

The Impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the Quality of Learning Experiences of Graduate Students and Medical Assistants in Mazandaran Province

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present study aimed to investigate the impact of a Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences among graduate students and medical assistants in Mazandaran Province.

Methodology: This study was applied in purpose and descriptive-correlational in design. The research population consisted of 1,665 graduate students and medical assistants in Mazandaran Province during the 2020–2021 academic year. Using Cochran's formula, the sample size was determined to be 313 participants, who were selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-developed Global Citizenship Education Curriculum questionnaire and the Learning Experiences Quality Questionnaire (Neumann, 1990). Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling in SPSS and PLS software.

Findings: The findings indicated that the model assessing the impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences among graduate students and medical assistants demonstrated good fit. The Global Citizenship Education Curriculum had a positive and significant effect on learning experience quality ($P < .001$). Furthermore, the three components of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum—knowledge, attitude, and skills—had positive and significant effects on both the curriculum itself and all four components of learning experience quality, including library and computer resources, course content and value, learning flexibility, and the quality of formal and informal faculty–student relationships ($P < .001$).

Conclusion: Considering the positive impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences of graduate students and medical assistants, enhancing this curriculum can serve as an effective approach to improving learning experience quality.

Keywords: Curriculum, Global Citizenship Education Curriculum, Learning Experience Quality, Graduate Students, Medical Assistants.

1. Introduction

Today, the origin of all social, economic, cultural, and political changes and transformations in countries lies in their education systems and higher education systems; and if these systems are purposeful, curriculum-driven, comprehensive, and advanced, societies will achieve greater development and progress (Gholizadeh & Esmaeilishad, 2022; Rizal et al., 2025; Webster, 2025). Attention to factors influencing academic performance has long been a central concern for specialists and planners in both general and higher education systems, and numerous factors are influential in this regard, among which the quality of learning experiences can be noted (Abbasi et al., 2019). The quality of learning experiences refers to learners' perceptions of the direct and indirect inputs of the educational environment, including educational content, learning resources, flexibility, curriculum, and the quality of interpersonal relationships within the educational setting (Gantasala et al., 2022). Direct inputs refer to institutional investments in educational programs in terms of content, resources, and flexibility, whereas indirect inputs refer to the processes through which the university attempts to enhance learning (Hu et al., 2016). The quality of learning experiences consists of four components: library and computer resources, course content and value, learning flexibility, and the quality of formal and informal faculty-student relationships (Huang et al., 2018). To implement academic programs effectively, adequate resources must be available so that opportunities for students' growth and development are created. Common and necessary resources for students in universities include the quality and quantity of books and articles, research services through computer systems, and the number of students in each class. Course content and value depend on the quality of academic advising to access appropriate content, the quality of teaching provided by instructors, and the perceived value of academic programs or courses. Learning flexibility and curriculum adaptability emphasize that the more flexible they are relative to students' needs and abilities, the better and more quickly educational programs can be implemented, leading to more positive outcomes. The quality of formal and informal faculty-student relationships reflects the extent to which better relationships—whether formal or informal—facilitate more effective learning (Jarrar et al., 2022). Today, the quality and effectiveness of education have gained increasing importance for universities and can create a competitive advantage for them. Accordingly, universities

continually assess the quality of education and its related factors, including students' quality of learning experiences (Tian et al., 2022). The quality of learning experiences can exert substantial influence on learners' academic and professional development and lead to the achievement of various short-term and long-term outcomes, contributing to growth in both academic and non-academic domains (Ammigan et al., 2021).

One of the factors that significantly affects the quality of learning is the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum (Mravcova, 2016). Globalization is a modern phenomenon that has confronted today's world with major challenges across cultural, political, economic, and social dimensions. Like any new phenomenon, it has gradually transformed traditional societal structures and introduced new structures across diverse communities (Poursalim et al., 2019). A global citizen refers to an individual's knowledge and awareness of themselves in relation to others, where critical thinking and reflection are among its most essential components (Duarte, 2023; Goodier et al., 2018; Tuke et al., 2022). This construct refers to reciprocal human interactions, respect for cultural diversity and human rights, commitment to global justice, sensitivity to human suffering everywhere, the ability to view the world from others' perspectives, and a sense of responsibility toward both personal and collective obligations (Fergusson & McFarlane, 2022). A global citizen is someone who has adequate awareness of the contemporary world, understands their role as a citizen, and, while respecting values, cultural diversity, and differences, participates in various national or global activities (Klein & Wikan, 2019; Zahoori & Mirzadeh, 2024; Zare et al., 2024). Global Citizenship Education is one of the essential programs in every country for developing the skills, values, and attitudes needed to empower citizens for healthy and vibrant living, informed decision-making, and addressing national and global challenges (Woods & Kong, 2020). The goal of Global Citizenship Education is not merely to teach individuals knowledge about the future of the world but to nurture future generations through the development of beliefs, attitudes, and thinking processes that enable them to confront inequalities and national or global challenges (Goren & Yemini, 2017). Global Citizenship Education includes learning in three domains: cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral. Cognitive learning focuses on developing knowledge, understanding, and critical thinking about local, national, regional, and global issues and the interdependence of societies. Socio-emotional learning aims to foster a sense

