



## Palestinian EFL Students' Attitudes Toward E-Learning and Blended Learning during the 7th of October War on Gaza

Mohammed Farrah<sup>ID\*1</sup>, Shorouq Abu Zainh<sup>\*\*1</sup>, Hiba Sweity<sup>\*\*\*1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> English Department, Hebron University (Palestine)

\*✉ [mfarrah@hebron.edu](mailto:mfarrah@hebron.edu)

\*\*✉ [shorouqabuzainh@gmail.com](mailto:shorouqabuzainh@gmail.com)

\*\*\*✉ [hebasweity@gmail.com](mailto:hebasweity@gmail.com)

Received:03/06/2024

Accepted:16/09/2024

Published:01/04/2025

### Abstract:

The beginning of the Israeli military aggressive attack on Gaza after the 7th of October resulted in the disruption of education in Palestine at universities, schools, and kindergartens. Online learning can provide learners with opportunities to employ learning technologies during challenging conditions to secure somehow conducive learning environments during wartime. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of EFL students in Palestinian universities toward e-learning and blended learning during the Gaza War on October 7th. This study examines both, the benefits and the challenges of e-learning and blended learning in general, as well as the challenges of e-learning and blended learning during the Gaza War on October 7th, from the Palestinians' points of view. The researchers used a quantitative method in this study. In order to collect data, they distributed a questionnaire among six Palestinian universities: Hebron University, Birzeit University, Bethlehem University, and Al-Quds University Palestine Ahliya University, An-Najah National University. In the questionnaire, the participants were 98 students (87 females and 11 males), and all participants have tried e-learning and blended learning experimentation during this Gaza war October 7th crisis. Overall, students' attitudes toward e-learning and blended learning diverged as to whether to conduct e-learning or blended learning as a continuation of the semester within the 7th of October Gaza War (2023-2024). The researchers concluded that e-learning has emerged as a preferred option for many students due to its ability to address safety concerns, financial constraints, and convenience. It is especially useful during times of war and economic instability. On the other hand, some respondents prefer blended learning because of its perceived benefits in promoting fairness, adaptability, and improved learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** *E-learning; Online Learning; Blended-Learning; Attitudes; Benefits; Challenges; Gaza war 7th of October.*

## اتجاهات الطلبة الفلسطينيين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية نحو التعلم الإلكتروني والتعلم

### المدمج خلال حرب السابع من أكتوبر على غزة

محمد فراح<sup>1\*</sup>، شروق أبو زينة<sup>1\*\*</sup>، هبة السويطي<sup>1\*\*\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة الخليل (فلسطين)

[mfarrah@hebron.edu](mailto:mfarrah@hebron.edu) ✉\*

[shorouqabuzainh@gmail.com](mailto:shorouqabuzainh@gmail.com) ✉\*\*

[hebasweity@gmail.com](mailto:hebasweity@gmail.com) ✉\*\*\*

تاريخ النشر: 2025/04/01

تاريخ القبول: 2024/09/16

تاريخ الاستلام: 2024/06/03

### ملخص:

أثر الهجوم العسكري الإسرائيلي العدواني منذ السابع من أكتوبر تشرين الأول بشكل كبير على العملية التربوية في غزة والضفة الغربية وعطل التعليم في رياض الأطفال والمدارس والجامعات، ولهذا لجأت المؤسسات التعليمية للتعليم الإلكتروني لما يوفره من فرص لاستمرار التعليم في الظروف الصعبة مثل الحروب. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على آراء طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجامعات الفلسطينية نحو التعليم الإلكتروني والتعليم المدمج خلال حرب غزة في السابع من تشرين الأول (أكتوبر). وحاول الباحثون دراسة فوائد وتحديات التعليم الإلكتروني والمدمج بشكل عام وكذلك تحديات التعليم الإلكتروني والتعليم المدمج خلال حرب غزة من وجهة نظر الفلسطينيين. استخدم الباحثون المنهج الكمي في هذه الدراسة. ولجمع البيانات، تم توزيع استبانة على ست جامعات فلسطينية: جامعة الخليل وجامعة بيرزيت وجامعة بيت لحم وجامعة القدس وجامعة فلسطين الأهلية وجامعة النجاح الوطنية. بلغ عدد المشاركين في الاستبيان 98 طالبًا (87 أنثى و11 ذكرًا). بشكل عام، تباينت مواقف الطلاب تجاه التعليم الإلكتروني والتعليم المدمج حول ما إذا كان يجب إجراء التعليم الإلكتروني أو التعليم المدمج كاستمرار للفصل الدراسي خلال حرب غزة في السابع من تشرين الأول (أكتوبر). وخلص الباحثون إلى أن التعليم الإلكتروني ظهر كخيار مفضل للعديد من الطلاب بسبب قدرته على معالجة المخاوف المتعلقة بالسلامة والقيود المالية والراحة وهو مفيد بشكل خاص في أوقات الحرب وعدم الاستقرار الاقتصادي، ومن ناحية أخرى، يفضل بعض المشاركين التعلم المدمج بسبب فوائده المتصورة في تعزيز العدالة والقدرة على التكيف وتحسين نتائج التعلم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التعلم الإلكتروني؛ التعلم عبر الانترنت؛ التعلم المدمج؛ الاتجاهات؛ الفوائد؛ التحديات؛ حرب غزة 7 أكتوبر.

