



# Social Media Communication and Framing of the Gaza Conflict: Impact on Public Opinion

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the framing of the Gaza conflict on social media in Jordan and its impact on public opinion. By employing qualitative methods, it explores the emotional, political, and ideological underpinnings of digital discourse through in-depth interviews with Jordanian social media users, journalists, and political analysts. The findings reveal that online conversations predominantly center on humanitarian and moral matters; however, posts that evoke strong emotions are seen as both authentic and politically charged. The widespread distrust of mainstream media gives rise to echo chambers, leading users to depend more on content shared by friends and digital influencers. Utilizing media framing and connective action theories, this study highlights how digital platforms serve as vital arenas where users selectively influence public sentiment and political identity. In the Jordanian context, the paper examines social media communication during conflicts, advocating for improved media literacy. It also elucidates the geopolitical transformations in communication that social media has led to during crises. This research contributes to the broader discourse on the impact of digital media in the Global South, offering valuable insights for both researchers and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Social Media Communication, Gaza Conflict, Public Opinion, Media Framing, Humanitarian Narratives, Political Communication, Middle East

## 1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of information, especially regarding politics and global conflicts, is increasingly important because of social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram significantly influence narrative trends, enhance public understanding, and promote political engagement (Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022; KhosraviNik, 2017; Zamri et al., 2021). One notable conflict is Gaza, a long-standing regional crisis marked by cycles of violence and humanitarian disasters, which has recently become the focus of intense discourse on social media (Shams, 2018; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). In this decentralised narrative space, competition arises among various actors, including state entities, media systems, activists, and the public, wherein narratives are constructed relationally and evolve based on ideological motivators (Gerbaudo, 2018; Lievrouw, 2023). Analysing the framing of these narratives might reveal how social media shapes perceptions of the conflict, assuming that social media framing strategies impact public perceptions of the Gaza crisis (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017; Nasereddin, 2023), little is known about the awareness of users of such strategies, especially when news consumption is increasingly moving to social media. While global studies have explored the role of digital platforms in disseminating information regarding military conflicts, there is a lack of research examining how the Gaza conflict is framed in Jordanian conflict communications on social media. The socio-political context of Jordan is likely to affect public discussions on the Gaza conflict due to its state identity and enduring historical, political, and demographic connections to the Palestinian cause (Alkaabi, 2024).

This study aims to explore the themes within the digital discourse surrounding the conflict among Jordanian social media participants, thus contributing to the analysis of its digital narrative. In contrast to previous research that has predominantly focused on Western or institutional media representations of conflict, the present study underscores user-generated digital narratives originating from a Global South nation with profound historical and demographic ties to the Palestinian cause. By placing Jordanian discourse at the intersection of regional identity and digital activism, this research fills a significant gap in the current body of scholarship.

This paper employs framing theory to propose theoretical understandings that the way researchers frame data tends to shape readers' understanding and response to the data presented (Entman, 1993). The study also integrates Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020) and the logic of Connective Action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). These frameworks illuminate how individual narratives become collective symbols and how digital discourse shapes perceptions, especially in contexts with asymmetrical geopolitical stakes.

In light of the research design employed in this study and the selected qualitative methodology, this research utilizes semi-structured interviews to gather comprehensive insights from Jordanian social media users, journalists, and political analysts regarding their experiences and interactions within the online environment pertaining to the Gaza conflict. It

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involves examining the significance behind participants' interactions with rival digital narratives, thereby interpreting these within their contexts to uncover the meaning of social media framing in Jordan. This research will expand on existing framing studies by exploring how social media influences general legislative sentiment, opportunity frames, and how these conversations encourage concrete actions or thoughtful deliberations.

This study enriches the evolving sub-field of digital media and conflict communication by analysing the framing of the Gaza conflict within Jordan's digital media landscape and the relevance of those frames to the Jordanian public sphere. The findings are likely to be useful to communication and media studies, organisations of civil society, policymakers, civil societies, and researchers who are interested in knowing about how social media is changing the way conflicts in the Middle East are framed.

## 2. Literature Review

Social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter (X), TikTok, and Instagram, have transformed into key battlegrounds for public discourse and framing conflict narratives. However, scholarship remains divided on whether these platforms encourage meaningful political engagement or foster misinformation and polarization. While studies such as Eltantawy & Wiest (2011) and Nasereddin (2023) demonstrate how hashtags foster solidarity, others, including Sunstein (2017) and Tufekci (2017), caution against the formation of echo chambers and emotional oversimplification. This study critically engages with these tensions to explore how users in Jordan interpret, reproduce, and resist dominant frames about Gaza.

