The Repercussions of Scholasticide on the Future of Children in Gaza

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Abstract:

The study aims at exploring the impact of 'scholasticide' on children's futures in the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023. To achieve this aim, the study depended on qualitative methodology, drawing on data from international reports issued by the United Nations. In addition, interviews were conducted with survivors of scholasticide, such as instructors and school principals from Gaza. The study concluded that scholasticide has a negative impact on the future of children far beyond the destruction infrastructure, this negative impact includes difficulties of rebuilding students' educational infrastructure in the near future, attacking students of their right to education. Limited educational opportunities, increased vulnerability to radicalization, learning gap and a bad academic performance among the children, students being exposed to violence will affect their' mental health, and the loss of school staff during the war will affect the quality of education. Education shapes a nation's future; attacking education means attacking a nation's future.

Keywords: *Scholasticide; Gaza Strip; Gaza's school; future of children; right to education.*

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Introduction:

Israel committed a 'crime of genocide' during the October 7, 2023, war in the Gaza Strip. This war is referred to as a 'genocide war', in reference to a case submitted by South Africa. (International Court of Justice,2025, p.01). Under the 1948 Genocide Convention, the crime is defined not just by the scale of violence, but by its specific intent. Article II clarifies that genocide involves deliberate acts aimed at the physical or biological destruction of a group whether national, ethnic, racial, or religious in whole or in part.

"In practice, Article II outlines several ways this destruction can manifest. It isn't limited to the immediate act of killing; it also encompasses the infliction of severe physical or psychological trauma. Furthermore, it covers the calculated imposition of living conditions such as starvation or displacement specifically designed to lead to a group's eventual collapse, whether in its entirety or in part."(United Nations, 1951, p. 280).'Genocide war' is considered a turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all aspects. (Muhammed Hüseyín Mercan,2023, p.71-91). Since all sectors are facing challenges in recovering, including the private one. (United Nation Development Programme,2024, p.10). One of the important sectors which was affected by the genocide was the education sector.

Numerous studies have highlighted the vital role of the education sector in promoting social, cultural, and economic development, particularly in developing countries (A. Zolfaghari, 2002, pp. 77–102). Therefore, the destruction of the education system is likely to have serious negative consequences for social, cultural, and economic development, especially in developing contexts such as Palestine. 7th of October 2023, war of extermination, deliberate attack on its schools, which caused scholasticide that destroyed the future generation's potential. Education shapes a nation's future; attacking education means attacking a nation's future. This research aims at exploring the impact of 'scholasticide' on children's futures in the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023. To achieve this aim, the study adopted a qualitative methodology, drawing on data from international reports issued by the United Nations.

In addition, interviews will be conducted with survivors of scholasticide, such as teachers and students from Gaza. This methodology is used to understand and analyze complex social and political phenomena. It relies on exploring the meanings and implications of various phenomena rather than relying on purely quantitative measurement. (Patrik Aspers,2019, p.139-160). This research depended on qualitative data analysis, especially as some scholars sent a call for enhancing saturation in qualitative data analysis. (Amber N. Sechelski et al,2019, p.795-821). Although there is an increase in the educational crises in conflict zones, there is limited research on how 'scholasticide' can affect future generations of children; there is a gap in how 'scholasticide' can be distinguished from general wartime educational disruption. Also, most research concentrates on the 2008-

2014 wars. Analysis about 7 October 2003 war's impact on Gaza's educational system is outdated.

The significance of the study can be noted because this study provides the analysis of Scholasticide and its consequences on the future of children and their right to education. The main question for this study: What is the impact of Scholasticide in Gaza's schools on the future of Children?

1. Scholasticide first coined, origin and meaning:

Scholasticide is a concept that was coined for the first time by Karma Nabulsi professor at the University of Oxford in 2009, but this concept has become more widely known since. (Zora Simic,2025, p.319-335). She conceptualized it in the context of the Israeli assault (Basma Hajir et all,2025, p.01-09). The term itself is a linguistic hybrid, merging the Latin schola (school) with the suffix -cide (killing). This conceptual framework was popularized by Karma Nabulsi to describe what she identifies as the 'systematic destruction' of the Palestinian educational infrastructure. Over the last decade, 'scholasticide' has transitioned from a niche term into a staple of political and legal discourse regarding the Palestinian context . (Doménguez,2024, p.123).