## 1. Introduction

The recent technological advancement transformed the educational arena, making learning accessible and not confined to the traditional educational institutions. The universal transmission towards online learning was catalyzed by the Covid-19 pandemic (December, 2019) and the interruptions to the educational process. This global shift accelerated the introduction of new educational approaches such as such as blended learning. In this type of learning there is a combination of online learning and in-person instruction. Students gained greater control over their education and they adapted to different learning environment.

Historically, wars interrupted various facets of people's daily life. This disruption includes compelling people to make a shift to new realities. Recently, people in Gaza, Lebanon, and Ukraine have undergone similar disturbances. It did not take a long time for Ukrainian since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic and the start of the Russian Ukrainian war in 2022. This shift online learning continued and online learning and teaching became a basic part of the educational process. According to Galynska and Bilous (2022), both students and educators faced various problems as they tried to continue the educational process and navigated the complications of education during wartime. Depending on the circumstances, the educational institutions in Ukraine were obliged to adapt both online and in-person classes, when circumstances allow.

Likewise, since the 7th of October and the Zionist Israeli aggressive war on Gaza, Palestinian educational institutions have suffered a lot both in Gaza and the West Bank. In Gaza, the educational process stopped at all levels. In 2023-2024, during the Gaza war October 7th, education in Gaza strip has come to a halt at every level According to reports, at least 439 Palestinian higher education workers have been killed as of November 2023, and Israeli strikes have damaged buildings belonging to five of Gaza's six universities, involving the Islamic University of Gaza, where the president was murdered by an airstrike. However, the education process in Gaza is unable to continue due to the heavy airstrikes that damaged schools, colleges, universities, and airstrikes have also caused damage to the internet and network structures. A huge number of students and teachers were killed by the Israeli forces.

In the West Bank, the educational system developed in a different manner. Though the war is on Gaza, it had a profound impact on the learning process in the West Bank. Most of the educational institutions in the West Bank shifted to blended learning due to various challenges such as the aggressive attacks by Israeli settlers, unsafe transportation, and the large number of Israeli checkpoints and barriers. In this type of blended learning there was online learning for the students who cannot reach their institutions and in-person learning for the students who can reach their institutions. During the war, both students and educators in the West Bank educational institutions faced numerous challenges such as insecurity, unreliable internet access, shortage in the online resources, restricted movement and transportation due to the Israeli barriers, and financial constraints as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have faced unemployment due to lack of work. All of the aforementioned challenges severely stalled online learning efforts. After more than six months of the war, a number of West Bank universities in the West Bank, coordinated by the Ministry of Education, initiated a tuition-free enrollment to online courses to students in the Gaza Strip. The students pointed out challenges such as poor internet connection and inability to communicate efficiently with instructors. They added that though the West Bank universities provided them with the opportunities to enroll in the universities they faced psychological problems as their thoughts were often with their families amidst continuing bombing and death threats. However, in the Gaza Strip all educational institutions were closed due to the war on Gaza. In August 2024, some Universities in Gaza like

Islamic University of Gaza, Al-Aqsa University and Al-Quds Open University (despite lack of resources and psychological stress on the part of both instructors and students) transitioned to online learning focusing on theoretical courses and postponing practical ones.

Consequently, this study aims to examine Palestinian EFL students' attitudes toward e-learning and blended learning during 7<sup>th</sup> of October Gaza war. Moreover, it investigates both the benefits and obstacles encountered by Palestinian EFL students when engaging in blended learning in the second semester amidst the Gaza war. Lastly, it seeks to indicate students' opinions toward the evaluation during online classes in the first semester.