### 2.1. Humanitarian Framing

Social media reflected the controversy in the war and the Gaza conflict, which encompassed humanitarian, media, and political aspects (Alashqar, 2024; KhosraviNik, 2017; Nasereddin, 2023; Siapera et al., 2015). The representations of these aspects varied significantly depending on party politics and geopolitics. Examples include Nasereddin (2023), who studied #Ceasefirenow, #GazaUnderAttack, and #FreePalestine hashtags, determining that such hashtag movements promote the spirit of global concern and sympathy to the Palestinian people, and Ismail and Hafidz (2024), who analysed hashtag movements to promote support for justice in Palestine, finding that tweets calling for justice for the Palestinian people often gather Twitteratis who raise their voices. In a similar vein, Eltantawy and Wiest (2011) explored the role of new media in shaping a 'new international image' of Middle Eastern conflicts, proposing that social media offers discourses not found in mainstream Western and Gulf media. Together, these studies suggest that social media is not just a news channel, but a key part of the network that constitutes political narratives.

### 2.2. Emotional Affect and Identity

Framing theory concerns how issues are presented or framed (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993). Framing of news stories highlights certain aspects of them, thereby defining problems, causes, moral judgments, and potential solutions across both commercial and non-commercial media. As Entman (1993) explains, framing makes some things visible and others invisible. Binary frames are often used by the media in conflicts, with one side depicted as a victim and the other as an aggressor. For instance, during the 2021 Gaza War, Majzoub (2021) showed how Al Jazeera Arabic portrayed Palestinians as victims. Fox News characterised Israeli military action as legitimate self-defence (Adane & Amara, 2024). This simplistic enemy/victim framing aligns with the ideological polarization that is a hallmark of much media coverage (Osimen et al., 2023; Sun, 2024; Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al., 2016; Wang, 2017).

Nowhere is the importance of media framing clearer than in Jordan, where the Palestinian cause has deep historical, political, and cultural roots. Traditional media and social platforms both have their influences on public opinion. Solidarity and national identity are explored by Alashqar (2024) about the events of the Gaza conflict. Ahmad et al. (2021) examined the online media coverage of the 2021 Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Al-Farooq et al. (2024) suggested and framed the Palestinian side in strong terms of victimisation and resistance. Although these studies shed light on the frames employed by traditional media, less attention has been paid to the frames Jordanian social media participants have drawn from these studies or their responses to them (Alashqar, 2024).

### 2.3. Decline of Mainstream Media Gatekeeping

While the mediating role of mainstream media as a gatekeeper declines, social media has developed into a decentralized platform for broadcasting news, consuming information, and communicating conflict (Chadwick, 2013; Peruško, 2021; Reese, 2022). The shift from traditional media to social media caused a reorientation of public opinion processes, allowing information to be disseminated in seconds and creating bubbles for certain opinions. Often, participants encounter content that confirms their existing beliefs and reinforces their ideologies (Sunstein, 2017). Additionally, social media promotes individual and revolutionary identity building and diverse perspectives in political conflicts (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Social media, such as online platforms, has become familiar with the idea of social interactions and communication, as seen in the Arab Spring, which is related to major social movements (Tufekci, 2017), and has changed how knowledge is disseminated. This included a spike of social media broadcasting disinformation and polarisation, and misinformation tending to go hand in hand during the October 2023 conflict (Oguejiofor, 2024).

Social media are platforms that are seen as deliberative, allowing participants not only to read but also to write and share posts (Papacharissi, 2015)—thus providing a theoretical sense of digital public engagement. Co-creating these meanings clears the beliefs concerning unresolved issues, such as the Gaza war. Furthermore, according to the agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), although the media does not control how individuals think, it shapes which topics are deemed important. Due to the power of narrative, agenda setting occurs when actors who have sufficient power within a certain field (e.g., political, economic) direct its attention, and social media acts as a multiplier due to the role of algorithmic curation (Azzimonti & Fernandes, 2023; Lim & Bentley, 2022; Miller et al., 2024). As some issues receive more public attention, the relentless repetition of a small set of frames determines the narratives that dominate public discourse and communication about the Gaza war.

Furthermore, investigating how social media platforms influence perceptions of the Gaza conflict and affect Jordanian street movements and public opinion significantly enhances our understanding of Framing Theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, and Digital Public Engagement. Drawing on qualitative interviews with social media users, journalists, and political analysts in Jordan, the study highlights how interpretive responses to narratives circulating on Jordanian digital landscapes concerning the Gaza conflict diverged. The aim is to shed light on the impact of this digital narrative on shaping public opinion in Jordan and the region regarding the Gaza War by analyzing the main frames and narratives that emerge from large datasets of social media discourse.

