

## Genocide and deprivation: Healthcare, utilities, and economic strain for displaced University College of Applied Sciences staff post-october 7

Abeer Z Alhossary<sup>1</sup>, Aya KH El Mashharawi<sup>1</sup>, Basuki Supartono<sup>\*2</sup>

University College of Applied Sciences<sup>1</sup>, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta<sup>2</sup>  
Gaza City, Palestine<sup>1</sup>,

Jalan RS. Fatmawati Raya, Pondok Labu, Cilandak, Jakarta Selatan, Jakarta, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>

Corresponding author: Basuki Supartono, [drbasuki@gmail.com](mailto:drbasuki@gmail.com), Jakarta, Indonesia

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**Abstract.** The October 7, 2023, Gaza genocide has caused a severe humanitarian crisis, disrupting healthcare, essential services, and economic stability for academic and administrative staff at the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS). A quantitative survey was conducted involving 192 displaced UCAS staff to assess the impact of displacement, revealing significant hardships: 58% lack adequate healthcare access and face critical medication shortages due to Gaza's damaged healthcare infrastructure. Utility disruptions are widespread, with 59% struggling to secure clean water and 55% facing inconsistent or no electricity, hampering their ability to work remotely. Additionally, 82% serve as primary family providers, yet 42% report a total loss of income. The collapse of income sources and lack of external job opportunities have intensified the financial strain on UCAS staff, threatening their professional and personal responsibilities. These findings underscore the urgent need for international intervention to restore Gaza's healthcare, utilities, and financial stability. Humanitarian efforts are crucial to support Gaza's educational institutions and strengthen the resilience of displaced educators during this ongoing conflict.

**Keywords:** University College of Applied Sciences, Gaza Genocide, Healthcare disruption, Academic disruption, October 7

### Introduction

The October 7, 2023, Gaza genocide has deeply impacted life across Gaza, with higher education institutions (HEIs) becoming especially vulnerable. Among these is the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS), founded in 1998 in Gaza, which offers diverse diploma and bachelor's programs in engineering, business administration, and information technology. UCAS has been essential in educating Palestinians amidst recurring conflicts. However, the recent escalation has severely affected it and other HEIs, with over 2,700 students and 50 staff members killed across Gaza, and numerous educational buildings damaged or destroyed in the bombings.

The crisis has also caused the displacement of thousands, including UCAS academic and administrative staff, who now face limited healthcare access, utility disruptions, and income instability. Gaza's healthcare system has been severely strained, and destroyed infrastructure has left many without reliable access to essential utilities

such as water, electricity, and internet. For UCAS staff, these challenges are compounded by lost external income opportunities, leaving many families financially insecure.

As of October 2024, the Gaza death toll has exceeded 7,500, with tens of thousands injured and over 1.4 million people displaced. Continuous airstrikes have devastated residential areas, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure, intensifying the crisis.

This study explores the genocide's impact on displaced UCAS staff, focusing on healthcare access, essential utilities (electricity, water, and internet), and income stability. Genocide is a serious crime aimed at destroying, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, according to the United Nations Convention. These include the killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, inflicting living conditions calculated to bring about the group's destruction, preventing births within the group and forcibly transferring children to other groups (UN) (Tams et al., 2014).

The study addresses critical questions: 1) How has displacement affected UCAS staff's access to healthcare?; 2) How have utility disruptions impacted their professional responsibilities?; 3) What financial challenges have they faced, and how are they coping with lost income?

Displaced educators in conflict-affected regions, notably in Palestine and other war-ravaged countries, grapple with challenges that are both deeply rooted and complex, reflecting the far-reaching disruptions to their professional and personal lives. This literature aims to illuminate these challenges, offering valuable insights into the experiences of displaced educators and the broader implications for education.

Recent research on genocide and genocide-related impact on higher education institutions highlights the destruction of educational infrastructure in Gaza (Rabaia & Habash, 2024) and how political ideologies undermine academic freedom and genocide awareness (Rakipoğlu, 2024). However, the amount of research that explores the experience and challenges of academic and administrative staff, especially from psychological and economic perspectives, is limited. The present study fills these gaps by exploring the professional, psychological and financial consequences of displacement for UCAS staff through reporting shortages of resources, loss of income and the pressures caused by the dual need to maintain professional responsibilities with those to sustain a family. This study provides critical insights into educational institutions vulnerability in conflict setting.

## Method

### Research Design

This study employs a quantitative survey-based approach to examine the impact of displacement on the academic and administrative staff at the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS) in Gaza. The survey method allows for collecting comprehensive data regarding the professional, psychological, and material challenges systematically faced by the staff.

### Participants

The target population for this study consists of both academic and administrative staff at UCAS who were directly affected by the displacement caused by the ongoing

genocide in Gaza. A non-probability sampling technique (convenience sampling) was used due to the difficulty in reaching all staff members in conflict zones. The total number of employees with fixed contracts at UCAS is 396; however, the total number of respondents who participated in the survey is 192.

### Survey Instrument

A structured questionnaire was designed to explore four key areas: demographic information, access to healthcare, availability of electricity, water, and internet services, and family income sources. The survey was administered online through secure channels, ensuring participant confidentiality given the sensitive nature of the responses.