of belonging, shared values and responsibilities, empathy, cohesion, solidarity, and respect for diversity and differences. Behavioral learning aims to promote effective and responsible action at local, national, and global levels towards a peaceful and sustainable world (Kenyon & Christoff, 2020). In the twenty-first century, the world has moved toward specific identities and affiliations, and higher education has become one of the key institutions for socialization and global citizenship development through curriculum design. Higher education, through the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum, can address individual and societal needs across various domains and prepare the skilled and competent human capital required by both national and global communities (Rashidi, 2020). Given the importance of global citizenship education, its integration into educational systems—particularly higher education—as part of the curriculum has become vital. Students in the twenty-first century need knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to interact positively, effectively, and constructively with both their own societies and other societies (Kim, 2021).

No quantitative study examining the impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences was found. Therefore, the key findings of the most relevant studies are reported here. Golshani, Maki Alegha and Etemad Ahari (2021) concluded that learning activities that can improve the citizenship education curriculum include forming informal learning groups, learning through practice, and learner-centered or participatory teaching methods (Golshani et al., 2021). Bertram, Mthiyane and Naidoo (2021) found that teachers' mastery of a comprehensive curriculum framework can play an effective role in improving learning quality (Bertram et al., 2021). Piri, Barghi and Shahi (2019) found a positive and significant relationship between the quality of learning experiences (library and computer resources, course content and value, learning flexibility, and formal/informal teacher-student relationships) and attitudes toward the curriculum (Piri et al., 2019). Zakeri and Momeni Mahmouei (2019) found a positive and significant relationship between curriculum alignment by instructors, learning experiences, and students' academic performance (Zakeri & Momeni Mahmouei, 2019). Poursalim, Arefi and Fathi Vajargah (2017) concluded that the key components of Global Citizenship Education include needs assessment, learning objectives, learning content, materials and resources, learning environments and timing, teaching and learning strategies and their quality, the instructor's role, evaluation,

institutional factors, implicit learning, and program outcomes (Poursalim et al., 2017). Mravcova (2016) reported in a study on practical implementation of global citizenship education that such education must be an integral part of curricula and instructional processes at all levels to enhance learning quality and develop global citizens (Mravcova, 2016). Finally, Neumann (1990) emphasized the importance of evaluating learning experiences as a key indicator of educational effectiveness (Neumann, 1990).

One of the main indicators of the effectiveness of educational systems, including higher education, is assessing the quality of learning experiences and students' mastery of academic content. Therefore, conducting research to examine the quality of learning experiences—particularly among graduate students and medical assistants, due to their crucial roles in shaping the future and ensuring the health of society—is of heightened importance. Moreover, the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum appears to have the potential to influence students' learning experiences, yet no study in this area has been found. Thus, the researchers of the present study seek to investigate the impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences and, if confirmed, provide recommendations to specialists, administrators, and planners in higher education—especially in graduate and medical assistant programs—to improve learning quality. Consequently, the aim of the present study was to examine the impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences of graduate students and medical assistants in Mazandaran Province.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study was applied in purpose and descriptive-correlational in method. The research population consisted of 1,665 graduate students and medical assistants in Mazandaran Province during the 2020–2021 academic year. The sample size, calculated using Cochran's formula with a 95 percent confidence level, was determined to be 313 individuals, selected through stratified random sampling. In this sampling method, a list of graduate students and medical assistants was first prepared separately by discipline, and their proportional representation relative to the entire population was calculated. In the next step, the sample size was allocated proportionally, and the required number of participants from each discipline was selected via simple random sampling. Inclusion criteria consisted of signing the

informed consent form, having no academic probation during graduate studies or medical assistantship, no substance dependency or psychiatric medication use, no COVID-19 infection within the past three months, and no major stressful life events such as divorce or the death of close relatives within the past three months. Exclusion criteria included officially withdrawing from the study by refusing to complete the questionnaires or submitting incomplete responses.