A clear description of the destruction and damage to education. It is a systematic approach to eliminating and destroying the educational infrastructure of a country or region, either partially or completely, often as a result of conflict, war, or mass killing. Thus, some studies have linked the crime of genocide to educational genocide and the killing of knowledge. (Ahmed Kabel,2023, p.159-175).This link between genocide and educational genocide has led to the resignation of some UN staff members from their posts. (Alison Phipps,2024, p.371-374).

'Educide' is another concept used synonymously with to 'scholasticide' to describe the systematic destruction of education. 'Educid' is believed to have emerged because the concepts "education" and "genocide" were combined to form the word "educide". (Rula Alousi,2022, p.333-342). Although the two concepts are often used interchangeably without any distinction between them, to refer specifically to educational genocide, most studies use the term "scholasticide", but scholasticide is more commonly used than 'Educide'. "Scholasticide"The term "scholasticide" has been used in reports issued. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,2024). The concept of scholasticide is more commonly used than the concept of educid.

Scholasticide related deliberate targeting of educational systems, during armed conflict or occupation. The term gained more attentional discussion in conflict zones such as Iraq, Gaza, and Afghanistan.(Henry A. Giroux,2025, p.01-16). The term Scholasticide rooted in broader concepts to erase or control knowledge systems of a people. Through history, many regimes have the destruction of education. In Cambodia the Khamer Rouge targeted inintellectuals.(Philippe MF

Peycam,2010, p.153-177). The U.S. invasion of Iraq many academics were assassinated.(Saad N. Jawad et al,2014, p.55-72). In Afghanistan the extremist groups have attak schools. None of the previous examples have witnessed more deliberate destruction of educational systems as Gaza in the October 7th war 2023.

During conflicts and wars international humanitarian law protected schools, because they are not a conflict zone, it is a place for learning, so it should be protected the right to education. (International Committee of the Red Cross,2023).

2. Background: Gaza's Education System pre- 7 October 2023:

It is important to provide an overview of Gaza's education system prior to the 7 October 2023 war in order to better understand the impact of scholasticide on the future of children in the Gaza Strip. This overview can be drawn from the Statistical Yearbook of General Education in the Gaza Governorates (2022/2023). Issued by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the number of students who were enrolled in the schools is 609,751. The number of school staff was (26776). The same book also mentioned that over 700 schools were run by UNRAW, the Ministry of Education, and private institutions. (Ibid,2023).

Schools operated double shifts because of the high number of students. (Ministry of Education and Higher Education,202022-2023). According to interviews conducted with a group of government teachers and teachers from UNRWA schools, before October 7, 2023, school education in the Gaza Strip faced significant challenges and problems affecting the quality of education. There was severe overcrowding in classrooms, as the number of students exceeded the schools' capacity, forcing many of them to operate on a two-shift system (morning and evening) due to the increasing demand for school education. There was a shortage of books and stationery, as well as educational staff, which affected the flow of the educational process. Additionally, the repeated wars waged by the occupation on the Gaza Strip in recent years led to instability in the educational process.

Despite overcrowded conditions, Gaza has historically maintained high levels of educational attainment, with a literacy rate of 96% recorded in 2011 (United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2020).

UNESCO defines literacy through the lens of functional understanding. According to their criteria, an individual is considered illiterate if they lack the basic capacity to read and write a simple, coherent statement regarding their own everyday life. In Palestine, the illiteracy rate among individuals aged 15 years and above reached 2.1% in 2023, making it one of the lowest rates globally. Over the past two decades, the illiteracy rate in Palestine has declined by approximately 85%, dropping from 13.9% in 1997 to 2.1% in 2023. During the same period, the rate among males decreased from 7.8% to 1.1%, while among females it fell from 20.3% to 3.2% (PCBS, 2024).

The sheer scale of the bombardment and the mounting casualties among students and faculty have brought the educational process in Gaza to a complete standstill. With the systematic destruction of school infrastructure, every single school in the Strip has been forced to close since the onset of the hostilities. This collapse has effectively stripped some 608,000 students of their fundamental right to an education, as 70 government buildings and 145 UNRWA schools have been repurposed as desperate shelters for the displaced. (PCBS, 2023).

