| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Israel-Palestine Conflict Coverage in the Mainstream Media: A Systematic Review

Nurul Iman Alwani Ehsham[1]✉, Nor Fatin Abdul Jabar[2], Kamariah Yunus[3]

[1]*Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), 21300 Gong Badak, Terengganu, Malaysia*
[2]*Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia, 56100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*
[3]*Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), 21300 Gong Badak, Terengganu, Malaysia*
Corresponding Author: Nurul Iman Alwani Ehsham, +60 145043454 **E-mail**: imanalwani08@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This study examines how the Israel-Palestine conflict is rendered in mainstream media. Nowadays, news discourse intensely influences the public understanding of complex conflicts. Using a systematic literature review, this study reviews literature from 2019-2024 via Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Semantic Scholar databases. 20 selected articles were examined to see the thematic pattern and theoretical and methodological trends. Five main themes discovered were (1) using language to shape opinion, (2) media framing, (3) imbalance coverage, (4) visual framing, and (5) media bias and ideology, whereas the common method and theory applied were critical discourse analysis and Framing Theory, respectively. This study aims to intensify awareness of media framing choices in shaping public understanding of the conflict.

| KEYWORDS

Israel-Palestine conflict, systematic literature review, news discourse, media framing

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

1. Introduction

How the Israel-Palestine conflicts get covered in the media is not just about "bias" in some vague, abstract sense. It is about who gets to shape the narrative, who gets painted as the victim, who is called a "militant" versus a "soldier," and which voices are front and centre, or completely ignored. Depending on where you are standing, or more accurately, which outlet you are watching or reading, the same event can look like two entirely different stories. For instance, BBC or CNN frame Israeli action as a necessary measure for security, whereas they link Palestinians' action with terrorism (Heni et al., 2022). If you read enough news about the Israel-Palestine conflict across different regions, you notice an undeniable pattern.

Western mainstream media, such as BBC, CNN, The Guardian, and The New York Times have a particular way of framing this conflict, and their method is not random (Elmasry, 2024). The framing pattern is usually influenced by many factors, including historical alliances, political interests, and profoundly embedded cultural assumptions (Butt et al., 2023). Conversely, non-Western media, such as Al Jazeera, Press TV, TRT World, or even Pakistani outlets, come in with a completely different angle. They might not necessarily offer a different perspective, but provide a different view of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

This study provides a systematic literature review on the coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict in both Western and non-Western mainstream media. A comprehensive understanding of the conflict requires a deep interrogation to discover the linguistic choices of journalists and news editors, ideological bias, and political influence. The words they use, the images they choose, and the details they leave out are strategic patterns rather than just media quirks. These patterns help reveal the reflection of power, ideology, and global politics behind news production. Moreover, this study seeks to explore which theory and method the researchers commonly applied when analysing news coverage. Hence, the ground of this study is based on two research questions as follows:

RQ 1: What are the key themes highlighted by previous studies on Israel-Palestine conflict coverage in mainstream media?

RQ 2: What theory and method are commonly used by previous studies when analysing news coverage?

2. Literature Review

News coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict is constantly being debated in mainstream media, especially concerning how narratives are constructed and shared with the public. In 2023, the Israel-Palestine conflict attracted global attention due to the tragedy of October 7, 2023, where Hamas fighters launched a historic assault on Israel from the Gaza Strip, causing the devastating death of over 1,400 people and the captivity of more than 200 others (Hoon, 2024). Many people are still confused about the reality of the Israel-Palestine conflict despite its widespread media coverage. According to Sarwar et al. (2023), the degree of uncertainty derives from the inconsistent narratives offered by several sources, each reporting on different aspects and interpretations of the conflict.

In the current era of globalisation, the role of mainstream media such as television, newspapers, and social media is increasingly significant, as it has become a dominant platform in shaping public understanding of conflicts. With the shift from traditional news through newspapers to social media, the way of life of society has changed a lot. Access to social media such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook has become a major function in disseminating information to society (Ab Hadi et al., 2023). According to Acerbi et al. (2022), when news is done well, it educates the public, which in shift makes them more resistant to propaganda, false information, and other forms of disinformation.

When news stories about the attacks between Israel and the Palestinians on October 7 are looked at, it is clear that the news has different effects based on how it is interpreted. Especially when it comes to problems with unclear outcomes, people can express their own beliefs based on how news sources interpret them. Because technology is easy to get to, knowledge about this subject gets to people all over the world very quickly. This situation not only leads to a war of information between news sources but also changes how people think about things and could even make it harder to solve the problem at hand (Yıldırım & Şahin, 2024).

Studies on the contribution of mainstream media in producing news of the Israel-Palestine conflict have been gaining increasing attention in recent years, in line with the growing concern over media bias and information accuracy. According to Adane and Amara (2024), Western and non-Western media function as a major news dissemination tool for shaping conflict narratives. Effective and worthy news is produced through the use of specific linguistic strategies, such as word choice, tone, sentence style, and framing. This study found that people who perceive news about the conflict may develop a different level of trust based on where the news comes from, especially when the news comes from media outlets that people think have political or ideological leanings.

Substantially, the literature shows that mainstream media exhibits recurring patterns in their Israel-Palestine coverage, particularly in how events, actors, and outcomes are framed with the strategic use of language in news discourse. Nevertheless, the audience's ability to recognise these patterns depends on their exposure to diverse sources. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature by examining the coverage pattern across mainstream media platforms, with a focus on the influence of linguistic choices and framing techniques to help the media shape public opinion. Moreover, this study also reviews the trend of research methodology and theory commonly applied by language and media researchers in analysing media coverage of Israel-Palestine.

3. Methodology

This study is a qualitative study that uses a systematic literature review (SLR) method. Google Scholar database was used to obtain related articles on the news coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The search was also limited to publications from English-language journals that have been published. The search yielded 1,260 results during the initial screening, including journal articles, proceeding papers, and dissertations. Using the saturation technique, this study will include only 20 specifically relevant studies to answer the research questions. Therefore, this methodology will systematically analyse previous studies to identify themes, standard theories, and methodologies employed in analysing news coverage. The literature sources used are between 2019 and 2024. Each selected literature is organised based on method, theory, and key findings on the conflict coverage. Therefore, this systematic literature review excludes matters that are irrelevant to the research questions and objectives.

4. Findings

The following are the findings from 20 articles obtained through a literature review related to the coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict in mainstream media. Table 1 explains in more detail the articles, including the title, research method, discourse analysis theories employed, and main findings.