To conduct this research, the necessary coordination was first made with the graduate and medical education administrators in Mazandaran Province. The research instruments included one standardized questionnaire (Learning Experiences Quality) and one researcher-developed questionnaire (Global Citizenship Education Curriculum), which are described later. Subsequently, as explained above, participants were selected using stratified random sampling. Prior to final selection, participants were screened for inclusion criteria, and those meeting the requirements were invited to take part in the study. They were informed about the importance and purpose of the research and assured regarding ethical considerations, including confidentiality, privacy protection, and aggregated data analysis. Finally, participants were asked to answer all questions and items carefully and leave no item unanswered.

2.2. Measures

In this study, in addition to the demographic information form, which included gender, age, and work experience, two questionnaires were used to collect data.

Researcher-Developed Global Citizenship Education Curriculum Questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed by the researchers of the present study and consisted of 72 items across three components: knowledge (25 items), attitude (23 items), and skills (24 items). Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale (very low = 1, low = 2, moderate = 3, high = 4, very high = 5). Component scores were calculated using the mean of their respective items, and the total score was calculated using the mean of all items, with higher scores indicating more desirable conditions. Face and content validity were confirmed by experts. Construct validity was assessed using exploratory factor analysis, and results supported the existence of three factors—knowledge, attitude, and skills—with all factor loadings above 0.40. Reliability assessed through Cronbach's alpha and

composite reliability yielded 0.89 and 0.90 for knowledge, 0.95 and 0.96 for attitude, and 0.96 and 0.96 for skills.

Learning Experiences Quality Questionnaire: This questionnaire was developed by Neumann (1990) and consists of 12 items across four components: library and computer resources (2 items), course content and value (4 items), learning flexibility (2 items), and the quality of formal and informal faculty–student relationships (4 items). Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale (very weak = 1, weak = 2, moderate = 3, strong = 4, very strong = 5). Component scores were calculated using the mean of their respective items, with higher scores representing more desirable conditions. Neumann (1990) confirmed convergent validity through correlations with measures of academic commitment and satisfaction with university experiences and reported Cronbach's alpha values of 0.71 for library and computer resources, 0.74 for course content and value, 0.86 for learning flexibility, and 0.91 for faculty–student relationship quality. In Iran, Dortaj, Rajabian Dehzireh, and Asadinejad (2016) calculated component validity via correlations with the total score (0.77, 0.66, 0.45, and 0.51, respectively), all significant at $P < .01$, and reported total reliability at 0.87 via Cronbach's alpha. In the present study, face and content validity were confirmed by experts, and reliability assessed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability yielded values of 0.90 and 0.95 for library and computer resources, 0.88 and 0.92 for course content and value, 0.81 and 0.91 for learning flexibility, and 0.86 and 0.91 for faculty–student relationship quality.

2.3. Data Analysis

After data collection, demographic information and questionnaire responses for the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum and Learning Experiences Quality were analyzed using structural equation modeling in SPSS and PLS.

3. Findings and Results

The participation rate in the present study was 100 percent, and no sample attrition occurred during analysis. Most graduate students and medical assistants were male (217 individuals, 69.33 percent), under 40 years of age (138 individuals, 44.09 percent), and had less than 10 years of work experience (156 individuals, 49.84 percent) (Table 1).

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage of Demographic Information of Graduate Students and Medical Assistants

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	96	30.67
	Male	217	69.33
Age	Under 40 years	138	44.09
	41–50 years	110	35.14
	Over 50 years	65	20.77
Work Experience	Less than 10 years	156	49.84
	11–20 years	95	30.35
	More than 20 years	62	19.81

According to the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the normality assumption for the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum and its three components—knowledge, attitude, and skills—as well as for the Learning Experiences Quality

variable and its four components—library and computer resources, course content and value, learning flexibility, and faculty–student relationship quality—was not rejected ($P > .05$) (Table 2).