### **1.1 Significance of the study**

Since the Gaza war has started on October 7th, the education process in all Palestinian institutions and schools conducted e-learning for the first semester. E-learning was an essential resource to pursue the educational process in the first semester, because there were no alternatives for students in Palestine to continue their education. However, universities and schools have implemented blended-learning for the second semester. Students' perspectives have varied regarding it. This study will show the attitudes of Palestinian EFL students toward e-learning and blended -learning during Gaza war October 7th. Additionally, it will also consider the benefits and challenges that students have encountered during e-learning and blended-learning.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Because of the outbreak of the Gaza War on October 7th, Palestinian students in the West Bank switched to online education to continue their education in spite of the crisis that resulted in school closures and disruptions of traditional teaching methods. Nevertheless, most of the Palestinian students experienced important challenges during their attempt to cope up with the novel e-learning environment. Specifically, they encountered problems related to bad internet connectivity and lack of preparedness to the new learning environments. Therefore, universities started utilizing blended learning in the second semester as an alternative to merely depending on e-learning. This research aims to assess the perspectives of Palestinian EFL students regarding blended learning and e-learning amid the Gaza war on October 7th. Furthermore, it aims to investigate both the benefits and difficulties of blended learning and e-learning that Palestinian EFL students have encountered.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to:

1. Examine the attitudes of Palestinian EFL students toward e-learning and blended learning during the 7th of October War on Gaza.
2. Explore the challenges of e-learning that Palestinian EFL students encountered before the 7th of October War on Gaza.
3. Explore the challenges of e-learning that Palestinian EFL students encountered midst the 7th of October War on Gaza.
4. Examine Palestinian EFL students' attitudes towards the evaluation and assessment process midst the 7th of October War on Gaza.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Palestinian EFL students towards e-learning and blended-learning during the 7th of October War on Gaza?
2. What are the challenges of e-learning that Palestinian EFL students encountered before the 7th of October War on Gaza?
3. What are the challenges of e-learning that Palestinian EFL students encountered midst the 7th of October War on Gaza?

4. What are the attitudes of Palestinian EFL students towards the evaluation and assessment process amidst the 7th of October War on Gaza?

## **2. Literature review and theoretical framework**

This section includes theoretical and practical reviews for online learning. On the theoretical level, online learning is connected to some learning theories such as social constructivism and interactionist theories. The constructivist and interactionist theories emphasize the importance of interaction and collaboration in the educational process. For example, Vygotsky (1978) viewed learning as a social process. There is no doubt that the lack of interaction in online learning can have a profound impact on the nature of interaction in the learning process (Farrah et al., 2022; Farrah & Jabari 2021). This theoretical framework helps to contextualize the finding of the reviewed studies that mostly highlighted students' preferences of traditional learning due to the perceived challenges in online environments (Zboun & Farrah, 2021; Assaiqeli et al., 2023). Additionally, this review is related to the socio-technical approach where the design and performance of any organisational system can not succeed unless both 'social' and 'technical' aspects are brought together. According to Checkland (1999), there is an interplay between technological tools and social factors in the educational context. Geopolitical contexts (war and instability) and online learning can interplay together and have a profound impact on the educational process (Khaniukov et al., 2022; Galynska & Bilous, 2022). The following studies highlights the potential benefits of online learning as well as the expected challenges that must be addressed to improve the intended learning outcomes.

Zboun and Farrah (2021) indicated in their research that students believe that the challenges of e-learning outweigh the benefits. For instance, the majority of the students preferred traditional (face-to-face) courses or classes due to the difficulties they faced in online courses, including poor internet connection and limited interaction between instructors and students. However, a small number of students were in favor of online classes.

Farrah and Al- Bakry (2020) explored Palestinian EFL students' views on the challenges of online learning during Covid-19. Additionally, they evaluated the efficiency of online learning in facilitating the learning process and enabling learners to achieve their goals. The researchers reported that students reported positive experiences towards online learning. However, some students experienced significant challenges problems with online learning. This may affect its effectiveness. Based on the results of the study and students' views, the researchers offered some suggestions to overcome some of the challenges.