### Data Collection Procedure

Data collection occurred over two weeks in September 2024, capturing the immediate aftermath of the conflict. The survey link was distributed via UCAS's internal communication channels. Given the conflict conditions, participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of their anonymity.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions and percentages, were used to analyze the quantitative data. The analysis focused on identifying trends and commonalities in access to healthcare, utilities, and income disruptions among the UCAS staff.

## Result and Discussion

### Infrastructure damage and Technological Instability

In conflict zones like Gaza, infrastructure damage and technological instability severely hinder educational quality. Disruptions in electricity and internet access limit educators' ability to teach effectively, as damaged infrastructure affects both the learning environment and essential services (Peters & Pearce, 2012). The destruction of educational institutions has intensified these challenges, creating precarious conditions for teachers (Mamta & Singh, 2022). Additionally, unreliable infrastructure contributes to psychological strain among educators, leaving them feeling powerless (Bakhtiari et al., 2021). Research from Syria shows that damaged facilities lead to fewer operational schools, affecting teachers' ability to deliver quality education, and resulting in increased absenteeism and decreased motivation (Barakat & Abunimer, 2020). Access to technology and stable infrastructure is crucial for education, especially in crises. The World Bank (2021) reports that many Gaza educators struggle with limited technology and training, complicating their ability to engage students effectively amid displacement.

### Job Security and Income Stability

Job security and income stability are critical concerns that not only affect the livelihoods of these educators but also have significant implications for the educational outcomes of their students. The literature indicates that the instability caused by armed



conflict leads to disruptions in employment, salary delays, and an overall decline in the quality of education provided.

#### *Impact of Conflict on Job Security:*

Displacement due to conflict leads to significant job insecurity for educators, especially in regions like Palestine, where ongoing violence and political instability are common. Teachers often face job loss or reduced income as schools close or shift priorities in response to the crisis (Litvak Hirsch et al., 2019). The literature indicates that educators risk losing their jobs and experiencing interruptions in salaries and benefits, exacerbating their financial strain. Justino (2012) emphasizes that the economic repercussions of war can perpetuate poverty cycles, directly impacting educators' ability to maintain their professional roles.

The psychological toll of job insecurity is also significant, with financial instability contributing to mental health issues among educators (Zhang, 2014). The stress of economic uncertainty can lead to increased anxiety and depression, affecting teachers' performance and their ability to provide quality education (Jung et al., 2023). This concern is heightened in conflict zones, where effective teaching is critical for developing future generations.

#### *Long-term Implications of job insecurity and income instability for Education:*

The long-term implications of job insecurity and income instability for displaced educators are significant. The disruption of educational services not only affects teachers but also has cascading effects on students and the broader community. Research indicates that prolonged exposure to conflict can lead to a decline in educational attainment and increased dropout rates among students (Ullah et al., 2017). This, in turn, perpetuates cycles of poverty and instability within affected communities (Emmanuelar, 2015). Furthermore, the loss of experienced educators due to displacement or job loss can have detrimental effects on the quality of education. As noted by Ullah et al. (2017), the destruction of educational infrastructure and the displacement of teachers contribute to a decline in the overall educational landscape in conflict-affected regions (Ullah et al., 2017). The need for targeted interventions to support displaced educators and ensure their job security is critical for the sustainability of educational systems in these areas.

#### *The Role of Resilience and Adaptation:*

Despite the challenges of job insecurity and income instability, some educators demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity. Studies suggest that factors such as community support and personal coping strategies can mitigate the negative effects of conflict on job security and income stability (Jayakody et al., 2022). For instance, educators may engage in alternative income-generating activities to supplement their teaching salaries, thereby enhancing their financial stability (Adelaja et al., 2023). However, this juggling of multiple roles can lead to increased work-family conflict, further complicating their ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities (Wang et al., 2023). In Palestine, educators often navigate complex pedagogical dilemmas while striving to maintain their commitment to teaching amidst instability (Litvak Hirsch et al., 2019). The role of peace educators, in particular, has been highlighted as crucial in fostering resilience and promoting educational continuity in conflict zones. These

educators face unique challenges, including the need to address the psychological and emotional needs of their students while managing their job insecurities (Litvak Hirsch et al., 2019).

### **Health Concerns and Access to Healthcare for Educators Experiencing Forced Displacement Due to War**

Educators in conflict zones, especially those forcibly displaced, confront urgent health challenges that encompass both physical and mental struggles. In Palestine, ongoing violence and displacement pose unique threats to their well-being. Structural damage in Gaza has devastated healthcare services, leaving the system unable to meet the needs of local populations, including educators who play essential roles in society (Diab et al., 2023). Limited specialized training among medical staff and severe resource shortages compels displaced educators to rely on traditional remedies with inadequate outcomes (Abu Hamad et al., 2021; Elshami et al., 2019). Transportation barriers and societal restrictions further hinder healthcare access, particularly for women, impacting their overall health and teaching effectiveness (El Arnaout et al., 2019; Habal et al., 2024).