Table 2
Results of Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test for Global Citizenship Education Curriculum and Learning Experiences Quality Variables

Component	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
Knowledge	3.67	0.50	0.176
Attitude	3.64	0.67	0.235
Skills	3.48	0.70	0.193
Global Citizenship Education Curriculum (Total)	3.60	0.53	0.284
Library and Computer Resources	3.51	0.75	0.411
Course Content and Value	3.76	0.66	0.638
Learning Flexibility	3.64	0.74	0.216
Quality of Formal and Informal Faculty–Student Relationships	3.50	0.65	0.432
Learning Experiences Quality (Total)	3.63	0.60	0.867

Examination of the assumptions for structural equation modeling indicated that the normality assumption, as shown above, was not rejected. The assumption of adequate correlations among the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum and the Learning Experiences Quality variables was confirmed due to significance at $P < .001$. Therefore, the use of structural equation modeling was appropriate. Model fit indices demonstrated acceptable fit for the model assessing the impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on Learning Experiences Quality: $\chi^2/df = 2.23$ (< 3), RMSEA = 0.05 (< 0.08), NFI = 0.96 (> 0.90), AGFI = 0.94 (> 0.90), GFI = 0.93 (> 0.90), CFI = 0.96 (> 0.80), and IFI = 0.97 (> 0.90).

Based on structural equation modeling results, the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum had a positive and significant effect on Learning Experiences Quality, with a path coefficient of 0.88 and a t-value of 56.55 ($P < .001$). Additionally, the three components of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum—knowledge, attitude, and skills—had positive and significant effects on the curriculum itself, and Learning Experiences Quality had positive and significant effects on all four of its components: library and computer resources, course content and value, learning flexibility, and faculty–student relationship quality ($P < .001$). The reason for the positive and significant effects in all paths was that the standardized coefficients exceeded 0.30 and t-values exceeded 1.96 (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1

Structural Equation Modeling Results for the Effect of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on Learning Experiences Quality (Standardized Coefficients)