### 3. Methodology

The present research focuses on and analyzes the ongoing Gaza conflict and its representation on various social media platforms used in Jordan, aiming to explore the public opinion and perceptions of the conflict employing a qualitative approach (semi-structured interviews). This section further discusses the design of the present study, the tools used for data collection, the sampling methods employed, and the subsequent approaches to data analysis used in this investigation.

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study is a qualitative, interpretative study that examines how individuals experience and make sense of the way the Gaza conflict is portrayed on social media, which underlie opinion and framing through insights from participant perspectives and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It offers a justification for the construction of reality, which is often socially constructed, providing diverse angles and perspectives on the construction of public opinion and perception, specifically by engaging with digital content (Bryman, 2016).

#### 3.2. Data Collection

In the present study, data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, a standard qualitative method that ensures coverage of key themes/categories while providing deep insights with the help of deductively employed inductive subjective views (Aslam et al., 2023). Through this technique, informants can formulate their perspective openly based on an open-ended and feasible way, but through the research questions that keep a formal structure (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In the present study, participants engage with and discuss narratives about the Gaza conflict on social media through the interview questions, providing a guideline in the interview introductory section. They are required to have consumed social media content for the week prior to the interview. Moreover, the coding protocol was laid out following the coding guides as per Aslam et al. (2024) and Aslam et al. (2023).

**Table 1:** Coding Protocol

Main Themes	Operational Themes	Operational Meanings for Themes
Social Media Communication	Social Media	The specific platforms participants frequently use. Communication and engagement on Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram in the context of the Gaza Conflict
	Desensitisation About Gaza	Participants' perspectives on visualisation regarding the Gaza conflict on social media.
	Emotional and Cognitive Effects	The influence of social media on public sentiment about the Gaza conflicts in Jordan highlights both emotional and cognitive impacts.
	Influence on Public Opinion and Narratives	The effect of participants' reporting on the impact of different social media platforms on public opinion regarding citizens and the Gaza conflicts and wars.
	Engagement and Mobilisation	How social media structures mobilise participants, or convert them into activists or political actors.

Source: adapted and recreated from Aslam et al. (2023) and Kibiswa (2019)

The study provides a comprehensive coding framework (Table 1) for improved analysis and understanding of research dimensions. This framework includes several pertinent columns that serve different purposes: it identifies the hypotheses based on the theories supporting this research; it outlines the categories, themes, and codes used by researchers grounded in these theories. Similarly, it explores the actual testing to which each sub-theme, subcategory, and subcode that appear below have been subjected; it highlights the specification of operational definitions of all elements necessary to distinguish themes and sub-themes and shows how all codes and subcodes assigned have been operationalized according to the given meaning unit contained in each of the texts under analysis. A theme is described as representing “the thread of a latent meaning through condensed meaning units, codes or categories, on a more interpretative level ... an expression of the latent content of the text” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 107). Moreover, Patterson and Williams (2002) explain that “an idea adequate to itself so that it could be treated as a separate unit of meaning” (p. 47) in the text is the definition of a meaning unit. These definitions are integral as they illustrate clearly when a passage or section of text can be classified (or sub-classified) during a theme identification process. These definitions greatly increase analytic rigor, allowing for a more accurate understanding of the study results by providing clarity and consistency. To ensure smoothness in the interview sessions, they were conducted in Arabic. The data was subsequently transcribed and translated into English. Bilingual researchers conducted the translations and subsequently performed back-translation to ensure the accuracy of the meaning. Although minor idiomatic differences arose, the principal themes were preserved. It was noted that the translation influenced the tone; nevertheless, the meaning remained largely consistent.

### 3.3. Sampling Strategy

As stated previously, participants were chosen based on their social media activity. Using a purposive sampling technique, the researchers selected those who had engaged in discussions about the Gaza conflict at least a week before the interview, categorizing them into the following groups:

**Jordanian Social Media participants:** A diverse range of individuals engaging with platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram. This group was categorized by age, gender, and political viewpoint to ensure representative sampling. Approximately 10 participants were selected to offer varied perspectives.

**Journalists:** Seven journalists were chosen from a total of 11 associated with digital media outlets that significantly shape political narratives in Jordan.

**Political Analysts:** Experts in Middle Eastern geopolitics and Jordanian political dialogues participated to explore how expert narratives shape public views on the Gaza conflict. Eight political analysts were selected for inclusion in the datasets.

