, student projects, volunteer work, and clubs" (Interview 6, Teacher – Beit Hanina).

These activities varied between school clubs, field research projects, volunteer programs, debate and public speaking clubs, as well as agricultural and community activities within the neighborhood. The principal of Al-Issawiya School provided a practical example, stating:

"We organized practical workshops in entrepreneurship in cooperation with local businesspeople... these real stories inspire students more than any theoretical book" (Interview 10, School Principal).

This consensus (100%) indicates that schools rely heavily on extracurricular activities as the most flexible space for applying skills practically, away from the constraints of the formal curriculum.

A percentage of (70%) of participants reported conscious attempts to integrate life and professional skills into the curriculum, particularly through strategies such as project-based learning, case studies related to the reality of Jerusalem, and open classroom discussions. One principal stated:

"We work on developing these skills by integrating extracurricular activities into the core of the educational process" (Interview 1, Primary School Principal).

The principal of Al-Issawiya School provided a qualitative example of this integration, noting that an Arabic language teacher connects lessons to the neighborhood reality through writing reports and conducting interviews with elderly residents, giving knowledge a practical dimension. A science teacher also explained that:

"Encouraging students to ask questions about their daily environment develops their curiosity and critical thinking" (Interview 10).

However, the limitation of these practices to (70%) of participants indicates that integrating skills into the curriculum is still more linked to individual initiatives than to a comprehensive school policy.

A percentage of (60%) of participants also emphasized the importance of a supportive classroom environment that encourages dialogue, acceptance of differences, and cooperative learning. One teacher stated:

"We work on creating a safe classroom environment that encourages asking questions and exchanging ideas without fear" (Interview 8).

In contrast, all participants (100%) agreed that the teacher's role as a role model represents a central element in developing skills. One teacher explained that:

"The teacher is a guide and facilitator, not merely a lecturer" (Interview 1).

Another added:

"The teacher is a role model, guide, and psychological supporter, who enhances self-confidence and encourages trial and error" (Interview 6).

One teacher also referred to the value-based dimension of this role, stating:

"The teacher teaches values through their daily behavior before any lesson" (Interview 5).

Only (40%) of participants referred to the existence of special programs or institutional initiatives dedicated to developing skills, such as introducing a life skills subject, establishing a debate club, and programs such as "Big Brother" and "Challenge of the Week." One principal mentioned:

"Introducing the debate club helped students greatly in developing their self-confidence" (Interview 10).

This low percentage indicates the limited spread of sustainable institutional programs and the reliance of schools mostly on partial initiatives subject to available capacities and circumstances.

These results indicate that schools in the city of Jerusalem play an actual role in developing life and professional skills; however, this role depends largely on extracurricular activities and individual teacher efforts rather than on comprehensive institutional school policies. The high percentages of extracurricular activities (100%) and the teacher's role as a role model (100%) compared to the low percentage of special programs (40%) reveal a gap between efforts made and desired outcomes, attributed to organizational constraints, limited resources, and external conditions beyond the school's control.

These findings are consistent with the study of Al-Saadi and Khair Al-Din (2025), which confirmed that school activities represent the most effective entry point for developing life skills. They also align with Eccles et al. (2003) and Mahoney et al. (2005) in emphasizing the importance of extracurricular activities as flexible learning environments. The central role of the teacher that emerged in this study intersects with the findings of Cipriano et al. (2024), which showed that the effectiveness of SEL programs increases when the teacher is the primary implementer. The limited institutional programs also align with the findings of Buscha et al. (2023), which indicated that the school alone, without broader structural support, cannot achieve effective social mobility, highlighting the need for supportive organizational and community interventions.

Results of the Third Question: What are the main challenges facing schools in the city of Jerusalem in developing these skills?

The results of the interview analysis show that schools in the city of Jerusalem face a set of interrelated challenges that hinder their ability to develop students' life and professional skills. These challenges vary in terms of their severity and impact on the educational process. Political and social pressures topped the list of challenges at (100%) with a (very high) level of impact, followed by imposed and rigid curricula at (90%) with the same level of impact, then lack of resources and capabilities at (80%), families' economic conditions at (70%), while lack of professional training programs for teachers came at (60%), and overcrowded classrooms at (50%), all of which represent obstacles with a moderate to high impact.

All participants without exception agreed that the complex political and security reality in the city of Jerusalem constitutes the greatest and most comprehensive challenge facing schools. One teacher pointed out that:

"The psychological and social pressure on students makes it difficult for them to focus on developing skills such as communication and problem-solving effectively" (Interview 1).