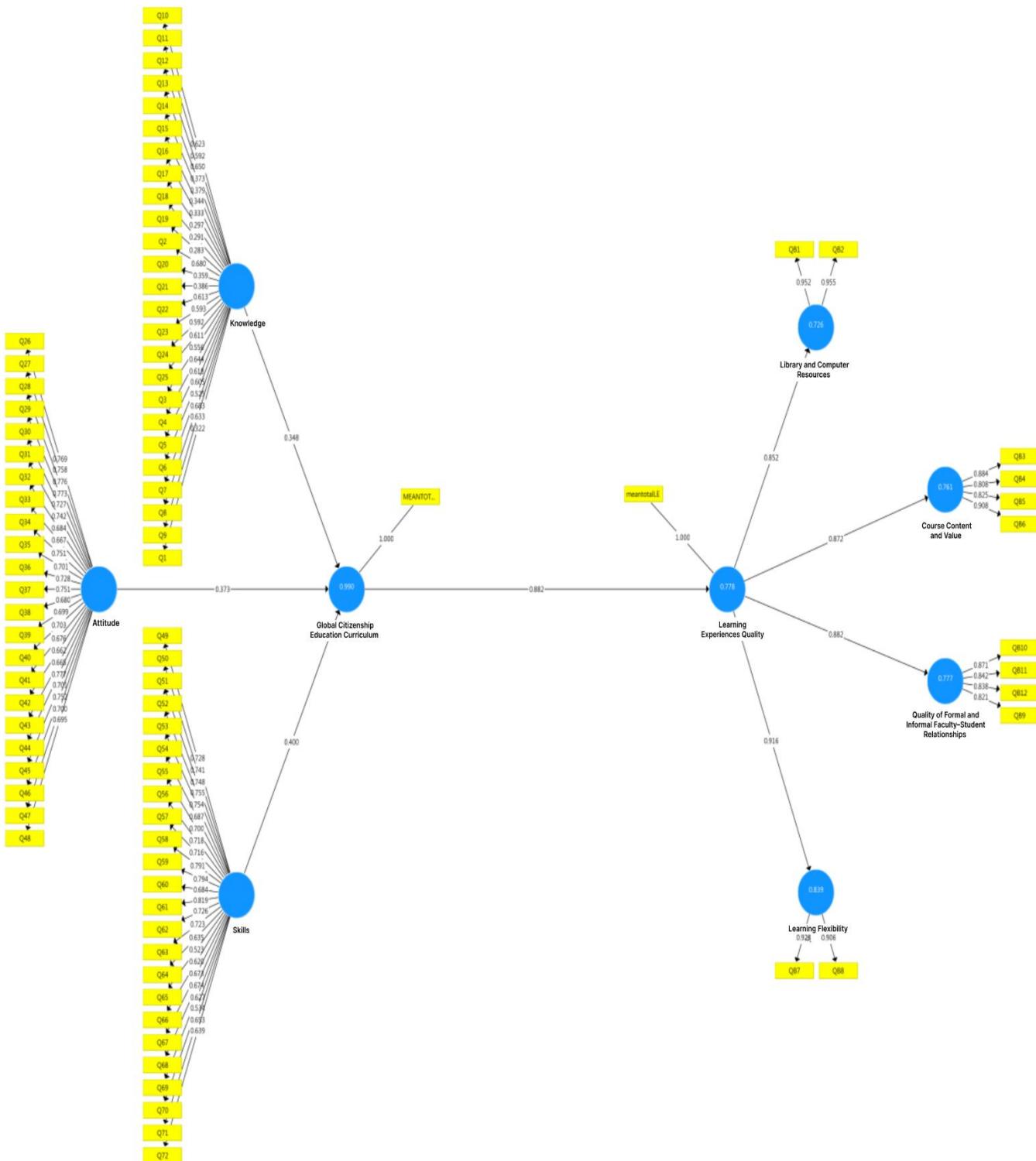
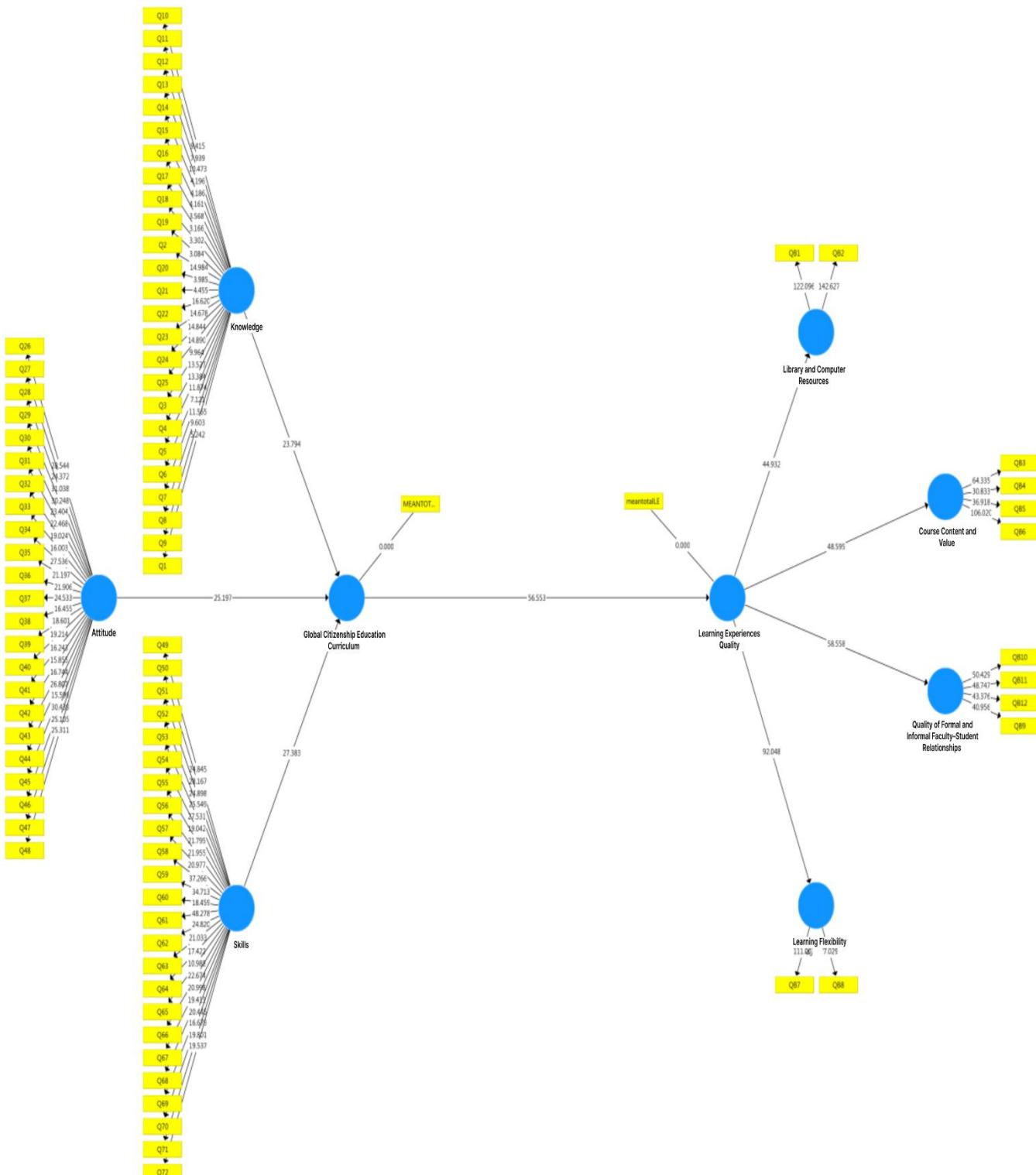