3. Analyzing the impact of the Scholasticide on the future of children in the Gaza Strip :

Scholastic has a negative impact on the future of the children in the Gaza Strip. This negative impact can be noticed in several aspects. The following negative impact will be illustrated:

4.1. The impact of educational infrastructure destruction on the future of children in the Gaza Strip:

Numerous schools were bombed and destroyed, making it difficult to resume education in the near future. Since the beginning of the genocide in the Gaza Strip on 7 October 2023 until the date of preparing this study, the educational process in all schools in the Gaza Strip has stopped, This includes schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), as well as public and private schools. Consequently, students in the Gaza Strip have lost two full academic years and have been denied the opportunity to exercise their right to education. This situation was highlighted during the Human Rights Council's fifty-ninth session (16 June–11 July 2025). "Over 658,000 school-aged children in Gaza have been denied access to formal education and the protective support provided by a functioning education system."This prevents students from having their right to education. (Human Rights Council,2025). Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights reported that the war in Gaza forced (625,000) school-aged students in Gaza to miss an entire academic year of education (Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights,2024). In 2024, UN experts expressed their concern about destroying around (80%) of Gaza's schools. (United Nations Human Rights Office,2024).

According to data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the scale of destruction is staggering: approximately 74% of Gaza's schools have been either damaged or destroyed. With 352 educational facilities affected, the vast majority of the Strip's learning infrastructure has been rendered unusable .(OCHA,2023).

UNRWA reported according to an assessment published by the Education Group on April 1, and based on satellite images collected on January 25, 2025, that nearly (88.5 %) of school buildings in the Gaza Strip (499 schools out of 564 schools) have been directly impacted or damaged, and it is estimated that they either need complete reconstruction or significant rehabilitation work. Approximately one-third of these schools (a total of 162 schools) are UNRWA

schools. Based on interviews with survival instructors and educators in Gaza, educational infrastructure distraction in the Gaza Strip affected the future of children in the Gaza Strip, because there was a lack of electricity, internet, as well as infrastructure damage, which further limited access to digital learning and reduced the availability of online alternatives.

Addressing the educational catastrophe in Gaza is not just a humanitarian necessity; it is a profound international obligation. The global community must move beyond rhetoric to ensure genuine accountability for attacks on schools while fortifying the legal safeguards that protect learning environments. By fostering deep-rooted partnerships with NGOs and academic bodies, we can mobilize the resources needed to not only rebuild the physical infrastructure but to cultivate resilient, sustainable systems that restore the fundamental right to learn.In addition, international scholarship programs can play an important role in academic recovery. Beyond offering immediate access to education, these initiatives help rebuild academic capacity and contribute to long-term peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected areas (Anas Almassri, 2024, pp. 102–476).

Besides, many schools turned into shelters for displaced families, according to the UNRAW-turned-shelter in Nuseirat. (UNRWA,2024). limiting their ability to function as educational institutions. According to the UNICEF report. ‘Education Under Fire: How Conflict in the Middle East is Depriving Children of Their Schooling’ shows that scholasticide creates a lost generation that receives insufficient education. (UNICEF,2015).



Source © 2024 UNRWA Photo: UNRWA school-turned-shelter in Nuseirat, Middle Areas, after it was hit.

4.2. The impact of losing educational staff on the future of children in the Gaza Strip:

Perhaps the most enduring scar left by the ongoing scholasticide is the systematic erosion of Gaza's human capital within the education sector. The loss is not merely physical or structural; it is the tragic and permanent disappearance of

an entire generation of educators, administrators, and specialized staff. Without this professional backbone, the institutional memory and pedagogical expertise required to sustain a functioning school system are being hollowed out. The loss of educational staff during the war by killing, displacement, or by causing incapacitation of school staff has affects the functioning of schools, and undermines the long-term educational prospects of the children in the Gaza strip.

It's not just the school building destruction that affected the ongoing educational process; the loss of qualified teachers will affect the children's future and affect the quality of education. Because it will be hard to replace them, this will include creating ignorant generations, said one of the school principals interviewed in Gaza. As he suggested, the solution to prevent this ongoing ignorant generation is for the UN to break its silence and take action to prevent this scholasticide.

