

The impact of Gaza's genocidal war: Scholasticide, trauma, and resilience among UCAS staff

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Abstract. Israel's genocidal war on Gaza has profoundly disrupted the educational landscape, creating significant challenges for institutions such as the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS). This study examines how Israel's war on Gaza has affected UCAS staff, with particular attention to displacement, property loss, and psychological trauma. To address this objective, the study employed a quantitative survey approach to assess the extent of material and personal losses among academic and administrative personnel. Analysis of data from 192 staff members revealed that 93% experienced displacement, 53% lost all property, and 43% lost a family member. The findings indicate that these multifaceted losses substantially strained staff members' ability to sustain their personal lives and academic responsibilities. These patterns reflect a systematic assault characterised as scholasticide—the targeted destruction of educators, academic environments, and the structures that sustain educational continuity—and educide, defined as the systemic dismantling of institutional infrastructure and educational continuity. This dual framework highlights how the destruction extends beyond incidental damage, aiming to erase educational continuity, community resilience, and academic identity in Gaza. Despite these challenges, UCAS staff demonstrated notable resilience. The study underscores the urgent need for global action to rebuild Gaza's educational sector and to support displaced educators.

Keywords: Gaza Genocidal war, Academic displacement, Scholasticide, Educide, Higher education,

Introduction

The University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS), established in 1998, is a leading institution of higher education in Gaza, offering diverse programmes in fields such as engineering, health sciences, and business. UCAS has long served as a central hub for technical and vocational education in Palestine, with the aim of fostering innovation among academics, scholars, and youth in the besieged Gaza Strip. However, Israel's ongoing genocidal war on Gaza (2023–2025) has severely disrupted the functioning and services of this institution, resulting in extensive damage and, in some cases, complete destruction. This devastation has deprived students and academics of vital resources, leaving many without a physical space to continue their education and professional activities.

Israel's attacks on civilian, health, and academic infrastructure have resulted in at least 62,000 direct deaths, more than 100,000 injuries, and the displacement of nearly the entire population of 2.3 million as of October 2023 (Mallapaty, 2024). Supporting this devastation with empirical evidence, Asi et al. (2024) found that 68.2% of educational facilities had sustained infrastructural damage, with many rendered functionally unusable. Their spatial analysis also revealed significant damage to other vital civilian sectors, including health and

water, illustrating the scale and concentration of the assault on essential infrastructure across Gaza. The extent and pattern of destruction raise serious humanitarian and legal concerns regarding the nature and intent of these attacks. Israel's targeting of essential civilian infrastructure, coupled with deliberate attacks on civilians and restrictions on humanitarian aid, has been collectively described as genocide by leading international experts (Agha et al., 2024; Amnesty International, 2024; United Nations, 2024).

As highlighted by (Asi et al., 2024), over 80% of educational facilities in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. This destruction forms part of what Scholars Against the War on Palestine (SAWP) identify as scholasticide: the deliberate targeting of Palestinian education through the systematic erasure of its institutions, infrastructure, and academic personnel. The term derives from the Latin *schola* (school) and *-cide* (killing), denoting the intentional destruction of education itself (Hajir & Qatob, 2024; Giroux, 2025). Beyond institutional demolition, scholasticide encompasses the direct targeting of educators and students through killing, forced displacement, or psychological harm resulting from the loss of family members, colleagues, homes, and learning environments. These acts collectively undermine the human and structural foundations necessary to sustain educational continuity. Public intellectuals and scholars describe scholasticide as the “total annihilation of Palestinian education” and emphasise its close connection to genocide, a characterisation the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has deemed plausible in relation to Israel's actions in Gaza (Ali, 2024).

Closely related, educide refers to the systematic dismantling of the educational ecosystem and the foundational conditions required for its continuity and recovery. It involves the destruction of infrastructure, the displacement of academic communities, and the collective psychological toll associated with the collapse of educational systems. The term combines *edu*, referring to education, and *-cide*, meaning killing, signifying the eradication of the capacity to sustain and regenerate education (Iriqat et al., 2025; Rabaia & Habash, 2024).

While recent studies, such as Asi, et al. (2024), have provided a necessary macro-level perspective on the physical destruction of educational infrastructure across the Gaza Strip, such broad spatial analyses inevitably overlook the intricate human toll experienced by the professionals sustaining these institutions. Consequently, this study examines the impact of the war on UCAS staff, focusing specifically on the consequences of displacement, property loss, and psychological trauma. This focus on UCAS staff is strategically important, as the institution serves as a central hub for vocational and technical education and functions as a microcosm of the broader sector. Unlike macro-scale research, this institutional-level analysis reveals the mechanisms of scholasticide “from within,” demonstrating how these disruptions undermine the resilience and professional continuity of educators essential to Gaza's recovery.