In a quantitative study, Assaiqeli et al. (2023) explored the challenges of ELT during the new normal in three countries: Malaysia, Turkey, and Palestine. The researchers in the three countries pinpointed some problems that faced learners and educational institutions. This included technological glitches, instructors' flexibility, and learners' motivation. Finally, the researchers indicated that learners and educators in the three countries experienced unique but similar challenges in the field of English language teaching (ELT). Similarly, Abdullah et al. (2023), in a quantitative study, examined the impact of online learning on learners' achievement. They found that online learning has several advantages. According to them, online learning has the benefit of offering the needed flexibility that meets the needs of learners. Additionally, they found that online learning is capable to enhance learner autonomy by allowing learners to learn outside of the classroom at their convenience. They concluded that blended learning facilitate learners' engagement and performance and enhanced learning outcomes. Mukhtaramkhon and Jakhongirovich (2022) aimed to explore the benefits and drawbacks of blended-learning. They found out that numerous students lack internet access, including within their classroom settings. So, the researcher suggested that any integration of



blended learning strategies into an organization's educational approach must consider this limitation. Likewise, Micaela and Jazmin (2023) reported that online learning largely succeeds when there is reliable technology. However, when technical issues arise, they impede the learning process.

In a qualitative study, Khaniukov et al. (2022) explored the experience of distance learning organization at the clinical department (the Internal Medicine Department) in Ukraine during the war and the problems encountered during online classes. They reported that though the department effectively adapted to online delivery, it encountered problems like limited clinical training, mental health issues, and unstable internet access. Moreover, they found that both instructors and learners have experienced significant challenges when moved to online learning during the war. These difficulties included issues such as different time zones differences, emotional distress, poor internet connectivity, security concerns, and flickering electricity.

Artyukhov et al. (2023) offered an analysis of information support for e-learning amidst Russian-Ukraine war. Their study underscored the importance of ICTs in sustaining continuousness during war, notwithstanding internet connectivity problems and psychological challenges encountered by both teachers and students. They concluded that a well-structured online learning platform will establish an affective environment for achieving sustainable development objectives via providing excellent educational experiences. The environment for e-learning requires not only developing material but also organizational and technical support for online, blended, and distance learning. Moreover, the researchers stated that, as proved by Ukraine's experience during the war, other countries are likely to find advantages in the use of different types of distance learning amid circumstances in which they have obstacles in moving around. In a qualitative study, Galynska and Bilous (2022) assessed the challenges that encountered higher education institutions in Ukraine in the war context. They reported several problems such as poor online infrastructure, lack of access to devices, and challenges in maintaining academic standards in wartime in Ukraine.

Kononova et al. (2024) investigated both students and instructors' attitudes at Kharkiv higher education institution towards online learning amidst Ukraine war. The study identified key challenges such as technological challenges that included bad internet connectivity and lack of access to online platforms and technological tools such as high-quality microphones and licensed software. Additionally, both teachers and students missed face-to-face interaction, thus affecting learning experiences and contributing to students feeling of isolation. The challenges deeply impacted the educational process in general and the quality of instructions in particular.

An article written by Scholars at risk Network website (2023) reported that, in Gaza, education across various levels has stopped because of insecurity, unreliable access to electricity and internet connectivity necessary for e-learning, and lack of essential resources. Similarly, in the West Bank, increased Israeli settlers' violence and restrictions on movement have compelled higher education institutions to transition exclusively to online modes of instruction.

In this review, we explored the debate on online and blended learning. There are some similarities in the findings of the above studies. Several studies reported significant technological challenges. the challenges included lack of access to technology or suitable online infrastructure and poor internet connectivity (Assaiqeli et al., 2023; Artyukhov et al., 2023; Galynska & Bilous, 2022; Khaniukov et al., 2022). The Palestinian and Ukrainian studies (wartime zones) highlighted some extra challenges such as emotional stress, anxiety and lack of security. Moreover, some studies highlighted that students' engagement was influenced by the shift to online or blended learning. For example, while Abdullah et al. (2023) reported that online learning improved student engagement,

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Assaiqeli et al, (2023) highlighted challenges related to motivation and levels of participation. Another issue that is highlighted in the literature review is psychological stress on the part of both instructors and students that added salt to injury to those who are involved in online learning in war affected areas (Assaiqeli et al., 2023; Artyukhov et al., 2023; Galynska and Bilous, 2022; Khaniukov et al., 2022)

As some of the reviewed studies reported positive experiences on the part of students and their level of engagement, others underscored significant challenges like connectivity, power outage and reduced interaction. Clearly, online learning or blended learning can offer some advantages in circumstances like Covid-19 and wars, but nobody denies that there are unique obstacles like access to internet and technology.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Design of the study:

In this study, a quantitative method was used, and the data was collected through an online questionnaire at the second semester of the academic year 2023\2024. This section is divided into four parts: participants, instruments, procedures, and the reliability of the study.