Table 1

Systematic Literature Review on Israel-Palestine Conflict Coverage on Mainstream Media

No.	Article	Method	Theory	Findings
1.	Analyzing Western Media Narratives on Israel Attack on Gaza-Palestine: A Critical Discourse Analysis Adane, H. B., & Amara, Y. (2024)	Critical discourse analysis	Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive approach	Western media employ discursive strategies such as emotive language, vagueness, and quantification to construct ideological narratives, framing Israeli positively and Hamas negatively
2.	The Discursive Representation of Social Groups through Lexical Choices in Headlines: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Western and Arab Online Reporting on Gaza War Eldin, H. M. A. S. (2019)	Critical discourse analysis	Fairclough's Three-Dimensional framework, Van Leeuwen's Social Actor approach	Both Western and Arab media outlets use different lexical strategies to shape the representation of the Israeli military with contrasting emotional tones, biases, and editorial choices
3.	A Comparative Discourse Analysis of Lexical and Ideological Variations in the 2023 Palestinian-Israeli Conflict Aljoundi, B. A. K. (2024)	Critical discourse analysis	Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Theory, Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach	Vocabulary has a dominant role in shaping ideological positions in the selected newspaper coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, while text style has less significant impact
4.	Political and Ideological Tensions in Israel: A Critical Language Analysis of News Reporting of the 2014 Gaza War Qawariq, R. (2022)	Critical discourse analysis	Critical Discourse Analysis Theory	The study found that Israeli newspapers use linguistic choices to shape perceptions of the conflict, including transitivity and agency, to frame events and actors in ways that influence how actions and motivations are understood
5.	Online News Media Framing of the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by Al Jazeera, BBC and CNN Panayotova, M., & Rizova, H. (2021)	Framing analysis	Agenda-Setting Theory, Framing Theory, Media Representation Theory	Results show that the selected newspapers frame the 2021 conflict through a "war" lens using different terminology, focusing on casualty, and ideological leanings that influence language and visual narratives
6.	Representation of Israel-Palestine Issue in International Media: An Analysis of BBC and Al-Jazeera Coverage in 2022	Content analysis	-	Findings show that there is an imbalance in conflict coverage, where Al Jazeera tends to side with Palestinians whereas BBC is more neutral in their news reporting

	Sarwar, H., Malihi, A. T., & Naz, I. (2023)			
7.	A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Biased Role of Western Media in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict	Critical discourse analysis	Van Dijk's Ideological Square framework	Findings reveal that there is a bias in Western Media coverage of the conflict, where they describe Palestinian actions as aggressive while Israelis are justified as self-defense.
	Kareem, A. H., & Najm, Y. M. (2024)			
8.	Narrative Discourse of the Israel-Palestine Issue in the Framework of Political Communication: A Comparative Study of Kompas.id and BBC Media	Critical content analysis	-	The comparison shows that Kompas.id to adopts a pro-Palestinian stance by emphasizing human rights violations, whereas BBC News aims for a more neutral tone by presenting perspectives from both sides but giving more justifications for Israeli
	Putra, A. (2024)			
9.	Exploring The Dawn's Newspaper Coverage of the Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Social Semiotic Multimodal Analysis	Multimodal analysis	Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)	Findings reveal that The Dawn's Newspaper employs visual and spatial elements, like urgent headlines, protest images, and symbolic imagery to highlight Palestinian suffering and urge global solidarity
	Zahid, E., Afzal, M., & Asgher, M. (2023)			
10.	Framing the Israel-Palestine Conflict 2021: Investigation of CNN's Coverage from a Peace Journalism Perspective	Textual analysis	-	Findings suggest that CNN's media coverage of the conflict mirrors selective framing and sourcing, which can shape public opinion in ways that may overlook the shared casualties' impact on both sides
	Bhowmik, S., & Fisher, J. (2023)			
11.	A Content Analysis of the 2023 Israel-Palestine Conflict News Reporting in The Star Online, Malaysia	Content analysis	Framing Theory	Findings show that The Star Online's coverage adopts a thematic and humanitarian lens, which reflects Malaysia's strong diplomatic ties and moral support for Palestine while encouraging international efforts toward conflict resolution
	Hoon, L. L. (2024)			
12.	Media Framing on the Palestine-Israel Conflict	Framing analysis	Framing Theory	Two Indonesia outlets, Republika.co.id and Kompas.com report the conflict based on the UN Security Council's inaction and express more vigorous support for Palestine, whereas the latter
	Arrosyid, H., & Halwati, U. (2021)			

				news adopts a neutral tone to focus on institutional responses instead
13. Ethnocentrism in Conflict News Coverage: A Multimodal Framing Analysis of the 2018 Gaza Protests in the Times of Israel and Al Jazeera Doufesh, B., & Briel, H. (2021)	Multimodal content analysis	-	The study found that Al Jazeera and Times of Israel use contrasting textual and visual strategies, which are shaped by ethnocentric perspectives, to frame Gaza protests either as peaceful or violent	
14. Images of the Israel-Gaza War on Instagram: A Content Analysis of Western Broadcast News Posts Elmasry, M. H. (2024)	Content analysis	Framing Theory, Victim/Defensive Mode of Reporting Model	Findings show a bias in Western media coverage, with pro-Israeli sources dominating, but Palestinian violence is framed as aggression without a similar context	
15. The Echoes of Peace in Newspapers Editorials: A Corpus Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of Israel-Palestine Conflict Mahmood, A., & Alvi, U. F. (2024)	Corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis	Van Dijk's Ideological Square	The analysis reveals ideological bias across all publications via polarised "us vs them" narratives, moral framing, and biased rhetoric on the peace that favours dominant powers while marginalising the victimised side.	
16. Framing of Israel and Palestine Conflict in the Elite Press of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America Butt, A. R., Amer, U., Ahmed, R., Husnain, M., & Rasool, H. (2023)	Framing analysis	Framing Theory	The examination of three frames indicates that Palestine is depicted more favourably under Human Interest, Conflict, and Religious frames in prestigious media from both the USA and Saudi Arabia.	
17. (Mis)Misrepresentation of Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in the Lead Pakistani English Newspapers: An Application of Social Identity Theory By Henri Tajfel Azim. S., & ur Rehman, H. J. (2024)	Critical discourse analysis	Van Dijk's "Us Versus Them"	The findings suggest Pakistani news presents Palestinians as victims and Israel as oppressors, using strong language and reputable sources. Humanitarian framing dominates, generating public compassion and supporting ideological narratives.	