The following questions guide the research:

- (1) How has Israel's genocidal war on Gaza impacted the displacement and living conditions of UCAS staff?
- (2) What is the extent of property and family losses experienced by UCAS staff?
- (3) How have these challenges affected their professional responsibilities and the continuity of educational operations at UCAS?

Methods

This study employs a descriptive, quantitative, survey-based approach to examine the impact of displacement on academic and administrative staff at the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS) in Gaza. This design was selected as an appropriate method for

documenting the factual extent of scholasticide, particularly with respect to material destruction, displacement frequency, and human loss. The survey method enables the collection of comprehensive data on staff members' professional, psychological, and material challenges.

Participants

The target population of this study comprises academic and administrative staff at UCAS who were directly affected by displacement resulting from the ongoing genocidal war. A non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, was employed due to the extreme difficulty of accessing all staff members in active conflict zones. The total number of employees with fixed contracts at UCAS is 396; despite significant logistical constraints, 192 respondents participated in the survey, representing a response rate of approximately 48.5%.

Survey Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed to assess the multifaceted impact of the war on staff members. To ensure transparency and reproducibility, Table 1 outlines the structure of the survey instrument and the key variables assessed, which were derived from the study's research questions. The survey consisted of six key sections utilising multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

Table 1. Summary of Survey Instrument Domains and Variables

Section Domain	Key Variables / Items Assessed
1 Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of employment (Academic/Administrative) • Contract status (Fixed) • <i>Note: Age was excluded due to data sensitivity</i>
2 Family Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of family members • Housing type before the war (Extended/Nuclear family)
3 Displacement Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displacement occurrence (Yes/No) • Frequency of displacement (1-5 times, >10 times, etc.) • Primary cause of displacement (Shelling, orders, invasion) • Current place of displacement/shelter type
4 Location & Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place of residence before Oct 7 (Governorate) • Place of residence after Oct 7 (Governorate/Outside Gaza)
5 Material Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of housing destruction (Total/Partial/No damage) • Type of property loss (Home, agricultural land, car, shop)
6 Human Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of family members during the war (Yes/No) • Relationship to the deceased (Primary/Extended family)

Given that the survey items assessed factual events (e.g., displacement frequency and specific property loss) rather than latent psychological constructs, internal consistency reliability testing (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) was not applicable. Instead, to ensure instrument quality, the questionnaire underwent a face-validity review by three senior academics at UCAS to verify clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness given the sensitive context.



Data Collection Procedure

In recognition of the volatile and resource-constrained environment, a structured data collection protocol was implemented to promote both accessibility and safety. The survey link was disseminated through secure internal UCAS communication channels (official email and WhatsApp groups) to maximise participation despite intermittent internet access. The data collection process is illustrated in Figure 1.