Displacement also exacerbates mental health issues, with high rates of anxiety, depression, and PTSD reported among educators facing violence and economic hardship (Gülşen et al., 2010; Marroquín Rivera et al., 2020; Yasmin et al., 2022). Limited access to mental health services and cultural stigma complicate care in Gaza (Ahmed, 2023; Pruginin et al., 2016). These findings highlight the urgent need for international intervention to restore healthcare and mental health support for displaced educators (Bagley, 2017).

### ***Mental Health Challenges***

Mental health is critically affected among educators facing forced displacement, with many experiencing anxiety, depression, and PTSD due to violence and stress from displacement (Gülşen et al., 2010; Yasmin et al., 2022). High rates of mental health disorders in displaced populations often stem from exposure to violence, family loss, and economic hardship (Erucar et al., 2018; Marroquín Rivera et al., 2020). The ongoing crisis in Gaza has intensified mental health challenges, with widespread destruction limiting access to essential services. The loss of family members and systematic attacks on healthcare and educational facilities further heighten psychological distress, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Ahmed, 2023; Diab et al., 2023). Additionally, a shortage of mental health professionals and stigma around mental health exacerbate barriers to care (Ahmed, 2023; Pruginin et al., 2016). Addressing this crisis requires urgent international intervention to restore healthcare infrastructure and mental health support (Bagley, 2017).

### ***Socio-Economic Factors and Health***

The socio-economic environment in conflict-affected areas plays a pivotal role in determining the health outcomes of displaced educators. Economic hardships, including job insecurity and poverty, are significant health determinants among displaced populations (León-Giraldo et al., 2021; Yasmin et al., 2022). In Palestine, many educators face employment uncertainty and financial strain, contributing to elevated stress and worsened health outcomes (Hussein et al., 2018). Economic hardship can restrict



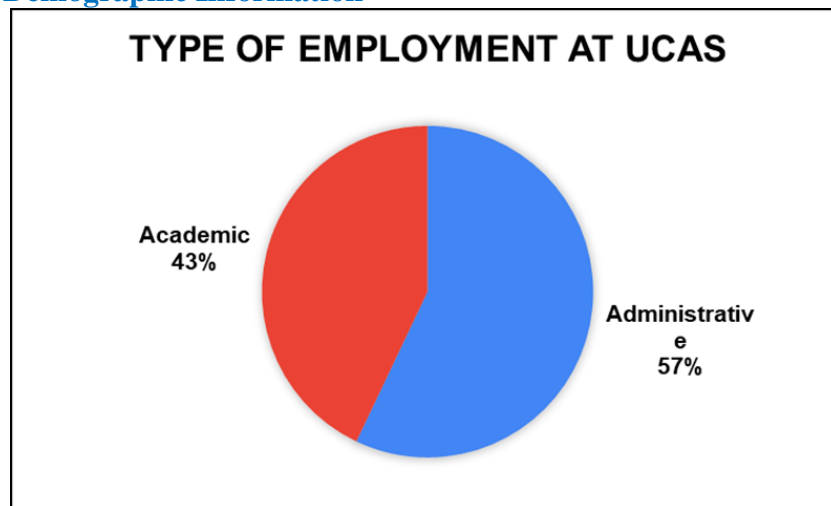
healthcare access and compound mental health issues, creating a complex interplay between financial instability and overall health (Mels et al., 2010).

Moreover, displacement often disrupts educators' social networks, essential support, and well-being sources. Research shows that social support plays a critical role in managing stress and promoting mental health (Eruyar et al., 2018). In conflict zones, the breakdown of community structures leads to increased isolation and despair, negatively affecting educators' mental and emotional health (Siriwardhana et al., 2013).

### *The Role of Resilience in the Health of Educators*

Resilience plays a vital role in protecting the mental health of educators displaced by conflict, especially in Palestine. Defined as the capacity to adapt positively under adversity, resilience mitigates the negative impacts of trauma and instability (Thabet & Thabet, 2015). Research shows that educators who practice adaptive coping, like cognitive reappraisal and mindfulness, report lower stress and improved mental health (Al-Zain & Abdulsalam, 2022). For Palestinian educators, resilience is essential as they face both professional and personal traumas, including the loss of loved ones (Abu Baker et al., 2021). Studies indicate that resilient educators benefit personally and positively impact their students, demonstrating resilience's interconnected benefits in educational environments (Abu Baker et al., 2021). Furthermore, resilience training programs tailored for conflict zones help educators manage stress, supporting their mental health amidst displacement challenges (Darkhawaja et al., 2022; Robertson et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2020).