No.				
18.	BBC and New York Times' coverage of the May 2021 Israeli onslaught on Gaza: A critical discourse analysis Amer, M. M. A. (2022)	Critical discourse analysis	Critical Discourse Analysis	The findings suggest the media outlets overwhelmingly supported Israel's narrative by presenting the conflict as revenge against Hamas, reducing Palestinian suffering, and avoiding Israel's responsibility for civilian fatalities.
19.	The Role of Social Media in Shaping Narratives and Perceptions in the Israeli-Gaza Conflict that Escalated on October 2023 Oguejiofor, P. O. (2024)	-	Agenda-Setting Theory, Framing Theory	Social media reshapes conflict narratives, with both Israeli and Palestinian parties using it to promote competing views. However, misinformation and insufficient fact-checking greatly alter public view globally.
20.	Palestine in Media: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Israeli Media in Influencing Online News Headlines Setyohadi, N. M., & Jannah, R. (2024)	Critical discourse analysis	Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)	The study indicates a pro-Palestinian bias, depicting Israel as the aggressor through transitivity and word choices. Media narratives are formed by political sensitivities, determining how each side is depicted linguistically.

Table 1 presents a systematic review of past literature exploring how news reports on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Based on the 20 selected articles, the study identified essential themes in a survey on Israel-Palestine conflict coverage in mainstream media. These themes include 1) using language to shape opinion, 2) media framing, 3) imbalance coverage, 4) visual framing, and 5) media bias and ideology. Table 2 below shows the classification of articles based on the four themes:

**Table 2**
Themes Arise from Discussed Articles

No.	Author(s)	Using language to shape opinion	Media framing	Imbalance coverage	Visual framing	Media bias and ideology
1.	Adane, H. B., & Amara, Y. (2024)	x	x	x		
2.	Eldin, H. M. A. S. (2019)	x				
3.	Aljoundi, B. A. K. (2024)	x				
4.	Qawariq, R. (2022)	x	x	x		
5.	Panayotova, M., & Rizova, H. (2021)	x	x	x		

No.	Author					
6.	Sarwar, H., Malihi, A. T., & Naz, I. (2023)	x				x
7.	Kareem, A. H., & Najm, Y. M. (2024)			x	x	
8.	Putra, A. (2024)		x	x		
9.	Zahid, E., Afzal, M., & Asgher, M. (2023)	x			x	
10.	Bhowmik, S., & Fisher, J. (2023)	x				x
11.	Hoon, L. L. (2024)		x	x		x
12.	Arrosyid, H., & Halwati, U. (2021)		x			x
13.	Doufesh, B., & Briel, H. (2021)		x			x
14.	Elmasry, M. H. (2024)			x	x	
15.	Mahmood, A., & Alvi, U. F. (2024)	x	x			
16.	Butt, A. R., Amer, U., Ahmed, R., Husnain, M., & Rasool, H. (2023)		x			
17.	Azim. S., & ur Rehman, H. J. (2024)	x	x	x		
18.	Amer, M. M. A. (2022)			x		
19.	Oguejiofor, P. O. (2024)			x		
20.	Setyohadi, N. M., & Jannah, R. (2024)	x				

Table 2 above provides a detailed illustration of which articles manifest on which precisely. For instance, results from the study of Adane and Amara (2024) reveal significant themes including how news outlets utilise linguistic features (lexical choice, sentence structure, transitivity) to shape public opinion, as well as media framing and imbalanced coverage of Palestinian and Israeli casualties. Therefore, to answer the first research question (RQ 1: What are the key themes highlighted by previous studies on Israel-Palestine conflict coverage in mainstream media?), this study generates a graph to illustrate the frequency of identified themes manifested in Israel-Palestine conflict studies between 2019 and 2024.

Figure 1

Frequency of Identified Themes in Israel-Palestine Conflict Studies from 2019-2024

Figure 1

Frequency of Identified Themes in Israel-Palestine Conflict Studies from 2019-2024
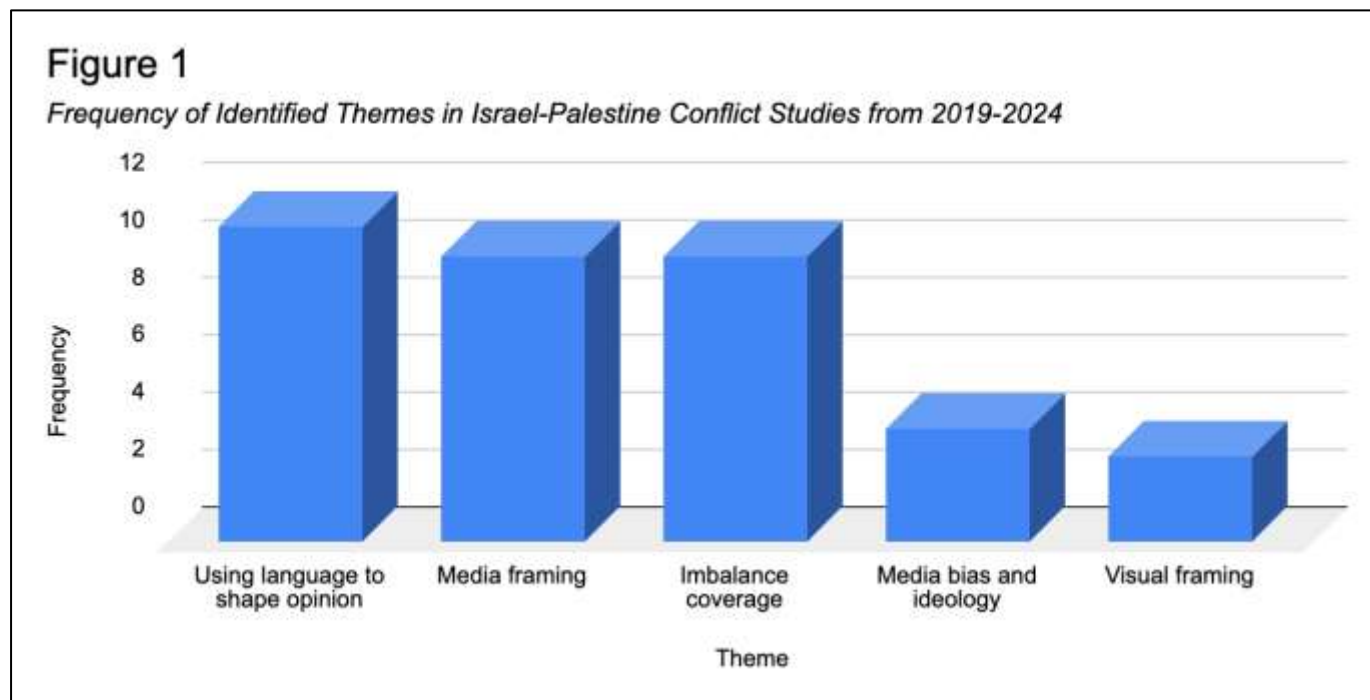
The selected articles were classified into appropriate themes. In total, 20 articles met the discussion theme. Based on Figure 1, the frequency of the theme of using language to shape opinion was the highest, with 11 articles manifesting the theme. Meanwhile, the frequency of the theme of media framing and imbalanced coverage was both manifested 10 times. Furthermore, the theme of media bias and ideology has appeared 4 times in the selected articles. Lastly, 3 of the studies also focused on visual framing to highlight the role of visuals in shaping narratives. In this regard, according to the following themes, the study explains a survey on the Israel-Palestine conflict coverage in the mainstream media.