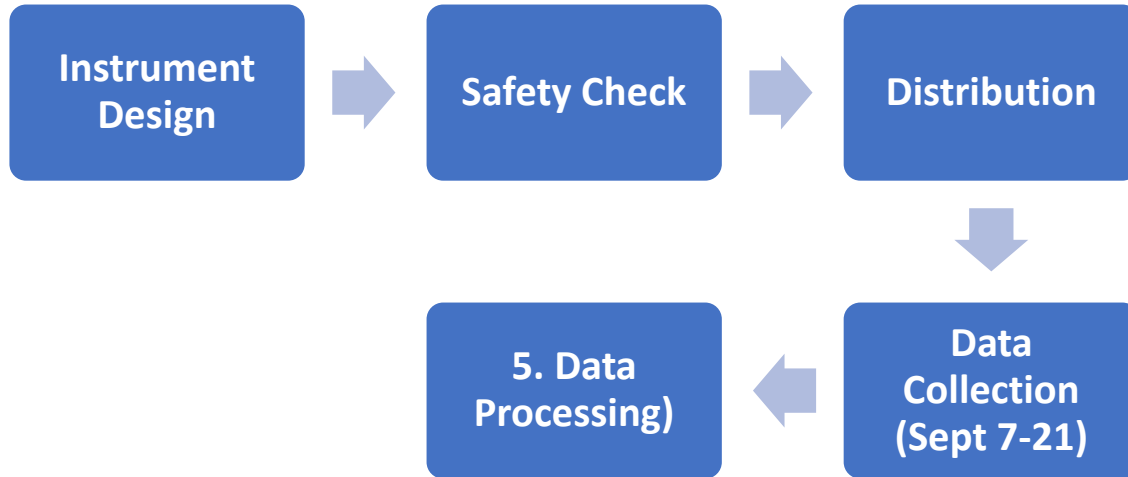


Figure 1. Data Collection Procedure

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to provide insight into the extent of displacement and its impact on UCAS staff. Frequency distributions and percentages were calculated to quantify challenges related to displacement conditions, professional disruption, and psychological well-being. The percentage for each category was calculated using the standard formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{n} \times 100\%$$

Where:

- P represents the percentage.
- f denotes the frequency of a specific response (e.g., the number of staff displaced).
- n represents the total number of valid respondents (192).

Ethical Measures:

Given the sensitive nature of the subject and the personal risks associated with participation, multiple ethical measures were implemented to protect respondents:

- **Informed Consent:** Participants were informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw without repercussions.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** No personally identifying information (such as names or contact details) was collected. Data were stored securely, and all responses were anonymised to safeguard participants' identities within a conflict zone.
- **Emotional Support:** Recognising the potential psychological distress associated with recounting traumatic experiences, respondents were provided with contact information for local psychological support services.

- Compliance with Ethical Guidelines: Although the extraordinary circumstances precluded a formal ethical review by a conventional institutional review board, all reasonable efforts were made to adhere to internationally recognised ethical research practices.

Result and Discussion

Theoretical Framework: Scholasticide and Educide

The Context of Genocide and Educational Destruction in Palestine

The Palestinian education system, particularly in Gaza, faces severe disruptions due to Israel's ongoing genocide and the displacement of educators, particularly since the Second Intifada. Approximately 9,700 Palestinian teachers lost their jobs during the 2021 Israeli genocidal war on Gaza (URWA, 2021), highlighting widespread instability within the education sector. Israel's genocidal policies, in violation of United Nations human rights conventions, have deliberately destroyed Palestinian educational resources and institutions (Buheji & Hasan, 2024). In May 2024, over 150 Palestinian academics and staff from universities in Gaza issued a unified statement affirming their determination to resume teaching and research despite the destruction of their institutions by Israeli military forces (Gaza Academics and University Administrators, 2024). This targeted devastation can be understood not only as an assault on infrastructure but also as a manifestation of scholasticide, in which the deliberate dismantling of academic institutions and personnel aims to erase the foundations of education itself. Such actions perpetuate educational deprivation and severely undermine Palestinians' prospects for a stable and self-determined future. In parallel, resilience within the Palestinian education system persists, reflected in a sustained commitment to transformation and perseverance amid adversity (Buheji & Hasan, 2024).

The Context of Educide and Scholasticide in Gaza

Recent studies have conceptualised educide and scholasticide as strategic assaults on educational systems within conflict zones. Iriqat et al. (2025) provided an in-depth analysis of educide, demonstrating how systematic attacks on educational institutions obstruct community recovery and perpetuate sociopolitical violence. Their research highlighted the extensive physical destruction of schools and universities in Gaza, thereby illustrating the broader implications of these actions for community identity and development.

Complementarily, Rabaia & Habash, (2024) examined the psychological consequences of educide for youth, revealing how educational disruption adversely affects emotional well-being and future aspirations. They argued that the targeting of educational infrastructure not only denies students access to knowledge but also inflicts lasting psychological trauma, thereby undermining their sense of agency and belonging. Similarly, Ali (2024) expanded this discourse by exploring scholasticide as the systematic dismantling of educational systems, in which deliberate targeting erodes community resilience and impedes post-conflict educational recovery.

Hajir and Qato (2025) further explored scholasticidal practices in academic spaces during periods of genocide, demonstrating how systemic political violence fractures educational continuity and subordinates academic life to ideological control. Building on this, Giroux (2025) situated scholasticide within a global framework, demonstrating how attacks on educational institutions jeopardise academic freedom and contribute to the erasure of cultural memory.