#### 3.2 Participants

This study was conducted during the academic year 2023-2024. The researchers employed the random stratified method. The questionnaire attracted 98 students, both genders (88.8 females and 11.2 males of EFL students) from six Palestinian universities, which are: Hebron University (42 students/42.9%), Al-Quds University (5 students/5.1%), Bethlehem University (7 students/7.1%), Palestine Ahliya University (18 students/18.4%), Al-Najah National University (20 students/40.4%), and Birzeit University (6 students/6.1%). Table 1 presents the findings related to the demographic data.

Table 1. The results of the demographic data.

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	87	88.8
	Male	11	11.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Age	18.00	2	2.0
	19.00	12	12.2
	20.00	19	19.4
	21.00	42	42.9
	22.00	23	23.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Level	Freshman	7	7.1
	Sophomore	11	11.2
	Junior	29	29.6
	Senior	51	52.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Major	Translation and interpreting	17	17.3
	English literature and translation	25	25.5
	English-French	16	16.3
	English literature	26	26.5
	Applied English	14	14.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.0</b>
University	Hebron University	42	42.9
	An-Najah National University	20	20.4
	Bethlehem University	7	7.1
	Palestine Ahliya University	18	18.4
	Birzeit University	6	6.1
	Al-Quds University	5	5.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As table 1 reveals, most of the students are females (88.8%) and (11.2%) were males. Which is normal because most of Palestinian universities students are females, and the researchers of the questionnaire have distributed it among their female friends. Regarding their ages, most of the students are between 20 and 22 and this is normal because most of the students are in their third and fourth year. Regarding their academic level, 7 (7.1%) students were freshmen, 11 (11.2%) students were sophomores, 29 (29.6%) students were juniors and 51 (52%) students were seniors. The questionnaire was distributed among EFL students in general but the majority of them were juniors and seniors because the researchers are seniors so their peers are. Regarding their majors, 17 (17.3) students were majoring in Translation and interpreting, 25 (25.5) students were majoring in English literature and translation, 16 (16.3) students were majoring in English-French, 26 (26.5) students were majoring in English literature, and 14 (14.3) students were majoring in applied English. The results here are normal because the questionnaire was distributed among EFL students. That's why it varied between all these English majors. Regarding their universities, most of the students 42 (42.9) were from Hebron university because the researchers are from Hebron university. 20 (20.4) students were from An-Najah National University, 7 (7.1) students were from Bethlehem University, 18 (18.4) students were from Palestine Ahliya University, 6 (6.1) students were from Birzeit University, and 5 (5.1) students were from Al-Quds University. The responses have varied because the questionnaire was distributed among these Palestinian universities.

### 3.3 Instrument

In this research, only one data collection instrument was used among the EFL students from the six Palestinian universities mentioned above. The instrument was a questionnaire designed to quickly and efficiently collect data from a large number of respondents. It aimed to explore the perspectives of Palestinian EFL students toward e-learning and blended-learning during the Gaza war October 7th. The questionnaire has five sections. The first section involved some of the participants' personal data, such as age, academic year, major, university and level. The second section has 14 questions regarding Palestinian EFL students' points of view and attitudes toward the benefits of e-learning during the Gaza war October 7th. The third section has also 14 questions regarding the challenges of e-learning and blended learning. The fourth section has 8 questions about the challenges of e-learning and blended learning during the war. The last section consists of 10 questions regarding evaluation during e-learning. The questionnaire included two types of items: Likert or closed-ended (51 items) and open-ended (1item). Including partially open-ended item may provide richer exploratory/descriptive data. The questionnaire used the Likert scale from 1-4 (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) to show the percentage of disagreement and agreement among respondents.

### 3.4 Procedure

The researchers designed the questionnaire using Google Forms. The researchers conducted this study online, where they distributed and shared it with the Palestinian EFL students in the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024 via different apps like WhatsApp and Facebook, and then the students responded. The questionnaire took between 10 and 15 minutes to fill out. The results were gathered and discussed as the last step. Finally, the researchers analyzed the students' answers and compared their findings with previous studies on the same subject.

### 3.5 The Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire is 0.882, which indicates strong internal consistency. This high reliability emphasizes the instrument's compatibility with the study's objectives.



Furthermore, researchers assessed the questionnaire's validity and content, improving it to ensure relevance and efficiency in gathering relevant data.

#### 4. Results

This section presents the results gained from analyzing students' responses in the questionnaire.