## **Section 1: Demographic Information**

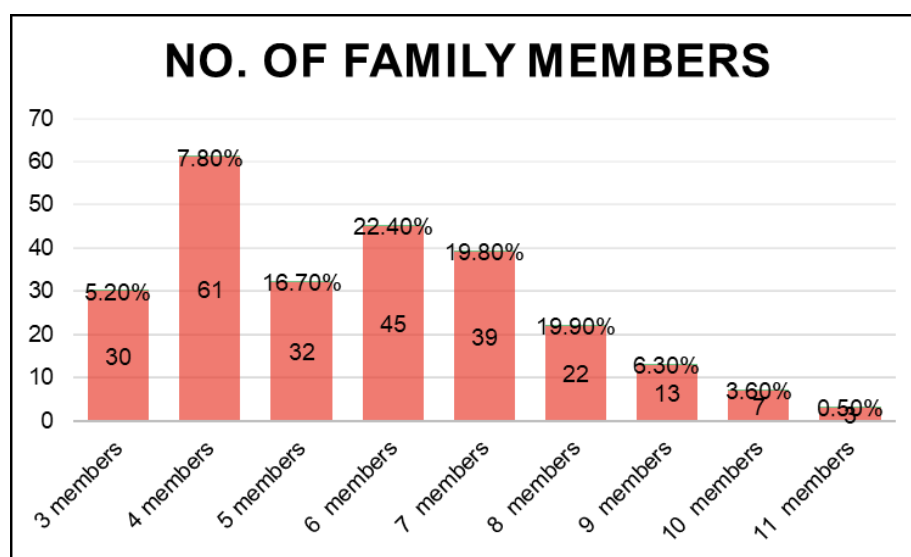


**Figure 1.** Type of employment at UCAS

Source: author documentation

Figure (1) illustrates UCAS staff employment types, with 109 administrative and 82 academic staff members who responded to the survey from the cumulative number of all the staff. Administrative staff make up the majority of the respondents, indicating the essential role they play in maintaining the institution's functionality during the crisis.

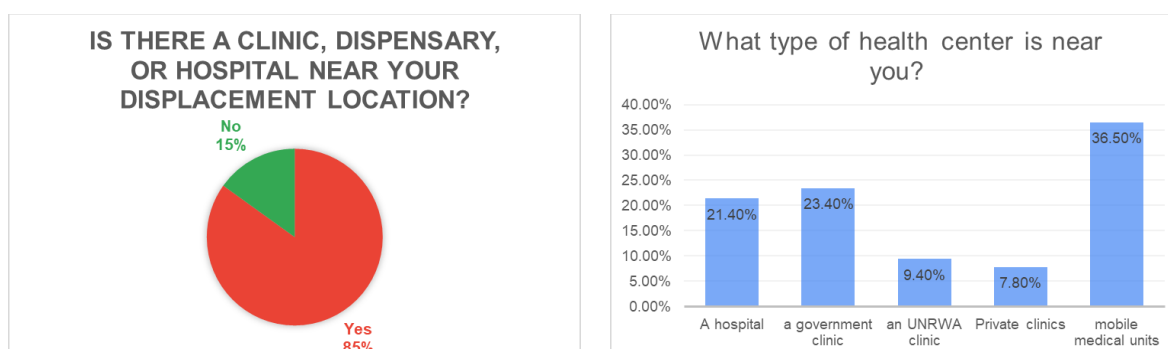




**Figure 2.** Type of employment at UCAS  
Source: author documentation

Figure 2 shows the distribution of family members among the UCAS staff. The most common family size is four members, which constitutes (32%), followed by six members (22.6%) and 7 members (19.80%) This distribution suggests that most displaced staff have dependents with relatively large families, which complicates their relocation efforts and adds additional stress regarding care and provisions during the conflict. In addition, the Palestinian society is a society where the nuclear family is strongly connected with the extended family. Therefore, most of these families are also attached to other family members like the grandparents, brothers-in-law with their spouses, etc.