From Home/Classroom to Camp: The Challenges of Housing Destruction and its Effects:

The 2023–2025 Israeli genocidal war on Gaza has led to widespread destruction of housing and infrastructure, displacing approximately 1.9 million Palestinians and severely affecting educators' lives and educational services (Hamadeh, 2023; Muasher et al., 2024). As a result, displaced educators often lack access to essential resources such as shelter, clean water, and healthcare, making it nearly impossible to sustain their professional duties and further destabilising Gaza's educational landscape (UNRWA, 2021).

The psychological impacts on displaced educators are profound, as trauma resulting from displacement, home loss, and ongoing violence contributes to mental health conditions such as PTSD and depression (Hammad & Tribe, 2020). Recent studies have examined the severe psychological repercussions associated with war-induced displacement and trauma. Aldabbour et al. (2024) reported that 97.05% of participants experienced mild depressive symptoms or higher, while 84.37% and 90.56% reported mild anxiety and mild stress, respectively. This combined physical and psychological toll significantly constrains educators' ability to support their students, thereby further destabilising educational continuity. Aldabbour et al. (2024) emphasised the urgent need for mental health interventions to address this crisis and to support vulnerable groups, including educators.

The challenge of family loss among educators and its impact:

Israel's genocide in Gaza imposes profound challenges on educators, particularly in relation to family loss resulting from targeted violence. The psychological toll of family loss is substantial, with research indicating that such loss can lead to severe psychological distress and reduced teaching effectiveness (Radetić-Lovrić & Pećanac, 2020). Family support plays a crucial role in mitigating these impacts, as coordinated family resilience has been shown to help educators cope more effectively in violent contexts (Sousa et al., 2013).

In Gaza, however, limited support systems exacerbate grief and isolation, contributing to increased mental health challenges, such as PTSD and depression, among educators (Betancourt et al., 2013; Shehadeh et al., 2015). This psychological strain can also affect educators' ability to provide a stable learning environment, as they struggle to manage their own trauma while supporting students facing similar losses (Manzanero et al., 2017). Understanding these challenges is essential for informing the development of effective support systems to promote mental health and sustain education in conflict-affected areas.

Navigating Crisis: The Resilience and Coping Mechanisms of Educators:

Educators in war zones such as Gaza demonstrate resilience that is crucial for maintaining educational continuity amid violence and displacement. Resilience enables educators to persist despite adversity, particularly when supported by stress-management training and community networks (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Iannucci et al., 2020). Studies indicate that relational resilience, supported by professional networks among colleagues and communities, buffers educators from the stress of isolation and environmental challenges (Mansfield et al., 2016). Displaced educators also adapt by employing digital and community-based methods, thereby helping to ensure student stability during periods of crisis (Salha et al., 2024). Education symbolises resilience and resistance in Palestine, as collective strategies help sustain the system under conditions of occupation, benefiting both educators and students (Faraj, 2022).

Analysis

This section presents the empirical findings from the survey of 192 UCAS staff, followed by an in-depth discussion that situates the data within the broader context of Israel's genocidal

war on Gaza. The analysis examines key dimensions, including employment roles, family dynamics, residential changes, displacement patterns, housing destruction, property losses, and the profound personal toll of family member loss. A detailed interpretation accompanies each graph and table to clarify how these findings reflect the systematic targeting of educational and civilian infrastructure.

These patterns of widespread displacement, loss, and trauma reflect more than incidental consequences of war. They signal what scholars increasingly identify as scholasticide and educide, which involve not only the targeting of people and infrastructure but also the dismantling of institutional continuity, pedagogical function, and academic identity. The quantitative data, when viewed through this lens, underscore a broader strategy of erasing Gaza's intellectual and social resilience through deliberate educational collapse. This integrated framework allows each aspect of the data to be interpreted not as an isolated impact but as part of a systemic campaign to destroy the foundations of Palestinian education.