Theme 1: Using language to shape opinion

One of the most consistent issues brought up across the studies is that language has never been neutral, especially when the media is reporting the Israel-Palestine conflict. Language is used in a strategic way to ensure the readers capture the story as news editors had planned. Strategic ways here mean that news editors carefully use verbs, and adjectives, or even use active or passive voice when discussing certain groups. In a way, some verbs manage to portray one group positively, and another one negatively. Words do not just describe the events. They are a 'tool' to steer how readers feel about the story (Aljoundi, 2024). When the mainstream media tells a story, their linguistics preferences often do a lot more than just "reporting."

One of the strategic ways that news editors apply is the presence of agency in their sentences. Agency refers to who is represented as doing what to whom. Normally, a pattern of sentences that comes up repeatedly without agency is the use of passive voice when describing violence against Palestinians. For example, a headline with no subject or actor like "Four Palestinians killed in raid." Headlines as in the example, obscure the agent responsible for the action which may remove the accountability. Readers could almost forget there was a trigger pulled. In other words, there must be an entity that causes the action which is omitted in the sentence. However, Western media do not use the same style if the violence involves Israeli victims. The grammatical structure shifts from passive voice to active voice. For instance, "Hamas kills Israeli soldier", where suddenly the attacker is front and centre. Scholars like Eldin (2019), Putra (2024), and Qawariq (2022) believe that this writing pattern is not part of the editor's stylistic, but more like a conscious setup. It may also reflect political and ideological points of view.

Another strategic way of using language to shape opinion is the use of discursive strategies such as euphemisms (Putra, 2024) and repetition (Adane & Amara, 2024). The word "euphemism" is derived from a Greek word meaning "to speak favourably", or good speech. According to Lingga and Rangkuti (2021), euphemism is as " practice of referring to something offensive or indelicate in terms that make it sound more pleasant or more acceptable than it is". The portrayal of Israelis and Palestinians is a

good illustration of euphemisms. Israeli airstrikes are often referred to as "operations," "campaigns," or "responses" in Western media coverage of the conflict. The Palestinians call the airstrikes a "war" or "aggression," which gives the impression that one side is more reasonable and the other more aggressive. The opposite is true with repetition, which involves using the same term or slightly altered version of a previous one throughout the text (Sigar & Saeed, 2022). Repetition of violent language to characterise a group has the potential to establish a disturbing theme and influence public perception of that group. The public may form a bad impression of the Palestinian people when they hear the word "terrorist" used in connection with the media's portrayal of the Palestinian cause. In sum, the intentional language usage in question is systematic rather than accidental. The main point is that it shows how editorial biases affect important story coverage, narrative choices, and the classification of people as bad, innocent, or completely ignored. Without ever raising its voice, the media steers societal conversations through undercurrents of linguistic choices. Headlines and soundbites become the echoes that the readers mistake for their thoughts.

Theme 2: Media framing

Pan and Kosicki (1993) state that media framing can be defined as either a method for creating and analysing news discourse or an inherent feature of that discourse. News framing is like an artist's relationship with their artwork. Some artists put a lot of thought into the presentation of their work, selecting frames that they think would bring out the best in their viewers. According to Tewksbury and Scheufele (2019), journalists unconsciously go through a similar procedure when deciding how to portray the political landscape. They choose the words and pictures that people will use to form opinions about policies and situations. The notion of framing must be assessed in every news coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Not just the facts, but also the way they are presented have a duty. From 20 selected articles, there are two types of media framing widely practiced by journalists in reporting the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The first type is the "Us Versus Them" framing (Azim & ur Rehman, 2024; Bhowmik & Fisher, 2023; Mahmood & Alvi, 2024). According to de Borja Navarro and Yeh (2022), just drawing a line between "Us" and "Them" can lead to prejudice and polarisation, which in turn can disrupt social harmony in any given community or nation. One of the most powerful ways for people to express their thoughts and feelings about other people and groups is through the language they use. This type of framing splits the world into insiders and outsiders. Those who are like "us" are considered logical, civilised, and democratic, whereas those who are not are considered irrational, scary, and a threat to society. Western media such as Fox News, CNN, BBC, and the New York Times routinely apply the pronoun "us" to refer to Israel. They illustrate Israel as a democratic state where the citizens are kind, the institutions are sound, and democracy is practiced. In contrast, Palestinians are grouped as "them", a threat, an issue, or at most, a humanitarian crisis that requires managing. Non-Western media generate general descriptions of the Palestinians. The journalists use imprecise language such as "Palestinian protests," "Gaza erupts," or "Hamas fires rockets." Some lines are delivered as though they were always meant to be believed, while others sound like improvised thoughts, fluttering at the edge of certainty.

The second type of framing highlighted by previous studies is the "Victim Versus Aggressor" framing (Elmasry, 2024; Kareem & Najm, 2024; Qawariq, 2022; Setyohadi & Jannah, 2024). When there is a conflict, there are sides. Each side has its protagonist, who may play the aggressor or the victim. The characteristics and behaviours exhibited by the war actors in the media help to delineate these roles. In addition, the action and interaction of the opposing parties on the battlefield are becoming the centre of attention during the conflict. However, their actual behaviour is merely semi-interesting outside of the arena (Oehmer, 2010). Viewers care about how they are portrayed when the conflict is ongoing and might forget about their attributes when the conflict is over. Usually, the media do not directly attribute who plays the aggressor and victim role. They frame them. In this case, Israelis get to play the victim role because some news outlets frame the group using photographs of weeping families, and ruined homes, and highlight the emotional appeal of their suffering in news articles. That way, the readers would mainly see the damage and forget about the actions. Framing Palestinian as the aggressor begins with sympathy embolism of the group with statistics or abstract acts of violence, such as explosion, rape, and destroying buildings. Even when the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) bombs Gaza, Hamas missiles are blamed.