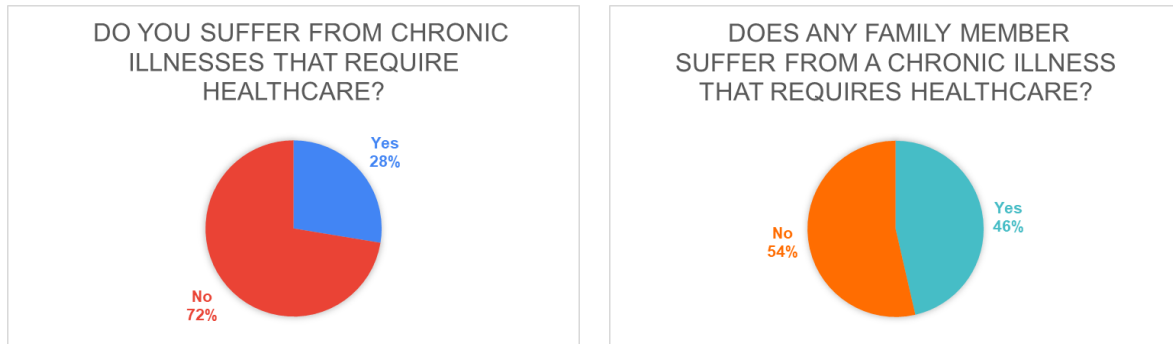
## Section Two: Access to Healthcare



**Figure 3.** Availability of health centers  
Source: author documentation

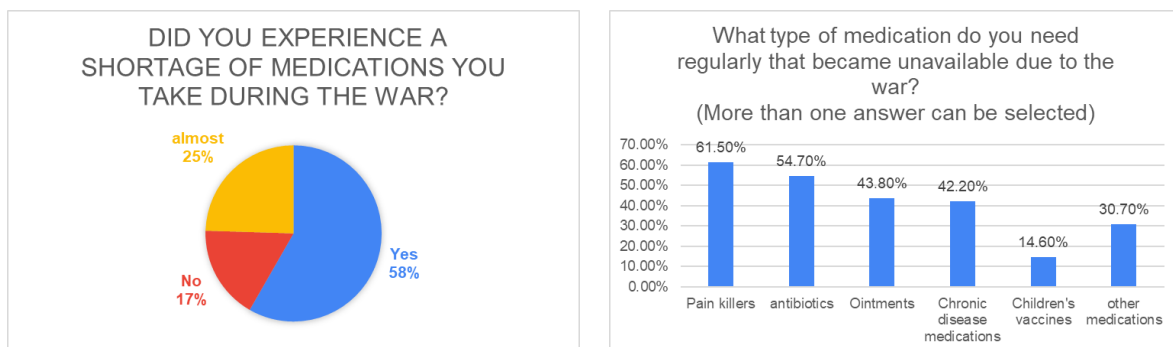
This figure highlights the significant gap in access to healthcare for displaced UCAS staff, with 58% reporting inadequate access to clinics or hospitals nearby. Among available providers, public hospitals and government clinics are limited, accounting for 21.4% and 23.4%, respectively. Due to the escalating conflict and high casualty numbers, mobile clinics (36.5%) have been established through donations, including support from the Indonesian Red Crescent in Khan Younis. The lack of nearby healthcare facilities

increases vulnerability, particularly for those with chronic conditions, affecting personal health and work performance. This situation underscores the urgent need for international medical intervention and infrastructure rebuilding.



**Figure 4.** Chronic diseases among UCAS staff and their families  
Source: author documentation

Figure 4 shows the prevalence of chronic diseases among UCAS staff. While 72% report being healthy, 28% suffer from chronic conditions requiring regular medical attention. Additionally, 46% of their immediate family members have chronic diseases, increasing the pressure on staff to provide medications for their families. These chronic illnesses compound the health challenges faced by UCAS staff during displacement, as access to necessary medications and healthcare services is often limited. This situation exacerbates their physical and psychological distress, underscoring the critical need for continuous medical care for displaced individuals with chronic conditions, even in times of war.



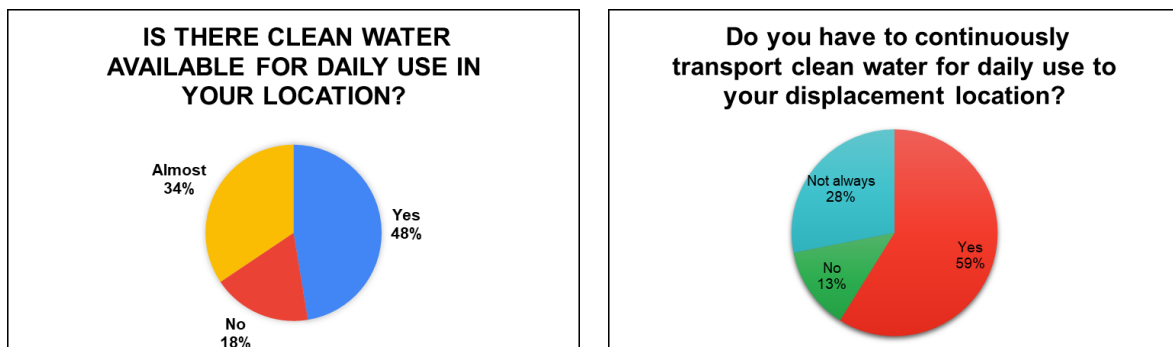
**Figure 5.** Medication shortage  
Source: author documentation

Figure 5 highlights the medication shortages faced by UCAS staff during displacement, with 58% of respondents reporting severe access issues. Painkillers (61%) and antibiotics (54.7%) are particularly scarce, and 42.2% of respondents indicate a high need for medications for chronic conditions like insulin and heart treatments. The conflict has disrupted supply chains and destroyed medical facilities, resulting in a critical



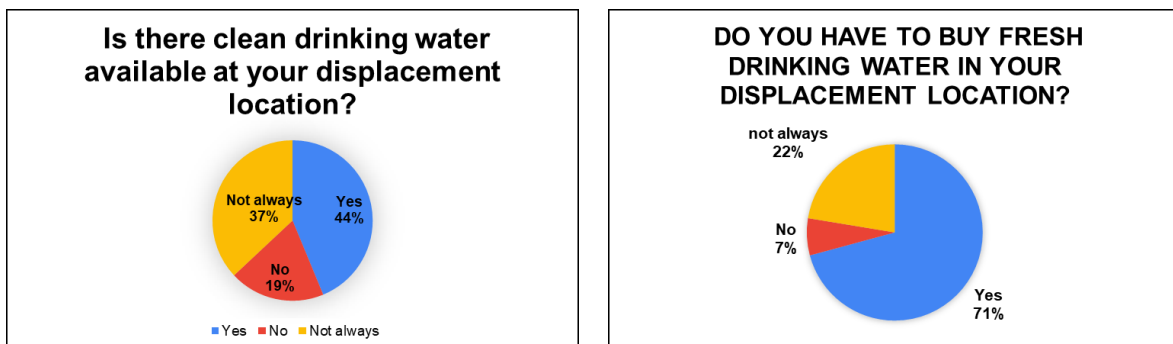
healthcare crisis that worsens the vulnerability of those with chronic health needs. This shortage significantly impacts the health and well-being of displaced staff and their families, especially for those with chronic illnesses, where interruptions can lead to life-threatening complications. The overall collapse of Gaza's healthcare system is evident, exacerbated by the destruction of major hospitals targeted during the Israeli occupation. The reliance on intermittent supplies from international organizations is unsustainable, highlighting the urgent need for intervention and the rebuilding of medical supply chains to address the escalating health crisis.