Section 1: Demographic Information

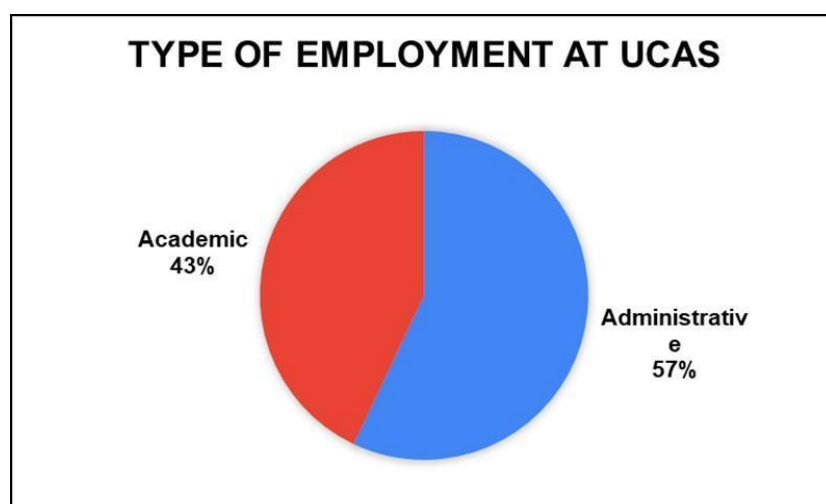


Figure 1 Type of employment at UCAS

Figure 1 shows that, among the 192 respondents, 109 were administrative staff and 82 were academic staff. The predominance of administrative staff highlights their essential role in maintaining institutional functions amid targeted attacks. This figure emphasises that the disruption extends beyond academic instruction and affects the institutional foundation. The resilience of these staff members illustrates the broader social impact of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, even as they face systematic targeting—an act increasingly recognised as part of educide, which includes the erosion of institutional capacity, workforce, and educational continuity.

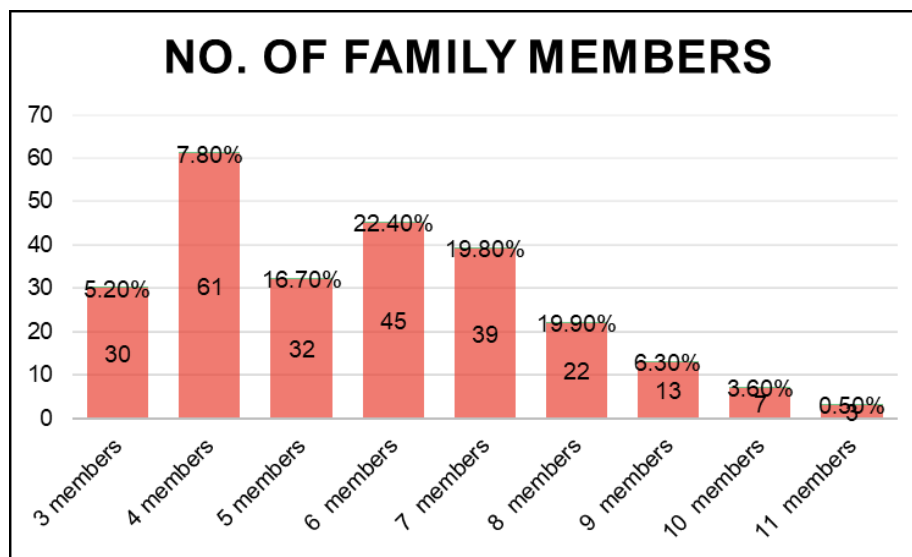


Figure 2 Type of employment at UCAS

Figure 2 shows the distribution of family size among UCAS staff. The most common family size was four members (32%), followed by six members (22.6%) and seven members (19.8%). This distribution suggests that many displaced staff members have relatively large families, which complicates relocation efforts and adds stress related to care and provision during the conflict. In Palestinian society, the nuclear family is closely interconnected with the extended family. Consequently, many families maintain close ties with extended relatives, such as grandparents and in-laws. These compounded challenges reflect a less visible dimension of educide, whereby instability in family life further undermines educators' ability to sustain their roles and weakens educational continuity.