##### The answers for the main questions in the questionnaire:

This section presents the results gained from the analysis of student responses to the questionnaire. It addresses the three research questions posed in the study. **The first dimension in the questionnaire was the benefits of e-learning.**

Table 2: Benefits of E-learning and blended learning.

No.	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
4	Recording lectures helps me re-watch lectures I missed.	98	3.37	.724
9	It is easy to complete assignments electronically.	98	3.12	.678
3	E-learning is an appropriate solution to complete the educational process under the 7th of October Gaza war.	98	3.08	.808
8	I face no problems using Google Classroom, Meet, or other apps.	98	3.06	.859
2	E-learning improves students' technological skills.	98	2.87	.620
14	I support my university's decision to return to blended education this semester despite the ongoing war.	98	2.66	.885
7	Instructors uses new methods of teaching that is consistent with e-learning.	98	2.66	.657
12	E-learning is more convenient and comfortable than face-to-face learning.	98	2.65	.851
1	All the courses I took can be effectively taught online.	98	2.55	.826
13	E-learning grants students' better grades.	98	2.51	.900
6	E- learning is more flexible and adaptive than traditional learning.	98	2.41	.835
5	E-learning provides a good interaction environment between students and instructors.	98	2.36	.777
11	I interact and participate more in online classes.	98	2.34	.799
10	I prefer e-learning over traditional (face-to-face) education.	98	2.23	.859

Table (2) reveals the means and standard deviations of the benefits of E-learning from the point of view of the Palestinian EFL students. The items in table 2 are arranged according to the chronological order according to the highest means. As we notice item number (4) gets the highest mean (3.37) and it shows that students agree with the idea that "Recording lectures helps me re-watch lectures I missed". The participants considerably cherished recorded lectures as a means to improve their learning, with the majority agreeing that re-watching lectures facilitated filling the gap.

Moreover, students have agreed on item number (2) (M=2.87) "E-learning improves students' technological skills". This means that most students lack sufficient proficiency with technology, but they generally believe that e-learning helps enhance their technological skills. However, most of the students disagreed on item (6) (M=2.41) "E- learning is more flexible and adaptive than traditional learning". This illustrates that most students find face-to-face learning better and more flexible. Finally, it appears that the majority of students are frustrated with their e-learning experience, as demonstrated above. Students disagreed with item (10) (M=2.23) "I prefer e-learning over traditional (face-to-face) education", which has the lowest mean in this table. To clear up, Table (3) shows that most students prefer face-to-face classes because they provide for more interaction, they experienced no issues using classroom and online apps, and they received instant feedback. However, they do not like online classes because the instructors talk all the time, which bores them. They believe that online learning doesn't grant them better grades.

The second dimension in the questionnaire was the challenges of e-learning as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Challenges of E-learning

No.	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
2	Students and instructors encounter a lot of technical issues (bad internet connection, device problems, etc.) during blended.	98	3.29	.746
14	Some instructors don't record the face-to-face lectures.	98	3.05	.791
4	Interaction with teachers in online classes is less than in face-to-face classes.	98	3.00	.799
7	E-learning is less motivating than traditional learning.	98	2.90	.806
6	I face problems with electricity during my online classes and exams.	98	2.89	.785
9	Instructors talk most of the time in online classes.	98	2.88	.777
3	I have problems with the general lack of socialization and communication with the instructors, and classmates in online learning.	98	2.87	.741
13	During blended learning, the instructors' voice in the online meeting is unclear and keeps breaking up.	98	2.83	.874
11	Some instructors don't open an online meeting for students who don't attend face to face classes.	98	2.74	.900
1	Instructors and students are not trained enough to use E-learning platforms.	98	2.68	.698
12	Having other responsibilities (e.g., work, being a housewife) besides being a student affect negatively the E-learning process.	98	2.66	.837
10	Lack of a calm room to attend my online classes (noisy surrounding environment).	98	2.63	.890
5	Due to the poor financial conditions, I can't afford or access the laptops and smartphones needed for online classes.	98	2.59	.835
8	Recorded lectures encourage me not to attend classes.	98	2.43	.942

Table (3) reveals the means and standard deviations of the challenges of E-learning and blended learning from the point of view of the Palestinian EFL students. The items in table (3) are arranged according to the chronological order according to the highest means. Item number (2) (M=3.29) gets the highest mean, and it seems that students agree with the idea that “students and instructors encounter a lot of technical issues (bad internet connection, device problems, etc.) during blended learning”. This highlights persistent technical glitches, principally regarding the connectivity of the internet. This shows that to fulfill the required goals for education with E-learning, we need to offer the needed technical support for both students and instructors. Also, item (6) (M=2.89) talks about technical issues regarding electricity.