Theme 3: Imbalance coverage

News media coverage of a dispute in which a power disparity is present can either enhance or help ameliorate the imbalance (Reuban, 2009). Some voices get more attention, some get buried. Many people think bias in conflict reporting is about choosing one side over another. However, imbalanced coverage does not always manifest as either praise or blame. Sometimes, it happens through silence such as leaving particular information out. In the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, imbalanced coverage involves the way journalists present news stories to shield specific narratives from any scrutiny. Several researchers pointed out that conflict coverage is different depending on the media outlet (Hoon, 2024; Kareem & Najm, 2024; Panayotova & Rizova, 2021). For example, news companies in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) like BBC, CNN, Fox News, The Guardian, and

New York Times, focus on Israeli perspectives, with their coverage reflecting the language used by political allies. Their coverage would involve political views and policy goals related to the diplomatic ties between the countries and the Israeli government. Non-western media such as Al Jazeera English and Kompas. Id (Indonesia-based), and Star Online (Malaysia-based) feature firsthand reports from Gaza, thus questioning the assertions made by the Israeli Government and emphasising the effects of longstanding occupation. Research also shows that media outlets from Indonesia and Malaysia tend to focus on criticising Israeli action, the structural injustice, and the lives of Palestinian civillians, rather than solely on instances of violence (Arrosyid & Halwati, 2021; Hoon, 2024).

Theme 4: Media bias and ideology

"When not telling the whole story is viewed as inaccuracy" is how bias is defined by Gans (2003). The favouritism or denigration (whether deliberate or not) of one ideology over another is what Eisinger et al. (2007) call ideological bias. According to Patterson (1993), ideological bias can be seen in various ways in the media, including the stories chosen for reporting and publishing, the tone or "angle" used to report different stories (positive, negative, or neutral), the amount of space given to different sources, and the sources themselves. According to Van Dijk (2013), one of the most important social practices impacted by ideologies is the way people use language and discourse. This, in turn, affects how people learn, adopt, or alter their beliefs. Regardless of disagreements that may exist among the various social science definitions of ideology, they all agree that ideology is ultimately concerned with the shared values and principles held by social groups. Media bias and ideological viewpoints appeared as repeated explanations for how coverage of the Israel-Palestine is shaped. A substantial number of studies indicated how media outlets headquartered in the US and UK normalised with Israeli governmental narratives (Sarwar et al., 2023). This was evident in patterns of source selection, language choices, framing methods, and images published that positioned Israel as reasonable for security measures. At the same time, they portray the Palestinians, not only Hamas but also the civilians (women and children) through a lens of societal threat. What makes the findings more interesting is that ideological bias could still emerge in non-Western media, but this time the prejudice is against the Israelis. They were biased by criticising Israelis' actions most of the time and paid more attention to the loss of Palestinian lives. This method of news writing is what Clarke (2018) believes is explicit bias, where she defines explicit bias as expressing the "attributes of a particular group or the attributes of particular individuals due to group membership" (p. 513). For instance, local news such as the Star Online emphasises Palestinian voices because they use historical facts to support their news writing. Similar reporting trends are seen in the Pakistani press, where they use strong language and credible sources to explicitly support Palestine. Nevertheless, the synthesis indicates that media bias is rarely random. It follows ideological lines that are typically related to broader political objectives, whether those goals are Western-aligned or regionally driven.

Theme 5: Visual framing

Photography has played a unique role in raising awareness and fostering significant social change, and its effectiveness is still effective in the digital age (Zelizer, 2010). Powerful images of war can sway public opinion for or against combat operations (Cope et al., 2005). For example, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt relaxed press censorship, after a two-year ban on casualty photos, and allowed the release of photos depicting dead soldiers in the hopes it might galvanise public support for the war (Cope et al., 2005, p.3). Unlike written words, images and films may seem more authentic since they seem unedited. But in actuality, visual content is just as managed. Editors select which images accompany which headlines, which faces are displayed in agony, and which devastated landscapes are exhibited.

Studies by Kareem and Najm (2024), Mahmood and Alvi (2024), and Zahid et al. (2023) emphasise how media outlets utilise visual framing to evoke sympathy from their targeted audience towards the group they are siding with. One instance that was highlighted is Al Jazeera's published images of Palestinians under the hardships due to the Israelis' bombing campaign, which has underscored a sympathetic narrative, successfully attracting their readers to feel the pain. Nonetheless, visual framing is not only about how images are posted but also relates to the placement of key news components such as headlines. Zahid et al. (2023) state that a Pakistani daily, The Dawn, places headlines like "60 killed in Gaza camp strike, 166 in last 24 hours" at the top-left of the newspaper page as a deliberate strategy to immediately grab the reader's attention and highlight the severity of the situation. Moreover, the inclusion of a photograph depicting a protest in Morocco, with demonstrators holding Palestinian flags and signs reading "Free Palestine," visually reinforces the global outcry against the conflict

A potential downside to the rise of the digital age is the introduction of AI-generated visuals, which have the potential to distort news reporting. Despite the benefits that have been mentioned, there is a significant risk of AI-generated news photos being used inappropriately and leading to negative outcomes, such as the propagation of false information, damaging stereotypes,

and fake news (Paik et al., 2023). Emotional reactions to visuals created by artificial intelligence (AI) may vary from person to person and situation to situation, including but not limited to climate change, war, and terrorist attacks.

In this systematic study, the researcher also looks into the pattern of research methods and theoretical lens applied by the selected studies on Israel-Palestine coverage. To answer the second research question (RQ 2: What are the theories and methods commonly used by previous studies when analysing news coverage?), bar graphs are generated as in Figure 2 and Figure 3 to illustrate findings on research method and theory pattern.