Section 2: Housing information before and after October 7

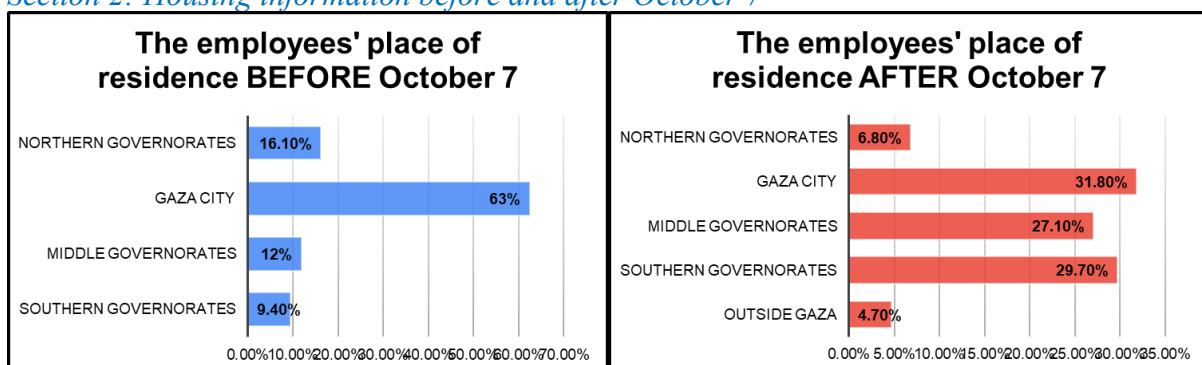


Figure 3. The UCAS staff's place of residence before and after October 7

Before the genocidal war, 63% of UCAS staff resided in Gaza City. Following October 7, this proportion declined to 31.8%, with substantial relocation to the Middle Area (27.1%) and the Southern Governorates (29.7%). Notably, 4.7% of staff evacuated Gaza entirely. This spatial redistribution aligns with patterns of conflict intensity, as northern Gaza experienced the heaviest bombardment (Asi et al., 2024). These patterns are consistent with findings by Muasher et al. (2024), who documented displacement trends in other conflict zones in which civilians gravitate toward perceived safer areas despite overcrowded and resource-depleted conditions. These enforced shifts also reflect a component of educide, as repeated displacement

undermines the institutional rootedness and geographic continuity necessary for sustaining education.



Figure 4. Was the displacement from home due to the war after October 7?

A total of 93% of UCAS staff reported displacement directly linked to the genocidal war after October 7, leaving only 7% who managed to retain stable housing. This figure underscores the widespread humanitarian toll of the conflict and reflects the destabilisation of everyday life. These findings are consistent with UNESCO's (2020) assertion that armed conflicts disproportionately destabilise educational communities by forcing educators into transient living arrangements that hinder professional continuity.

The near-total displacement of UCAS staff illustrates the pervasive impact of Israel's genocidal war on civilian life. Rather than constituting an incidental outcome, such extensive displacement indicates a strategy aimed at dismantling social and institutional continuity. This genocidal war appears designed to uproot communities and disrupt the reproduction of social and educational networks.

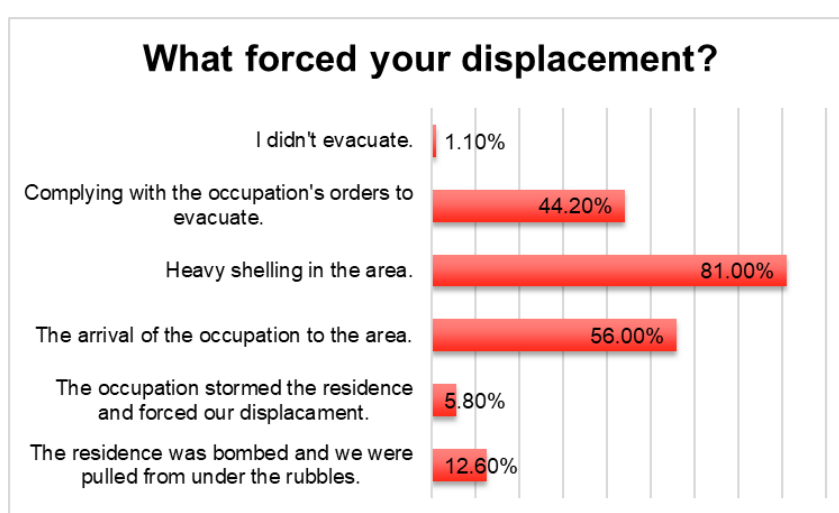


Figure 5. What forced your displacement?

In addition, the survey sought further clarification regarding the specific reasons for displacement. Figure 5 indicates that the primary causes of displacement were heavy shelling

(81%) and ground invasion (56%), with 44.2% of respondents reporting compliance with evacuation orders issued by the Israeli army. The destruction of homes (12%) further compounded the crisis.