One principal expressed this challenge more deeply by stating:

"How can you explain a mathematics lesson to a child who is worried about their father who was delayed because of a checkpoint or inspection? The teachers themselves live under these pressures and sometimes need psychological support before they can support the students" (Interview 10).

Another teacher also referred to the impact of military checkpoints and daily instability on the regularity of the educational process, saying:

"Military checkpoints affect the attendance of students and teachers and create a state of instability in learning" (Interview 5).

A percentage of (90%) of participants mentioned that imposed curricula represent one of the most prominent challenges hindering the development of life and professional skills. One principal stated:

"The most prominent challenge we face is rigid curricula that do not provide sufficient space to develop students' skills" (Interview 1).

A teacher added a cultural and political dimension to this challenge, saying:

"Sometimes we feel that the curricula do not reflect the reality of our students, but rather ignore the history and culture of Jerusalem, even though this is what students need to strengthen their identity" (Interview 6).

One teacher indicated that this rigidity is not limited to content but extends to restricting the teacher's freedom, stating:

"There is a constant struggle over curricula and exclusion of concepts related to the history and culture of the Arab community" (Interview 5).

A percentage of (80%) of participants also reported that lack of resources constitutes a fundamental obstacle to implementing activities and programs that support skills development. One teacher explained:

"The scarcity of resources and capabilities, along with political pressures, creates a state of confusion and instability in the school" (Interview 5).

This shortage was distributed between limited technological devices and internet access, weak infrastructure, lack of classrooms and laboratories, in addition to administrative and financial complications. One principal expressed this by saying:

"Sometimes we have excellent ideas for educational activities, but financial procedures delay their implementation for months" (Interview 10).

Another principal added:

"The shortage of qualified teaching staff increases the burden on existing teachers and affects the quality of performance" (Interview 1).

A percentage of (70%) of participants indicated that the deteriorating economic conditions of Jerusalemite families directly affect students' interaction and participation in educational activities. One principal stated:

"Many parents work long hours because of the economic situation, and this places an additional burden on the school to compensate for the lack of home follow-up" (Interview 10).

Another teacher added:

"The high cost of living in Jerusalem makes some families unable to support their children or provide educational necessities" (Interview 5).

A percentage of (60%) of participants mentioned an urgent need for continuous professional development for teachers, particularly in the areas of interactive teaching and skills development. One teacher said:

“The teacher needs real support and training programs that keep pace with educational developments” (Interview 5).

Another teacher confirmed this by saying:

“We need continuous training on modern teaching strategies, not only theoretical courses” (Interview 6).

These results indicate that the challenges facing schools in the city of Jerusalem are not merely educational, but structural, political, and economic and interrelated. The high percentages of political pressures and imposed curricula (100% and 90%) indicate that the school operates in an unstable environment that limits its ability to engage in long-term planning. The lack of resources and economic conditions weakens the sustainability of educational initiatives, while insufficient professional training and overcrowded classrooms reduce the effectiveness of interactive classroom practices.

These findings are consistent with previous studies on the Jerusalem context, such as Mustafa & Cullingford (2008) and Jamal (2020), which confirmed that political constraints and psychological pressures represent major obstacles to the educational process. The results also support the findings reported in Ir Amim (2023) regarding lack of resources and weak infrastructure in Jerusalem schools. These challenges are also consistent with the findings of Dahmani (2023) concerning the gap between theoretical curricula and practical application, and with the results of Buscha et al. (2023), which confirmed that structural and social factors remain more influential than partial school reforms in achieving social mobility.

Results of the Fourth Question: What is the relationship between developing life and professional skills and achieving social mobility for students in the city of Jerusalem?

The results of the interview analysis show complete consensus (100%) among participants that developing life and professional skills is directly and strongly associated with achieving social mobility for students in the city of Jerusalem. This relationship took several interrelated pathways, most notably: professional mobility, educational mobility, economic mobility, and social empowerment and community participation, in addition to an extended psychosocial impact within the local community.

A percentage of (90%) of participants indicated that students' possession of skills such as entrepreneurship, teamwork, and communication clearly contributes to improving their employment opportunities and the quality of jobs they obtain after graduation. One principal stated:

“When a student possesses critical thinking and teamwork skills, they become able to compete in the labor market, establish their own projects, and be an active member of their community” (Interview 1).