Figure 2

Trends in Methodological Choices in Studies on Israel-Palestine Media Coverage
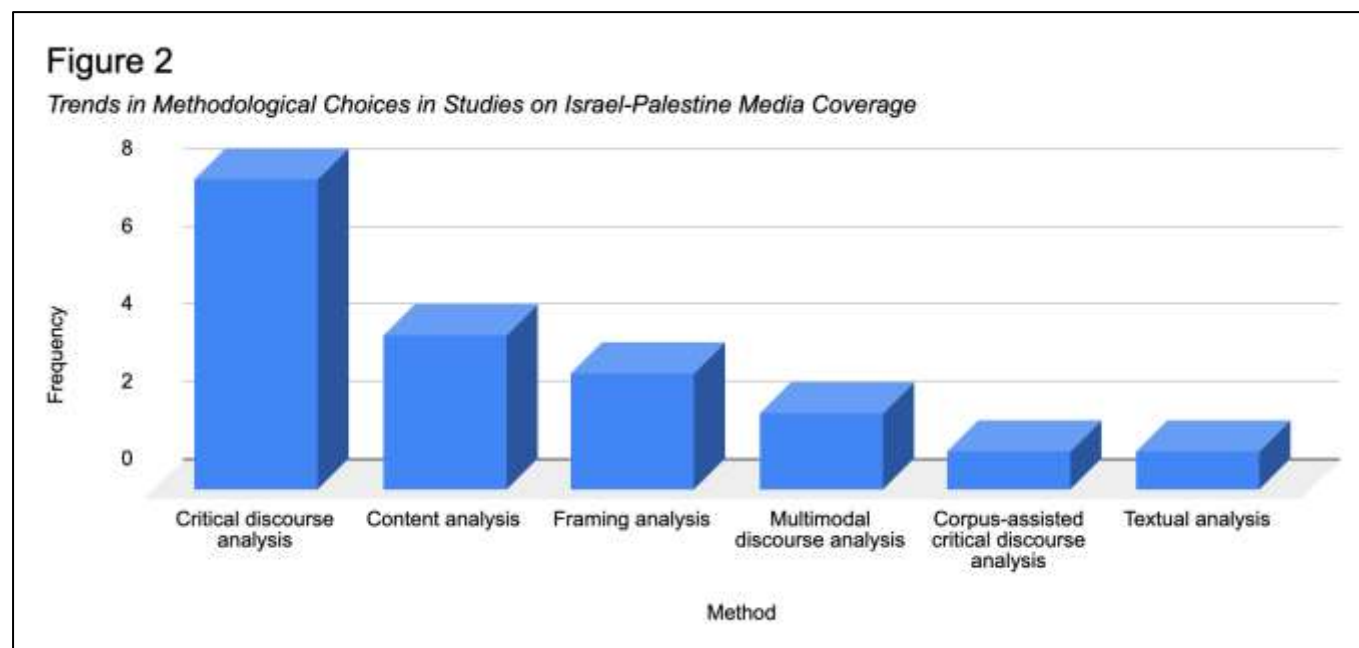

Figure 2 above illustrates the trends in methodological preferences in selected articles on Israel-Palestine news coverage. Among the reviewed studies, the critical discourse analysis method appears as the most frequently employed with eight studies adopting this research method. This result strongly emphasises the researcher's focus on uncovering ideological structure and power relations in news discourse (Ali & Ibrahim, 2020). Critical discourse analysis as a research method systematically deals with the semiotic data by clarifying ideologies and power while considering common interests (Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019, p.3).

Besides, content analysis is the second most applied method in the four reviewed pieces of literature. This suggests that most researchers are drawn to the structure of media text, as Mayring (2019) states "The content analysis developed in communications and media for analysing material in the mass media seemed to be relevant because it adhered to rule-based systematic analytical procedures". Framing analysis comes next with three studies, followed by multimodal discourse analysis used in two studies, which indicates a growing interest in the role of language and visuals in shaping public perceptions. Interestingly, specialised methods such as corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, and basic methods of textual analysis were employed once, which suggests that they are not yet commonly applied in this field.

The methodological choice trend discovered in selected articles shows that language scholars gravitate toward qualitative approaches, especially critical discourse analysis. This pattern emphasises that scholars are interested in investigating how news discourse reflects and reinforces ideological narratives when producing news stories on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Moreover, it is essential to review the theoretical lenses that underpin these studies, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 3

Theoretical Lens Adopted in Selected 20 Literature on the Israel-Palestine Conflict
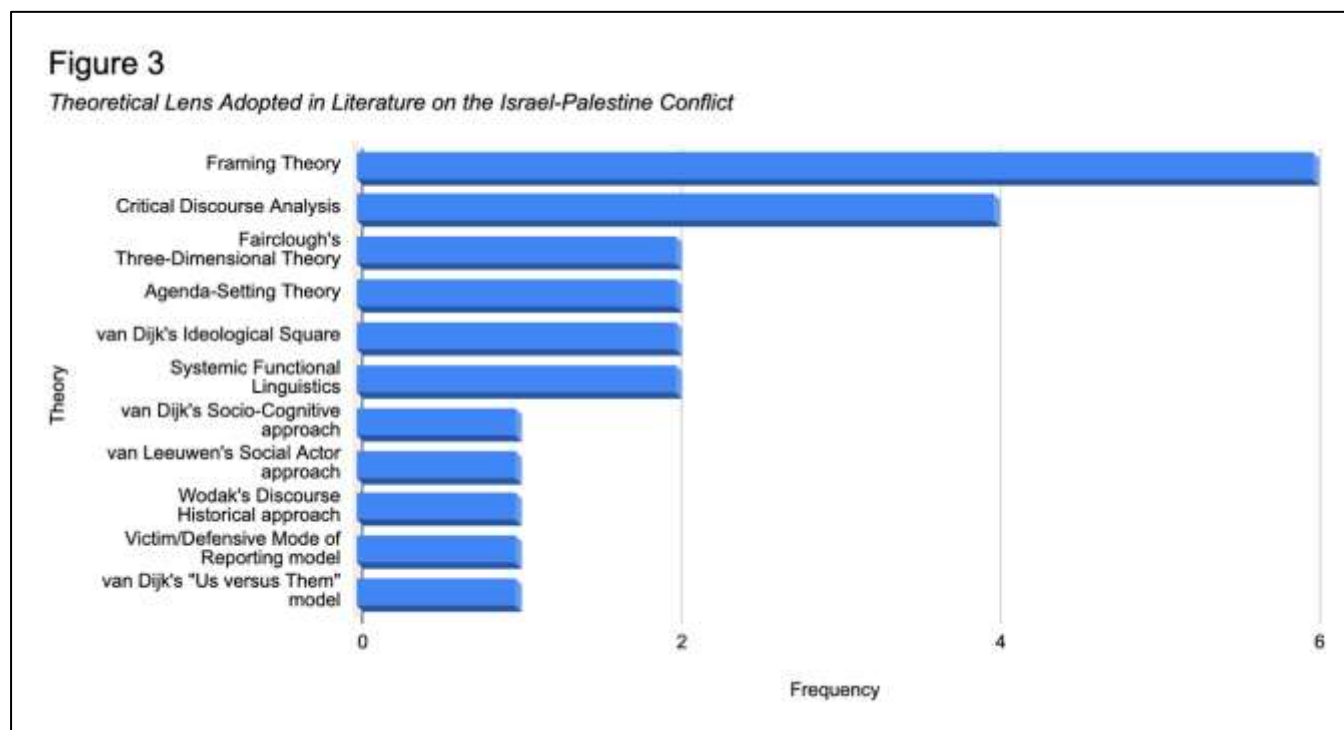
The chart illustrates the frequency with which various theoretical frameworks were employed in 20 selected articles on the news coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The data was presented in a horizontal bar graph, with the x-axis representing the number of studies and the axis-y listing the names of the theories.