### Section 3: Availability of water, electricity, and internet services



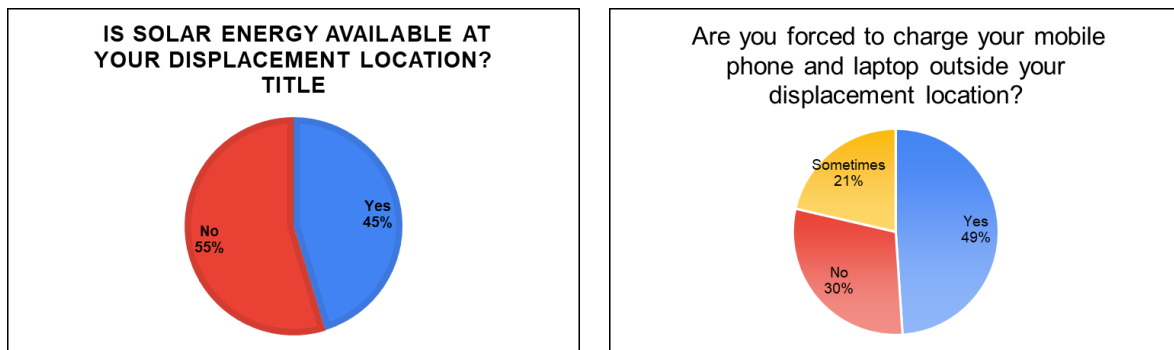
**Figure 6.** Availability of clean daily use water  
Source: Source: author documentation

Access to clean water is a fundamental human need, and its absence in displacement areas poses a severe public health crisis. Without clean water, the risk of waterborne diseases increases, adding significant daily burdens for displaced UCAS staff. Figure 6 illustrates the availability of clean water at displacement locations, revealing that while 48% of respondents report some access to clean water, its availability is inconsistent. Specifically, 34% state that water is "almost available," and 18% indicate they lack access altogether. Consequently, 59% of respondents must transport clean water to their displacement sites, while only 13% do not have to carry water. Those with better access are often staying in apartments or with relatives, while individuals in tents or public areas face greater challenges in obtaining clean water. This situation underscores the broader trend in conflict zones where infrastructure destruction endangers displaced populations.



**Figure 7.** Availability of clean drinking water  
Source: Source: author documentation

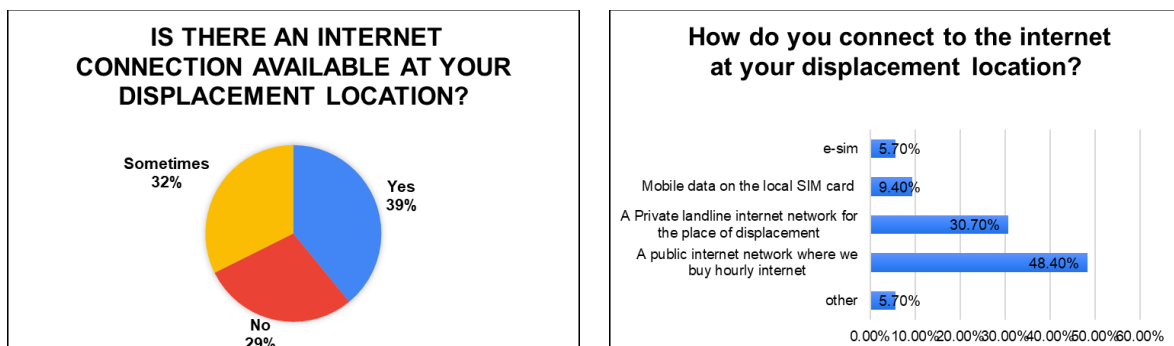
Figure 7 highlights the challenges in accessing clean drinking water at displacement locations, with 37% of respondents reporting infrequent availability. This scarcity forces 71% to buy or transport water from other areas, while 19% indicate no clean water is available nearby. Although 22% of respondents receive free water from organizations, the ongoing lack of access continues to exacerbate the suffering of displaced UCAS staff and their families. The financial burden of purchasing water adds to the challenges for families whose incomes have been disrupted by the conflict, underscoring the urgent need for humanitarian aid and investments in water infrastructure.



**Figure 8:** Availability of Electricity  
Source: author documentation

Figure 8 reveals that access to electricity is severely limited for the displaced UCAS staff. The majority of the respondents (55%) report intermittent or no access to electricity at their displacement locations.