The principal of Al-Issawiya School provided a realistic and impactful example reflecting this pathway, saying:

“One of our students came from a modest economic background, but he excelled in entrepreneurship activities. After graduation, he established a small mobile phone repair business, and today he owns a large shop and employs four people from the neighborhood” (Interview 10).

A teacher also provided another example highlighting the impact of soft skills, stating:

“A student who was very shy was completely transformed by participating in the debate club. Today she works in an important media company and confirms that the self-confidence and communication skills she acquired at school are the secret of her success” (Interview 10).

A percentage of (80%) of participants also agreed that developing life and professional skills enhances students' chances of enrolling in higher education and continuing successfully. Participants confirmed that skills such as time management, critical thinking, and research ability enable students to excel academically and overcome the challenges of the university stage.

In this context, one teacher referred to supporting research findings, stating:

“Studies have proven that students who possess life skills enroll in universities at a higher rate, such as the study by Thompson & Martinez which showed that 78% of the experimental group enrolled in higher education compared to 52% of the control group” (Interview 3).

A percentage of (70%) of participants reported a tangible improvement in the economic situation of graduates and their families as a result of possessing life and professional skills. One teacher expressed this by saying:

“When a student learns skills like communication and problem-solving, they gain self-confidence, and better job opportunities open up for them” (Interview 5).

Another teacher added:

“Acquiring these skills helps students make informed decisions and adapt to economic challenges, which contributes to improving their conditions and building positive and sustainable social mobility” (Interview 3).

A percentage of (60%) of participants indicated that skills development contributes to enhancing community participation and local leadership among graduates. One principal stated:

“We notice that young people who graduated from our programs have become more involved in neighborhood committees, organizing cultural and sports events, and taking initiatives to solve community problems” (Interview 10).

A teacher added:

“When students possess these skills, they become more capable of making informed decisions and participating positively, which enhances upward social mobility” (Interview 7).

An additional unexpected theme emerged in the form of the role-model effect of successful graduates on the local community. One principal stated:

“When a child in the neighborhood sees that a former peer has become successful, they feel that success is possible for them as well. This breaks the cycle of frustration and despair” (Interview 10).

This effect represents an important psychosocial dimension, where individual achievements are transformed into symbolic capital that enhances collective aspiration within the Jerusalem community.

These results show that the relationship between developing life and professional skills and social mobility is cumulative and multidimensional. It is not limited to the economic dimension alone but extends to educational, psychological, and community dimensions. Possessing these skills contributes to improving students’ educational and professional opportunities, enhances their economic independence, and supports their community participation, thereby creating an upward pathway for social mobility within a highly complex context such as Jerusalem.

These findings are consistent with the results of Thompson & Martinez (2023), which confirmed the long-term impact of life skills education on educational and professional mobility pathways. They also align with the findings of Tagat et al. (2025), which showed that developing life skills enhances self-efficacy and professional stability in low-resource environments. These results are further supported by Cipriano et al. (2024) regarding the role of social and emotional skills in improving students’ academic and social outcomes.

Results of the Fifth Question: What are the proposed strategies and mechanisms for developing the school’s role in fostering these skills?

The results of the interview analysis indicate broad consensus among participants regarding a package of practical strategies that would enhance the school’s role in developing students’ life and professional skills. These strategies were characterized by their integrative nature, as responsibilities were distributed among the Ministry of Education, school administration, and the local community, with all participants (100%) agreeing that reform cannot occur at a single level. Curriculum flexibility, continuous training programs, and increased budgets topped the list of priorities at a (very high) degree, reflecting a deep awareness of the roots of the challenges facing Jerusalem schools.

A percentage of (90%) of participants referred to a set of practical measures that school administration can directly adopt to enhance skills development. Foremost among these was continuous teacher training, as participants emphasized the need to train teachers in modern teaching strategies, interactive classroom management, and the development of extracurricular activities, in addition to psychological support skills for students. One teacher stated: *“The teacher needs continuous training, not only in the subject matter, but in how to deal with the student psychologically and educationally” (Interview 6).*

A percentage of (90%) of participants also emphasized the importance of developing school infrastructure by providing computers and high-speed internet, equipped science laboratories, and spaces dedicated to extracurricular activities. One principal noted that:

“Having a laboratory or a well-equipped activity space opens new horizons for both teacher and student in applied learning” (Interview 1).

In addition, participants proposed enhancing administrative and financial flexibility by simplifying spending procedures and granting broader authority to school administration, allowing initiatives to be implemented without bureaucratic delay. They also emphasized the need to support extracurricular activities by diversifying school clubs, organizing field trips, and hosting experts and professionals from the local community.