"The toll on Gaza's intellectual life has been devastating, characterized by a staggering loss of life among both the youth and the academic community. Data from OCHA reveals that within just the first two months of the conflict, the educational sector was already in mourning for over 4,000 students and 209 educators. This isn't just a matter of statistics; it represents a profound hollowing out of the Strip's qualified teaching force, leaving a void that will be nearly impossible to fill." It also indicated that the number of Palestinian schools damaged or destroyed (352) represented an estimated 74% of the schools in all of Gaza. (OCHA,2023).

4.3. Psychological and emotional impact on students:

The collapse of Gaza's educational infrastructure has triggered a mental health crisis of unprecedented proportions. UN Security Council Resolution 2712 (2023) explicitly highlights this, voicing grave concern over the 'disproportionate effect' of the conflict on children. By acknowledging that the disruption of education has a 'dramatic impact,' the Council underscores that the loss of schooling isn't just an academic setback it is a trauma that inflicts lifelong scars on a child's physical and emotional well-being. (UN Security Council,2023). The deep concern about the children's physical and mental health expressed in the Security Council resolution 2712 (2023) agrees with the concerns of a school counsellor who was interviewed from Gaza.

'Students are no longer the same, said a school counsellor interviewed from Gaza. 'They can't focus, what they faced is not easy, they are exposed to constant trauma, loss, displacement, which led to anxiety, depression, killing, scenes of violence, explosion, etc., this psychological impact could shape the entire generation's future.

To understand how students' mental health could shape the entire generation's future. The answer came from a psychologist who participated in the interviews, who thinks that unstable learning environments affect students'

concentration and academic performance, and rising school dropout rates due to economic hardship and social instability. According to a school.

4.4. Threat to Academic and Professional Future:

Scholasticide could threaten the academic and professional future of children, as expressed by counsellors during interviews conducted. The explanation is that prolonged disruption of education can mean a whole generation may lose crucial learning years, creating a learning gap and poor academic performance among children. That may cause the limiting of educational opportunities, because 'interruption of education for two academic years led to students losing previously acquired academic skills and knowledge, resulting in learning gaps that are difficult to remedy in the short term.

As one counsellor put it during interviews conducted: 'there are the new students enrolling in schools for the 2023-2024 academic year who have not been able to enter schools at all, and thus they will suffer from educational loss that will affect their future'.

Another explanation provided by a school principal who participated in interviews explained how scholasticide could create a learning gap between generations. 'The high school students who were unable to take the exam for two academic years, despite the efforts of the Palestinian Ministry of Education, could not progress to the exam and join higher education.

Conclusion:

This study concluded that scholasticide has a negative impact on the future of children, this negative impact includes: First, the destruction of schools and educational infrastructure because many schools were bombed and destroyed, making it difficult to resume education in the near future. In addition, the study shows that many schools have been turned into shelters for displaced families, limiting their ability to function as educational institutions. One of the schools' infrastructures that have been exposed to danger is electricity, internet, and infrastructure hindered digital learning and online alternatives. Second the study found that scholasticide has a negative impact on the future of children, because the loss of teachers and educational staff, because many teachers and academics were killed, leading to a severe shortage of qualified personnel. In addition, many educators were displaced to safer areas inside or outside the region disrupted educational continuity. This will cause a difficulty in replacing these losses due to the blockade and restrictions on hiring. Besides, losing many teachers during the war will affect the quality of education. All this will have a negative impact on the future of the children. Third, the study found that psychological and emotional impact on students, because children who witnessed destruction and loss suffer from trauma, anxiety, depression, and PTSD. This will affect their' mental health of the children. Also, unstable learning environments affect students' concentration and academic performance. One of the negative impact the scholasticed create on

the future of the children, the rising school dropout rates due to economic hardship and social instability. the three of the previous negative impact of the scholasticed will threat to their academic and professional future.

Recommendations:

The study recommended that scholasticide is a silent erasure that will affect the future for a whole generation negatively. It's time for UN organization to break their silence, take action to prevent this scholasticide, because Schools are not a conflict zone, it is a place for learning, so it should be protected. The findings of the study revealed that schooling disruption has a negative impact on children's future.

Based on these results, the study recommends that future research should focus on strategies for educational recovery in post-conflict settings, with particular attention to providing mental health support.

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