Figure 2

Structural Equation Modeling Results for the Effect of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on Learning Experiences Quality (t-values)



4. Discussion and Conclusion

Given the importance of the quality of learning experiences and the potential impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on it, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences among graduate students and medical assistants in Mazandaran Province. The findings showed that the model assessing the impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences demonstrated good fit, and that the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum had a positive and significant effect on the quality of learning experiences of graduate students and medical assistants ($P < .001$). Moreover, the three components of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum—knowledge, attitude, and skills—had positive and significant effects on the curriculum, and the quality of learning experiences had positive and significant effects on all four of its components, including library and computer resources, course content and value, learning flexibility, and the quality of formal and informal faculty-student interactions ($P < .001$). Although no study was found that specifically examined the impact of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences, these findings align with the general directions of studies conducted by Golshani et al. (Golshani et al., 2021), Bertram et al. (Bertram et al., 2021), Piri et al. (Piri et al., 2019), Zakeri and Momeni Mahmouei (Zakeri & Momeni Mahmouei, 2019), Poursalim et al. (Poursalim et al., 2017), and Mravcova (Mravcova, 2016; Rizal et al., 2025; Webster, 2025; Zahoori & Mirzadeh, 2024; Zare et al., 2024).

To explain the positive effect of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum on the quality of learning experiences of graduate students and medical assistants, it can be inferred that such a curriculum contributes to developing informed, capable, and competent individuals. For this purpose, universities must educate individuals who, in addition to subject-matter expertise, possess knowledge and skills enabling them to adapt to societal changes and transformations. Consequently, one of the most fundamental educational and research responsibilities—especially in higher education—is to cultivate aware, responsible, active, creative, and broad-minded citizens who can align themselves with the values, customs, and expectations of local, national, and global communities. Therefore,

continuous design and revision of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum—ensuring its alignment with societal changes and transformations—are essential.

Another important point is that the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum consists of three components: knowledge, attitude, and skills. The knowledge component emphasizes awareness of issues such as social justice and equality, diversity, globalization and interdependence, sustainable development, and related concepts. The skills component emphasizes developing competencies in critical thinking, effective argumentation, the ability to question and challenge, and respect for others. The attitude component highlights areas such as identity and self-esteem, empathy, commitment to equity and social justice, respect for diversity, and concern for the environment. It is evident that these components help facilitate the realization of global citizenship through the curriculum. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that the more desirable and higher-quality the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum is, the more the quality of learning experiences will improve. Accordingly, it can be expected that such a curriculum has a positive and significant effect on the learning experiences of graduate students and medical assistants and can contribute to their enhancement.

One of the limitations of this study was its statistical population, which was confined to graduate students and medical assistants in Mazandaran Province. Additionally, communication with some participants was occasionally difficult due to work schedules and shift duties. Practical suggestions include determining the current status of the Global Citizenship Education Curriculum and the quality of learning experiences. Another research-related suggestion is to localize standardized examinations such as clinical competency and residency assessments to enable more precise future studies. Furthermore, conducting similar research in universities and higher education institutions in other provinces and comparing the results with those of the present study is recommended.

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that a Global Citizenship Education Curriculum Office be established as an appropriate mechanism for interventions aimed at achieving the curriculum's objectives, with increased attention to improving the components that demonstrate greater interdependence and interaction. Additionally, university activities aimed at achieving desirable levels of learning experience quality and global citizenship education should be carefully evaluated. Another practical recommendation is for universities to shift from

traditional and routine activities toward approaches aligned with global citizenship development. Finally, short-term, medium-term, and long-term planning based on the study's findings is necessary to improve the main components within the higher education health system and to support policymakers and managers in developing strategies to enhance global citizenship education and the quality of learning experiences. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of the present study will assist university administrators—especially those in the health higher education sector—in gaining a deeper understanding of issues related to global citizenship curriculum planning and learning experience quality so they may take effective and practical steps in applying and implementing the results of this research.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

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

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were under the ethical standards of the institutional and, or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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