Based on Figure 3, it is evident that Framing Theory is the top choice, which is utilised in six out of 20 selected papers. The prominence parallels the centrality of conflict framing in news discourse, specifically in how narratives are composed, legitimised, or questioned within public orbs. Given the highly diverged and emotionally charged nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the choice of Framing Theory accentuates the importance of observing the selective representations contour and sway global understanding and response (Parveen, 2017). This is followed closely by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) used by five studies. This suggests a sustained scholarly interest in exposing the ideological functions of language and the reproduction of power via discourse (Oguejiofor, 2024). In particular, two articles applied Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Theory, which facilitates language researchers to observe discourse at textual, discursive, and sociocultural context levels (Durmaz & Yogun, 2022). Frameworks such as Agenda-Setting Theory, and van Dijk's Ideological square, each developed in two studies, also contribute to this critical inquiry, recommending corresponding acumens into how information is spotlighted, and ideological boundaries are exhibited.

A range of other frameworks, such as Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach, Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach, and van Leeuwen's Social Actor Model, appear less frequently, in which those theories were used only in one or two literatures. The listed theories are indeed theoretically rich and well-established within discourse studies. However, their limited manifestation in this data may indicate linguists' fondness for broadly circulated frameworks or lack of methodological awareness of these models (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007). Otherwise, it may imply a tendency to reference broader paradigms without unambiguously naming granular models.

This study is more interesting as specific models curated to analyse conflicts such as the Victim/Defensive Mode of Reporting and van Dijk's "Us versus Them" model showed up once each. The amount of usage suggests that those theories might be underutilised in this context, or they are folded into a broader CDA framework. Nevertheless, this analysis illustrates which method and theory are becoming common ground for language analysts in exploring news discourse, conflict representation, or media mainly to see the relationship between media, ideology, and discourse (Sahmeni & Afifah, 2019). Besides, it clarifies the aperture in methodological and theoretical frameworks that are not yet utilised in media studies, considering modern media is known for its multimodal integration (Cross 2006; as cited in Assaiqeli, 2021). In the digital era, news outlets have migrated to

social media as the leading platform to publish news, with a larger audience and hastier tools to distribute stories (Hase et al., 2023).

4. Conclusion

The study shows that the public's perception of the Israel-Palestine conflict is greatly influenced by the mainstream media. The media continue to play a significant role in shaping the conflict narrative, even as global media systems undergo continuous evolution from print to digital news. Reports about the war frequently distort the truth. This reflects the outlets' political stances, as well as national interests and ideological tendencies. Some narratives are more likely to be adopted by audiences and others are ignored when they are exposed to specific language, images, or framing.

This study offers the initial conclusions on the operations of mainstream media in the production of news concerning complex conflicts. Enhancing the quality and equity of conflict reporting necessitates the adoption of more balanced editorial practices and increased accountability in the management of sensitive political narratives by media outlets. The discussion centred on media bias, language use, and framing, illustrating how media selections can reinforce specific ideologies and shape audience comprehension of complex geopolitical events. Visual framing, while less frequently addressed, remains crucial in influencing emotional responses and establishing legitimacy. Findings indicate that a robust theoretical expansion may provide new insights and broaden the analytical framework for examining the Israel-Palestine conflict, especially regarding changing media ecologies.

ORCID iD: Nurul Iman Alwani Ehsham (0009-0000-2282-8034), Nor Fatin Abdul Jabar (0009-0008-6908-9281), Kamariah Yunus (0000-0002-7103-6911)

References

[1]   Ab Hadi, S. N. I., Ridzuan, A. R., Hassan, M. S., & Rani, N. S. A. (2023). Empowering tabayyun in the dissemination of halal product information through social media: A preliminary study among students. I-iECONS e-Proceedings, 614–624. https://doi.org/10.33102/iiecons.v10i1.43

[2]   Acerbi, A., S. Altay, and H. Mercier. 2022. "Research Note: Fighting Misinformation or Fighting for Information?" Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review. https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-87

[3]   Adane, H. B., & Amara, Y. (2024). Analyzing Western Media Narratives on Israel Attack on Gaza-Palestine: a Critical Discourse Analysis [Doctoral dissertation, ibn khaldoun university-Tiaret].

[4]   Ali, A., & Ibrahim, M. I. M. (2020). A critical discourse analysis of Donald Trump's inaugural address in 2017. International Journal of Linguistics and Translation Studies, 1(1), 16-31. http://dx.doi.org/10.36892/ijlts.v1i1.10

[5]   Aljoundi, B. A. K. (2024). A Comparative Discourse Analysis of the Lexical and Ideological Variations in the 2023 Palestinian-Israeli Conflict [Master's thesis, Hebron University].

[6]   Amer, M. M. A. (2022). BBC and New York Times' coverage of the May 2021 Israeli onslaught on Gaza: A critical discourse analysis. International Journal of English Linguistics, 12(5), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v12n5p1

[7]   Arrosyid, H., & Halwati, U. (2021). Media framing on the Palestine-Israel conflict. KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi, 15(2), 217-224. https://doi.org/10.24090/komunika.v15i2.4949

[8]   Assaiqeli, A. (2021). Palestine in visual representation: A visual semiotic analysis of the Nakba. International Journal of Arabic-English Studies, 21(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.33806/ijaes2000.21.1.6

[9]   Azim, S., & ur Rehman, H. J. (2024). (Mis) Misrepresentation of Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in the Lead Pakistani English Newspapers: An Application of Social Identity Theory By Henri Tajfel. Peshawar Islamicus, 15(1), 13-22. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13831602

[10] Bhowmik, S., & Fisher, J. (2023). Framing the Israel-Palestine conflict 2021: Investigation of CNN's coverage from a peace journalism perspective. Media, Culture & Society, 45(5), 1019-1035. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231154766

[11] Butt, A. R., Amer, U., Ahmed, R., Husnain, M., & Rasool, H. (2023). Framing of Israel and Palestine Conflict in the Elite Press of Saudi Arabia and United States of America. Statistics, Computing and Interdisciplinary Research, 5(2), 239-249.

[12] Carpentier, N., & De Cleen, B. (2007). Bringing discourse theory into media studies: The applicability of discourse theoretical analysis (DTA) for studying media practices and discourses. Journal of language and politics, 6(2), 265-293. http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/jlp.6.2.08car

[13] Clarke, J. A. (2018). Explicit bias. Nw. UL Rev., 113, 505.

[14] Cope, J., Fifrick, A., Holl, D., Martin, M., Nunnally, D., Preston, D., & Tedesco, A. (2005). Image impact in print media: A study of how pictures influence news consumers. Impact of News Images, 1-40.

[15] de Borja Navarro, F., & Yeh, A. (2022). The dangerous discourse of "us" vs."them:" Spain's VOX discursive practices. Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics, 16(2), 211-233. https://doi.org/10.2478/jnmlp-2022-0005

[16] Doufesh, B., & Briel, H. (2021). Ethnocentrism in conflict news coverage: A multimodal framing analysis of the 2018 Gaza protests in The Times of Israel and Al Jazeera. International Journal of Communication, 15(2021), 4230-4251.