All participants (100%) agreed that the genuine development of the school’s role requires serious intervention at the ministerial level. Curriculum flexibility and development came at the forefront of high-priority strategies, as participants called for allowing curriculum adaptation to suit the Jerusalem context, explicitly integrating life and professional skills into official curricula, and reducing the focus on memorization and rote learning. One teacher expressed this by saying:

“We need greater flexibility in implementing the curriculum so that it reflects the reality of Jerusalem students, their history, and their culture” (Interview 7).

Participants also stressed the importance of sustainable professional development programs for teachers through regular and specialized training courses, experience exchange programs, support for action research within schools, and the granting of accredited professional development certificates. In the same context, participants emphasized that adequate financial support is an essential condition for the success of any reform, calling for increased operational budgets, dedicated funding for development projects, and incentives for distinguished teachers. One principal stated: *“Without real financial support, many ideas remain merely plans on paper” (Interview 10).*

A percentage of (80%) of participants also indicated the importance of building effective partnerships with the local community as a key partner in the educational process. These partnerships were concentrated in three main pathways. The first was parental involvement through holding periodic meetings, engaging them in school activities, and organizing awareness workshops on the importance of life skills. One teacher stated:

“When parents are partners, the school’s impact becomes deeper and more sustainable” (Interview 8).

The second pathway involved partnerships with the private sector and businesspeople through organizing field visits, hosting guest lecturers, providing summer training opportunities for students, and supporting student initiatives. The third involved cooperation with academic institutions through teacher training programs, academic consultations, and mentoring programs for high-achieving students.

A percentage of (70%) of participants indicated that psychological and social support represents a shared axis across all levels, given the political and social pressures experienced by students and teachers. Proposals included establishing psychological counseling centers within schools, implementing psychological support programs for teachers, and life skills workshops for students to deal with trauma. One principal expressed this by saying:

“It is not possible to talk about skills development or social mobility without paying attention to the psychological state of the student and the teacher” (Interview 10).

These results indicate that developing the school’s role in fostering life and professional skills requires a comprehensive, multi-level approach in which ministerial policies integrate with school practices and community partnerships. The high consensus on curriculum flexibility, training, and funding (100%) reflects participants’ awareness that the challenges facing Jerusalem schools are structural and cannot be addressed through partial school initiatives alone. The focus on psychological support also confirms that any educational reform in the Jerusalem context must take into account the human and psychological dimension alongside the academic dimension.

These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Zamrani (2022), who confirmed that the successful integration of life skills requires systemic approaches extending across policies, curricula, and teacher preparation. They also align with Cipriano et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of supporting teachers and providing an institutional environment conducive to sustaining skills programs. These results further support the findings of Al-Saadi and Khair Al-Din (2025) regarding the necessity of providing sufficient financial and organizational resources for school activities.

Recommendations:

Based on the results and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations can be presented to the relevant stakeholders:

1. Enhancing the flexibility of curricula and educational policies by allowing greater space for adapting curricula to align with the local context of the city of Jerusalem and integrating life and professional skills explicitly and systematically within study plans.
2. Developing sustainable professional training programs for teachers that focus on interactive teaching strategies, project-based learning, and psychosocial support for students, while linking these programs to accredited professional incentives.
3. Providing adequate financial and material support for schools, including increasing operational budgets, funding extracurricular activities, and supporting creative initiatives that contribute to developing life and professional skills.
4. Taking into account the specificity of the city of Jerusalem when formulating educational policies, by adopting flexible measures that consider the political, social, and economic challenges facing schools and students.
5. Strengthening the role of extracurricular activities and highlighting their importance as a fundamental contributor to developing life and professional skills by diversifying school clubs, organizing volunteer programs, and implementing community projects linked to students’ realities.
6. Focusing on continuous school development through adopting internal improvement plans, encouraging innovative initiatives by teachers, and providing a flexible organizational environment that supports experimentation and educational renewal.
7. Creating a supportive and psychologically safe school environment that encourages dialogue, participation, and critical thinking, and takes into account the psychological and social aspects of both students and teachers.
8. Activating partnerships with parents and the local community through regular communication channels, involving them in school activities, and building cooperative relationships with civil society institutions and the private sector.
9. Developing teachers’ professional competencies and integrating life and professional skills into daily teaching by employing active learning strategies, linking curriculum content to students’ realities, and enhancing critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills within the classroom.

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