The third dimension in the questionnaire was challenges of E-learning and blended learning during Gaza war 7th of October as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: challenges of E-learning and blended learning during Gaza war 7th of October.

No.	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
3	Some students are unable to attend face-to-face classes due to the fear of inspection at checkpoints.	98	3.46	.629
2	Some students cannot attend face to face classes because the Israeli occupation forces prevent me from passing.	98	3.44	.643
5	Some students struggle to afford transportation and university expenses due to my poor financial situation.	98	3.44	.719
4	Some students, particularly males, are unable to attend face-to-face classes due to fear of arrest at checkpoints.	98	3.39	.727
1	Some students don't concentrate during online classes because of the anxiety and stress due to the heartbreaking situation in Gaza.	98	3.31	.664
6	Some students are unable to attend face-to-face classes due to the fear of being exposed to dangers by the Israeli occupation.	98	3.23	.835
7	Students often get distracted during online classes because of the urgent news about the current Gaza war.	98	3.15	.765
8	Some instructors give more attention to students who attend face-to-face classes rather than those who attend online classes.	98	3.0102	.89090

Table (4) reveals the means and standard deviations of the challenges of E-learning and blended learning that the Palestinian EFL students has confronted during the 7<sup>th</sup> of October War on Gaza. The means of the table show that all students have agreed on each challenge. Item 3 gets the highest mean (M= 3.46). It indicates that students strongly agree that they are unable to attend face-to-face classes due to the fear of inspection at checkpoints. Also, students have agreed on item 2 “Some students cannot attend face to face classes because the Israeli occupation forces prevent them from passing” (M= 3.44), and item 4 “Some students, particularly males, are unable to attend face-to-face classes due to fear of arrest at checkpoints” (M= 3.39). These three items illustrate that a large number of students can't attend face-to-face classes due to the challenging circumstance caused by the Israeli occupation. Item 5” Some students struggle to afford transportation and university expenses due to the poor financial situation” (M=3.44) indicates that Students suffer from poor financial issues as a result of the ongoing war.

The fourth dimension in the questionnaire was examined the evaluation process during e-learning as shown in table 5.

Table 5: Evaluation during e-learning.

No.	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
4	Exams are more difficult during online learning than face-to-face exams.	98	3.27	.832
5	Instructors do not provide students the adequate time to solve their exams during E-learning.	98	3.14	.799
6	E-learning increases the size of assignments and the studying hours.	98	3.12	.853
3	Evaluation methods (e.g., exams) are not accurate due to easy means of cheating.	98	2.97	.843
1	The evaluation was not done in a fair and objective manner during E-learning.	98	2.95	.817
10	I get good marks during E-learning.	98	2.87	.782
8	I am not satisfied with my total courses' grades during E-learning.	98	2.87	.881
2	Students cannot submit their assignments and exams due to the tight deadline.	98	2.87	.768
7	Some instructors are biased to some students in evaluation.	98	2.83	.774
9	I get bad marks during E-learning.	98	2.41	.810

Table (5) shows the means and standard deviations of students' attitudes regarding evaluation and assessment during e-learning in the second semester of the academic year 2023/2024. Item 4 “Exams are more difficult during online learning than face-to-face exams” (M=3.27). This point demonstrates that many students are frustrated with how online exams are more difficult than normal ones. Item 5” Instructors do not provide students the adequate time to solve their exams during e-learning” (M= 3.14). This indicates that Instructors may believe that students will be able to work more efficiently in an e-learning environment because they have access to resources such as online textbooks or Google or other search engines.

**As for the open-ended item “regarding students’ preference for blended learning or E-learning over the face-to-face learning**, the responses optimized a wide-ranging opinion. The participants’ perspectives are affected by individual circumstances such as geographical location, economic status, and personal preferences. Many respondents prefer e-learning due to various reasons such as safety concerns (e.g., dangerous roads, war), financial constraints (e.g., transportation costs, economic difficulties), and convenience (e.g., flexibility of time, ability to replay lectures). Some express that the current situation, such as war and economic instability, makes e-learning the most suitable option. Others state that e-learning allows them to better take advantage of their time and overcome financial obstacles associated with attending face-to-face classes. Some state that blended

learning promotes a better balance of online and face-to-face components, which could enhance learning outcomes.