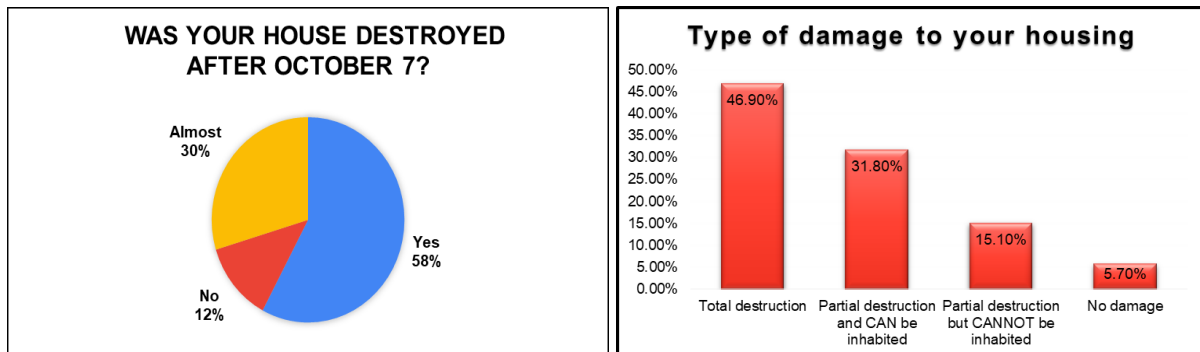


Figure 6. Type of housing destruction?

These tactics, including heavy shelling, invasion, and forced evacuation, reflect attempts to undermine mental and social cohesion. This pattern reinforces the ongoing process of educide documented in recent literature (Iriqat et al., 2025; Rabaia & Habash, 2024). The data also reflect the coercive nature of enforced evacuations, further illustrating the systematic devastation of civilian stability. Approximately 85% of staff reported total home destruction, while 30% reported partial damage. Even “livable” homes often lacked essential utilities, forcing occupants into precarious living conditions. The extensive destruction of housing is emblematic of policies that erode the foundational elements of civilian and academic life. Total or near-total destruction of homes, as reported by nearly 90% of respondents combined, underscores the severity of infrastructural damage.

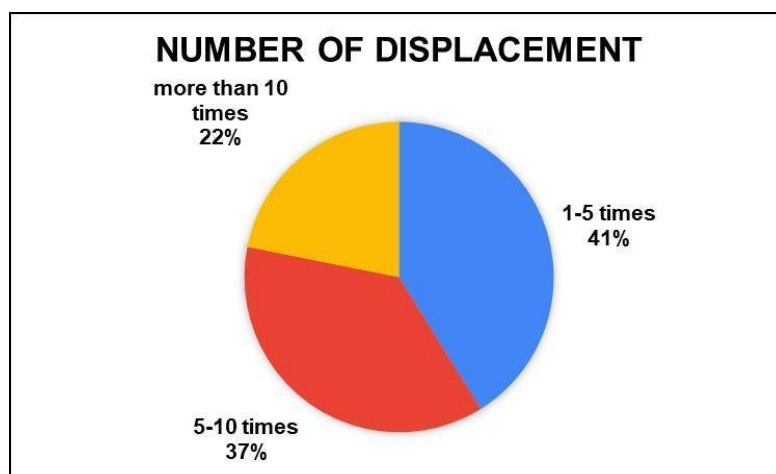


Figure 7. Number of displacements

With the continuation of the Israeli ground invasion, residents in Gaza were repeatedly forced to relocate whenever their area of displacement became threatened. As shown in Figure 7, UCAS staff experienced repeated relocations, with 41% displaced 1–5 times, 37% displaced 5–10 times, and 22% displaced more than 10 times.

Frequent displacement indicates the persistent instability that characterises conflict environments. Each episode compounds cumulative trauma and disrupts staff members' professional responsibilities and personal lives. The repeated forced displacement of academic

professionals reflects efforts to uproot them from the physical and institutional spaces that previously offered stability and continuity, a process central to scholasticide.