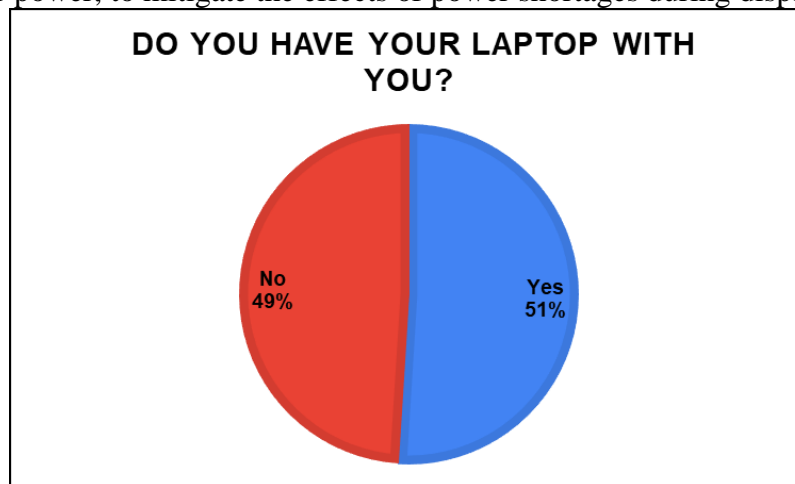
Electricity is a critical utility, especially for staff trying to maintain work responsibilities remotely or keep in contact with their loved ones. The lack of reliable electricity hinders basic functions such as communication, internet access, and even the ability to charge devices. For educators and administrators, this limitation impedes their ability to fulfil their roles, whether administrative duties like following up on student issues or academic duties that include online teaching. The data emphasizes the need for alternative energy solutions, such as solar power, to mitigate the effects of power shortages during displacement.



**Figure 9.** Availability of internet  
Source: author documentation

Figure 8 reveals that access to electricity is severely limited for the displaced UCAS staff. Although the majority of the respondents (39%) report intermittent or no access to electricity at their displacement locations.

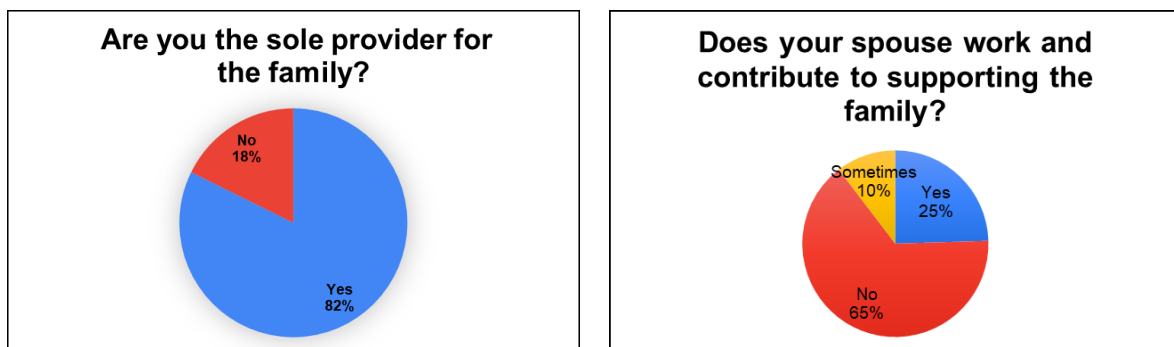
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**Figure 10.** Availability of a laptop  
Source: author documentation

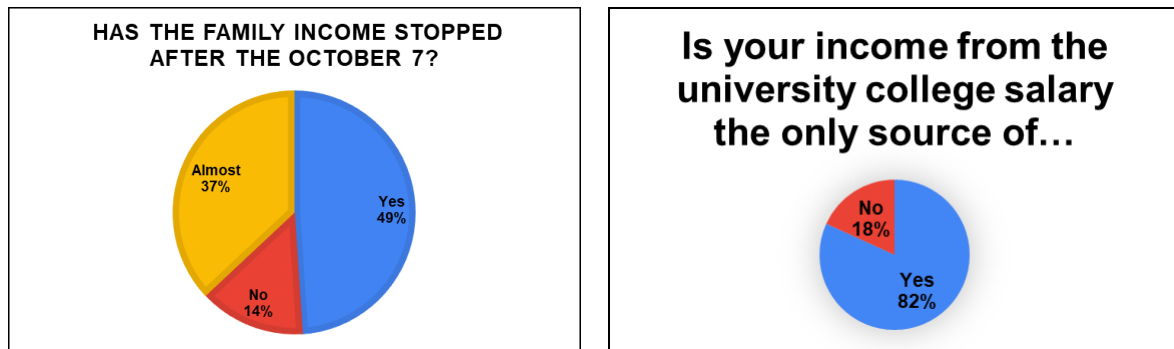
Figure 10 shows that while 51% of displaced UCAS staff have access to their laptops, 49% do not. This lack of access is due to the sudden nature of their displacement, damage during airstrikes, and limited electricity for charging. The inability to use laptops severely impacts both academic and administrative functions. For academic staff, laptops are vital for online teaching and research, while administrative staff rely on them to manage operations and coordinate responses during a crisis. This situation highlights the urgent need for emergency provisions to ensure staff can access essential tools to maintain educational continuity amid conflict.