[17] Durmaz, Z., & Yoğun, M. S. (2022). A critical discourse analysis of a visual image in Norman Fairclough's CDA model. International Journal of Scholars in Education, 5(1), 25-33. http://dx.doi.org/10.52134/ueader.1101763

[18] Eisinger, R. M., Veenstra, L. R., & Koehn, J. P. (2007). What media bias? Conservative and liberal labeling in major US newspapers. Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 12(1), 17-36. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1081180X06297460

[19] Eldin, H. M. A. S. (2019). The discursive representation of social groups through lexical choices in headlines: A critical discourse analysis of Western and Arab online reporting on Gaza war. CDELT Occasional Papers in the Development of English Education, 66(1), 95-128. http://dx.doi.org/10.21608/opde.2019.132720

[20] Hamas Elmasry, M. (2024). Images of the Israel-Gaza war on Instagram: A content analysis of Western broadcast news posts. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly. https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990241287155

[21] Hase, V., Boczek, K., & Scharkow, M. (2023). Adapting to affordances and audiences? A cross-platform, multi-modal analysis of the platformization of news on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Digital Journalism, 11(8), 1499-1520. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2128389

[22] Heni, A. N., & Chandra, O. H. (2022). The Representation of Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in Online News Articles: A Critical Discourse Analysis. Lensa: Kajian Kebahasaan, Kesusastraan, dan Budaya, 12(1), 134-147. http://dx.doi.org/10.26714/lensa.12.1.2022.134-147

[23] Hoon, L. L. (2024). A Content Analysis of the 2023 Israel-Palestine Conflict News Reporting in The Star Online, Malaysia. e-BANGI Journal, 21(3). https://doi.org/10.17576/ebangi.2024.2103.17

[24] Kareem, A. H., & Najm, Y. M. (2024). A critical discourse analysis of the biased role of Western media in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Journal of Language Studies, 8(6), 200-215. https://doi.org/10.25130/Lang.8.6.12

[25] Lingga, G. S., & Rangkuti, R. (2021). The analysis of euphemism meaning in different genre texts. Wacana: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra dan Pengajaran, 19(2), 15-23. http://dx.doi.org/10.33369/jwacana.v19i2.16549

[26] Mahmood, A., & Alvi, U. F. (2024). The Echoes of Peace in Newspapers Editorials: A Corpus Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of Israel Palestine Conflict. Dialogue Social Science Review (DSSR), 2(4), 638-657.

[27] Mayring, P. (2019). Qualitative content analysis: Demarcation, varieties, developments. In Forum: Qualitative social research, 20 (3). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-20.3.3343

[28] Nartey, M., & Mwinlaaru, I. N. (2019). Towards a decade of synergising corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis: a meta-analysis. Corpora, 14(2), 203-235. http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/cor.2019.0169

[29] Oehmer, F. (2010). Aggressor or victim? How the antagonists of the Lebanon War 2006 are constructed in German Newspapers. Conflict and Communication Online, 9(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-38820

[30] Oguejiofor, P. O. (2024). The Role of Social Media in Shaping Narratives and Perceptions in the Israeli-Gaza Conflict that Escalated on October 2023. International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research, 8(4), 74-82. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8008-4467

[31] Paik, S., Bonna, S., Novozhilova, E., Gao, G., Kim, J., Wijaya, D., & Betke, M. (2023, September). The affective nature of ai-generated news images: Impact on visual journalism. In 2023 11th International Conference on Affective Computing and Intelligent Interaction (ACII), 1-8. http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/ACII59096.2023.10388166

[32] Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. Political communication, 10(1), 55-75. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963

[33] Panayotova, M., & Rizova, H. (2021). Online news media framing of the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian conflict by Al Jazeera, BBC, and CNN [Master's thesis, Malmö University].

[34] Parveen, H. (2017). Framing theory, agenda setting theory. Media and Communication Studies.

[35] Patterson, Thomas E. 1993. Out of Order: An Incisive and Boldly Original Critique of the News Media's Domination of America's Political Process. New York: Knopf.

[36] Putra, A. (2024). Narrative discourse of the Israel-Palestine issue in the framework of political communication: A comparative study of Kompas. Id and BBC media. Islamic Communication Journal, 9(2), 325-340. https://doi.org/10.21580/icj.2024.9.2.25845

[37] Qawariq, R. (2020). Political and ideological tensions in Israel: a critical language analysis of news reporting of the 2014 Gaza war. An-Najah University Journal for Research-B (Humanities), 36(7), 1531-1556. https://doi.org/10.35552/0247-036-007-007

[38] Reuben, R. C. (2009). The impact of news coverage on conflict: Toward greater understanding. Marq. L. Rev., 93, 45.

[39] Sahmeni, E., & Afifah, N. (2019). Using critical discourse analysis (CDA) in media discourse studies: Unmask the mass media. REiLA: Journal of Research and Innovation in Language, 1(2), 39-45. http://dx.doi.org/10.31849/reila.v1i2.2764

[40] Sarwar, H., Malhi, A. T., & Naz, I. (2023). Representation of Israel and Palestine issue in international media: An analysis of BBC and Al-Jazeera coverage in 2022. Annals of Human and Social Sciences, 4(3), 375-381. https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2023(4-III)34

[41] Setyohadi, N. M., & Jannah, R. (2024). Palestine in Media: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Israeli Media in Influencing Online News Headlines. In Proceedings of National English Undergraduate Student Conference (NEUSCO), 1, 285-304.

[42] Sigar, A. H., & Saeed, B. M. (2022). The role of lexical repetition in English written texts. International Journal of Health Sciences, 6(8), 3446–3457. https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS8.12858

[43] Tewksbury, D., & Scheufele, D. A. (2019). News framing theory and research. In Media Effects, 51-68. Routledge.

[44] Van Dijk, T. A. (2013). Ideology and discourse. The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies, 175-196.

[45] Yıldırım, G., & Şahin, G. (2024). Israel-Palestine Issue in the International Press: A Critical Analysis on October 6-7 Attacks and Information Warfare. SAVSAD Savunma ve Savaş Araştırmaları Dergisi, 34(2), 43-56. https://10.54078/savsad.1489403

[46] Zahid, E., Afzal, M., & Asgher, M. (2023). Exploring The Dawn's Newspaper Coverage of The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Social Semiotic Multimodal Analysis. International Premier Journal of Languages & Literature, 1(2), 51-60. https://ipjll.com/ipjll/index.php/journal/article/view/9

[47] Zelizer, B. (2010). About to die: How news images move the public. Oxford University Press.