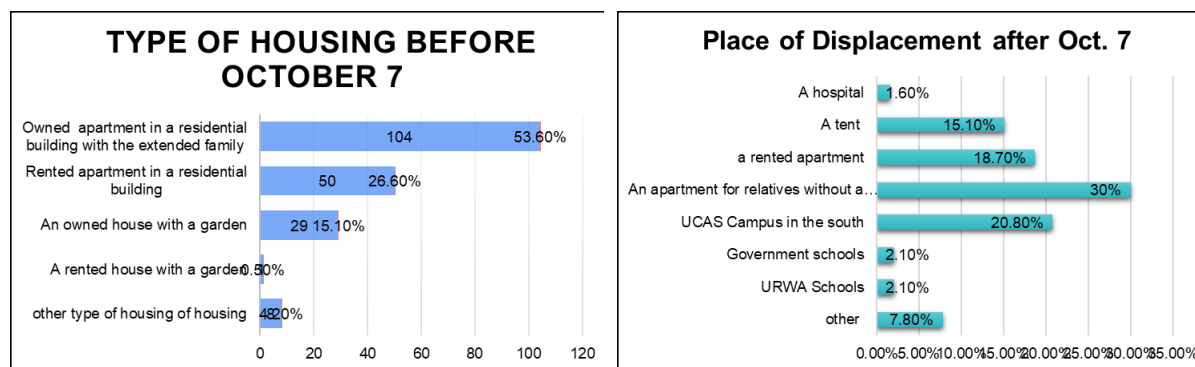


Figure 8. Type of Housing before and after October

As shown in Figure 8, before the Israeli genocidal war, 53% of UCAS staff resided in extended family homes—a cultural norm that fosters communal resilience—while 26.6% lived in nuclear family units. During the genocide, however, most staff reported relying on temporary accommodations. Specifically, 30% stayed with relatives without incurring rent, 20.8% sought shelter at the remaining UCAS campus in southern Gaza (which benefits from relatively stable infrastructure, such as solar power and internet connectivity), 18.7% rented apartments, and 15% lived in tents. A small proportion also sought refuge in alternative settings, including UNRWA schools, government schools, and other community facilities.



Figure 9. Type of property loss

As shown in Figure 9, total home loss accounted for 68.2%, while agricultural land destruction accounted for 24.5%, resulting in severe livelihood disruption. The extensive loss of property among UCAS staff illustrates the multifaceted impact of the genocidal war. Complete property loss signifies not only the destruction of physical assets but also a profound disruption to the economic and social foundations of the community. Agricultural land and other income-generating properties represent vital resources that support the subsistence and recovery of affected populations. This extensive property loss supports the interpretation that the current military campaign extends beyond collateral damage and forms part of a systematic effort to dismantle the foundations required for community resilience and educational continuity.

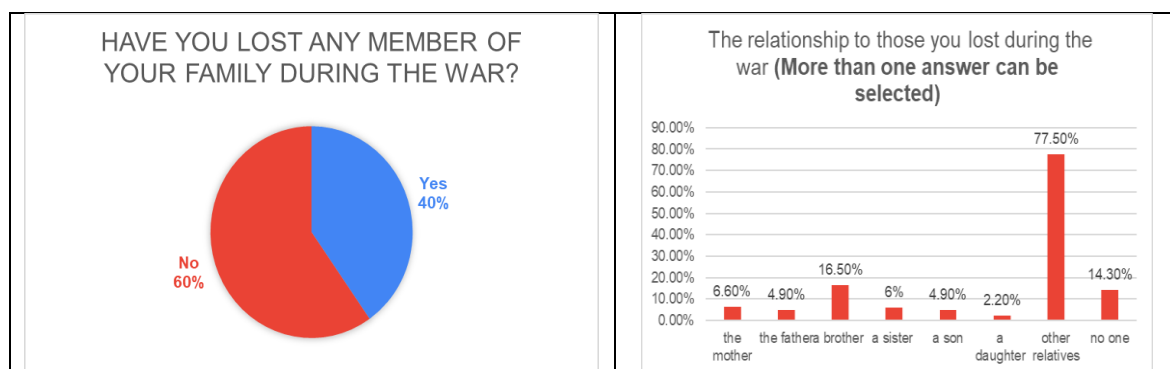


Figure 10. Family member losses

Figure 10 illustrates the human cost of the genocidal war; approximately 40% of staff lost at least one family member, with 29% reporting multiple losses. The loss of family members, as reflected in these data, represents the most acute human cost of the conflict. Such losses have far-reaching implications beyond immediate emotional distress, undermining social support systems critical to individual and collective well-being. In educational contexts, the grief and trauma associated with the loss of loved ones can significantly impair educators' ability to perform their roles effectively and disrupt the broader fabric of community resilience.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence of the systematic dismantling of the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS) when examined through the lenses of scholasticide and educide. The data revealed that 93% of staff were displaced and over 85% experienced total or partial home destruction, indicating that the assault extends beyond physical infrastructure to the lives of educators. These findings support the interpretation that the erosion of Gaza's educational capacity constitutes a strategic dimension of the war, with implications for long-term community resilience. However, staff persistence in resuming operations at the remaining southern campus highlights a form of institutional resilience in the face of this erosion. Safeguarding Gaza's higher education requires urgent international intervention, prioritising not only physical reconstruction but also immediate psychosocial support for the displaced academic community. Future efforts should focus on stabilising the human capital essential to Gaza's eventual recovery.

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