#### Section Four: Family Income Resources



**Figure 11.** UCAS staff as a family provider  
Source: author documentation

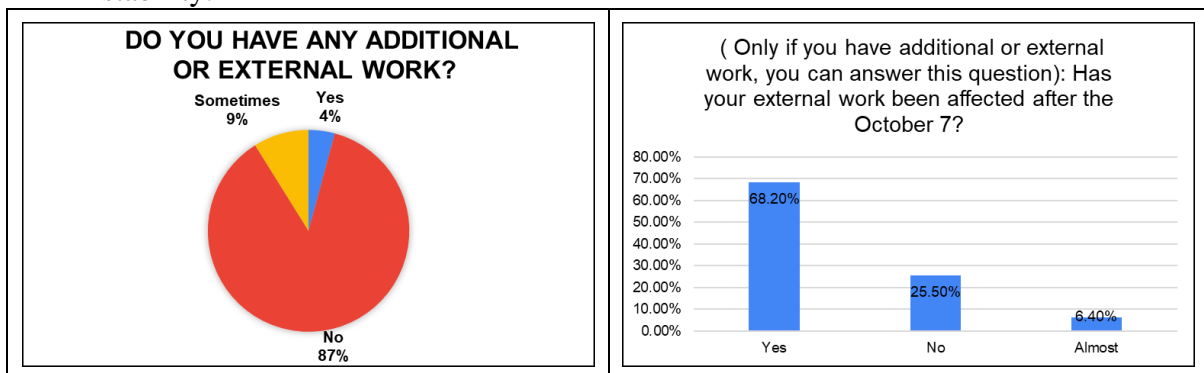
Figure 11 reveals that 82% of UCAS staff are the primary breadwinners for their families, with 65% reporting that their spouses do not contribute financially. Only 25% have spouses with stable jobs, while 10% indicate occasional contributions. This statistic highlights the immense burden on these individuals during the ongoing conflict, which has severely disrupted income streams. The economic challenges are exacerbated by the cessation of income for many staff members, placing significant financial strain on households. With limited access to alternative income sources and rising costs of essential goods, many families struggle to meet basic needs. This financial instability not only causes stress for individuals but also threatens the sustainability of educational institutions like UCAS, as staff prioritize immediate survival over long-term commitments. These findings emphasize the urgent need for financial aid and support for displaced educators to help them provide for their families while continuing their crucial work in education.



**Figure 12.** The continuation of the family income after Oct 7

Source: author documentation

Figure 12 illustrates that many UCAS staff experienced income disruptions after October 7, with 82% being sole providers for their families. Among them, 42% faced income discontinuation, while 37% reported their income had almost stopped, relying on donations. Only 14% stated their income remained unaffected. This situation places the majority of staff in a dire position to meet their families' basic needs. The cessation of regular income not only impacts their ability to provide but also causes psychological stress and uncertainty regarding future employment. This highlights the urgent need for financial aid and employment security for displaced educators to prevent long-term instability.



**Figure 13.** External work for the UCAS staff members

Source: author documentation

Figure 13 analyzes external work opportunities for UCAS staff before and after October 7, 2023. Prior to the conflict, only 4% had additional income sources, while 9% had potential temporary work opportunities. However, following the onset of conflict, 68.2% reported their external work was severely affected or completely halted. This loss exacerbates the financial challenges for staff reliant on multiple income streams to support their families, leaving them vulnerable. The decline reflects the broader economic collapse in Gaza, where destroyed businesses limit employment opportunities. This situation highlights the urgent need for comprehensive financial assistance and support for long-term economic recovery for displaced educators.

## Conclusion

This study highlights the complex challenges facing the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS) staff in Gaza following their displacement due to the conflict on October 7, 2023. The findings reveal a "triple crisis" impacting healthcare access, utilities, and income stability, profoundly affecting the personal and professional lives of academic and administrative staff.

The destruction of Gaza's infrastructure has severely limited healthcare access, with over half of the displaced UCAS staff lacking adequate medical facilities and many struggling with chronic health issues. The limited availability of medications and the near collapse of the healthcare system underscore the urgent need for international support. While mobile clinics offer some relief, they are insufficient for the extensive needs of the displaced population. Long-term investments are essential for rebuilding Gaza's healthcare infrastructure and ensuring a steady supply of medical resources.

Utilities such as water and electricity are also significantly impacted. About 59% of staff must transport clean water, and 55% face unreliable electricity access, complicating daily living and professional responsibilities. Financial challenges compound these issues, with 42% of UCAS staff losing income sources and another 37% reporting near-total income loss. This economic insecurity threatens both staff welfare and the sustainability of educational institutions.

Overall, this research underscores the urgent need for international intervention focused on healthcare, utilities, and economic stability. Comprehensive support is vital for strengthening the resilience of Gaza's educational institutions, which are critical for the region's future. Continued research should monitor the needs of displaced populations and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions amidst ongoing crises.

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