Moreover, the respondents in different universities reported significant challenges they encounter during going to universities. They attributed their preference to online learning to these challenges. Some respondents reported experiencing challenges like long distances to their university, taking more than one mode of transportation, Israeli barriers and humiliating checkpoints, Israeli settlers' attacks and difficult financial and psychological problems. For example, one respondents reported that her journey to the university that the journey takes long hours. Other respondents emphasized this and reported taking multiple means of transportation to their universities and sometimes climbing through the mountains. Another respondent, a mother, while another, narrated a near-death experience in her long journey of suffering to the university. The respondents stressed that they prefer online learning to ensure their safety and well-being. Most of the respondents indicated that online learning helps them to follow their learning despite the ongoing hardships.

## 5. Discussion:

The results of the current study reveal a nuanced view on the reference of e-learning and blended learning among EFL Palestinian learners, mainly amidst war on Gaza (2023-2024). The literature constantly is in line with the belief that while e-learning and blended learning provide flexibility, accessibility, and convenience, they also pose major challenges, particularly in wartime. Zboun and Farrah (2021) highlighted some significant challenges for online learning such as poor internet connectivity and lack of interaction inside the EFL classroom. Nevertheless, the findings of the current study demonstrated that large number of students preferred e-learning or blended learning for safety reasons and financial challenges. They found that e-learning helps them to have the flexibility to manage their time and overcome issues related to transportation cost and risks. These findings mirror with Farrah and Al-Bakry (2020) who emphasized the efficiency of e-learning in aiding learners to attain their academic goals despite the surrounding challenges. The findings also shed the light on technological glitches as observed by Mukhtarmkhon and Jackongirovich (2022) who reported that poor internet connectivity hinder the learning process in the online environment. According to Galynska and Bilous (2022), this challenges became worse in wartime where lack of stable online infrastructure worsens the already problematic learning context. Notwithstanding the challenges, e-learning was professed as a feasible solution by sizable portion of learners in the study, mainly as it facilitated the continuation of the learning process without risking the safety of the learners or affecting their financial situation. Furthermore, the results of the study align with Khaniukov et al. (2022) who noted that psychological stress triggered during wartime has impact on concentration and interaction in both e-learning and in-person classes. Students' preference for e-learning is rooted in its flexibility as underscored by Abdullah et al. (2023). Large percentages of students preferred this mode of delivery for its potential to strike the balance between the advantages of online learning with the personal interaction in in-person classes. The hardships associated with e-learning such as technological challenges, lack of interaction, and limited motivation, underscore the need for a more flexible model that can accommodate specific environments as observed by Micaela and Jazmin (2023).

## 6. Conclusion

Though there are a lot of studies that examined e-learning during pandemics, this paper offers insights on how wars impact the quality of education, thus providing new perceptions on learners' on learners' perceptions of blended learning during times of wars. The results revealed in this study indicate that

online learning, while essential amidst the war on Gaza (2023-2024), is not without difficulties. Anxiety, stress, technological glitches, and poor internet connectivity lead to learners' dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, online learning has a potential in wartime for safety reasons. In conclusion, using online learning in order to pursue the educational process during the war crisis was a good solution. However, the attitudes of the students varied regarding both e-learning and blended learning. The diverse range of perspectives highlights the wide variety of academic preferences and needs, which are influenced by factors such as geographical location, financial situation, and personal preferences. Online learning has emerged as a preferred option for many students due to its ability to address safety concerns, financial constraints, and convenience. It is especially useful during times of war and economic instability. On the other hand, some respondents prefer blended learning because of its perceived benefits in promoting fairness, adaptability, and improved learning outcomes. To summarize, in order to improve the effectiveness of blended learning and e-learning, students' perspectives must be prioritized, contributing to a more engaging, motivating, and beneficial learning experience. While these approaches are useful in crises, further improvements are required to ensure their effectiveness. Emphasizing student-centered approaches and increasing the motivational aspects of learning can significantly contribute to the effectiveness of these methods during crises.

## 7. Recommendation

Based on the results of the study, the researchers offer the following recommendations:

1. Universities should provide a good internet connection in order to avoid the technical issues that the students have to deal with.
2. Instructors should use more motivating strategies and methods (videos, PowerPoint, etc....) to attract the students' attention.
3. Providing instructors with the necessary technical support that they need while teaching online inside the university.
4. Identifying students' electronic devices and network speeds.
5. Universities should be flexible with the students who can't attend for financial reasons or Israeli barriers.

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