This approach yields a total of approximately 25 participants, which is adequate for qualitative interviews to achieve thematic saturation (Guest et al., 2006). Although the sample size ( $n = 25$ ) may appear restricted, it satisfies the requirements for conducting a comprehensive thematic analysis within the realm of qualitative research (Guest et al., 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This quantity enabled saturation across various participant groups and contributed to a balanced perspective from users, journalists, and analysts.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was utilised as the data analysis method, frequently applied to recognise, examine, and document patterns (themes) in qualitative data. Through thematic analysis, researchers pinpoint dominant frames present in the social media discourse related to the Gaza conflict and understand how these frames resonate with participants. The research follows a multi-stage analysis process:

- **Understanding Data:** Researchers carefully transcribe and translate interviews, closely reviewing the transcripts to comprehend the content fully.
- **Coding:** Initial codes are established based on common concepts, words, and themes evident in the data. Both inductive coding (for emerging themes) and deductive coding (for themes derived from the theoretical framework of framing and agenda-setting; see Alyaqoub et al., 2024; Aslam et al., 2024) are utilized.
- **Extraction of Themes:** Once the theory-based coding protocol process had been fully established deductively, initial thematic codes were extracted, including those related to the framing of the Gaza conflict itself, emotional and cognitive responses, and framing surrounding public opinion.
- **Thematic Review:** After finalising the themes extraction process, the identified themes are refined to ensure that they are meaningful and appropriate to the data.
- **Analysis:** Within this frame, scholars compare and contrast themes across the three different respondent types (social media users, journalists, and analysts), while situating their findings in literature on framing effects and social media effects, highlighting the stability of public opinion.

Thematic saturation was attained after approximately 22 interviews, as minimal new codes emerged in the final three. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing themes among participant groups and reviewing initial codes with two independent coders. Member-checking was conducted through follow-up clarification emails, and debriefing sessions with researchers were held to assess analytical bias.

### 3.5. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Establishing Trustworthiness ensures the validity of the interpretation and verifies its verifiability. The researchers elaborated on the findings and methodology of the study, underscoring its strengths and limitations. They incorporated quotations and additional supporting materials to substantiate their interpretations and conclusions. This enables readers to assess the transferability, reliability, and confirmability of the findings (Merriam, 2001; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The reader, however, determines if the qualitative study is trustworthy (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). As a result, when information was taken mainly from written transcripts, the researchers guaranteed that each selected detail was delivered by a recognisable social media user, journalist, or political analyst during the recording period.

Additionally, for ethical reasons, the study adheres to the ethical standards established by Helsinki. An Informed Consent was also signed by each participant, and they were also assured anonymity, protecting confidentiality. Furthermore, without facing any consequences, the right to withdraw from the study was also explained. Hence, researchers remain mindful of the emotional sensitivity surrounding this subject.

## 4. Findings

Drawing on qualitative interviews with 25 participants—social media users, journalists, and political analysts in Jordan, this research shows how the Gaza conflict is framed, and what impact these framings have on public opinion. Thematic analysis revealed four salient but interrelated themes: (1) emotion and humanitarian framing; (2) polarization and echo chambers; (3) mistrust of mainstream media and digital narratives; and (4) performative solidarity and digital activism. The next section describes each theme with participant stories and theoretical perspectives.

### 4.1. Framing of Humanity and Emotional Resonance

The humanization of Gaza has emerged as a consistent theme in interviews, highlighting the emotional impact of the crisis on individuals and communities. Participants recounted distressing narratives of tragedy, stressing the stark realities endured by those in Gaza. For example, social media users—witnessing the destruction firsthand—recalled haunting images of “children

crying for parents,” “children buried in rubble,” and “families torn apart in real time.” These accounts illustrate suffering and psychological trauma left on participants who noted frightened residents who were in chaos, seeing outside their balconies in sample photographs and videos. Moreover, there were also various harsh hashtags attached to this footage, #CeasefireNow or #GazaUnderAttack, alongside the classical hashtag used often, i.e., #FreePalestine, urging viewers to acknowledge the suffering of innocent civilians. Victimhood and moral obligation seem to be the most active expressions presented for the struggle of the Palestinian people, specifically mentioning Gaza. For instance, a regular poster on social media, a 22-year-old girl, argued that:

*“I do not need to do analysis; I would straightforwardly say that it hurts when we see the tortured children that were extracted, buried under the rubble, it is humanistic pain, yet not political”.*

In the above quote, the critical role of emotions is exemplified, aligning with Papacharissi's (2015) argument of “affective publics,” which ultimately shapes public opinions. This means the content retains a power that can affect public opinion across both social and political domains. Sometimes, the emotions or opinions of individual spectators can be reflected in the powerful and enthusiastic commentary of commentators. These elements became intensified later through social media, in the form of posts, stories, and emotional videos, which also heavily influence the general public. Furthermore, this transformation in media consumption patterns is reflected in the narratives that journalists choose to present, as they increasingly utilize these platforms to communicate emotional stories. For example, during a highly charged broadcast, an anchor underscored specific moments that evoked strong emotional responses from viewers, thus reinforcing the connection between media representation and audience engagement:

*“From a distance, we watched conflict reporting with a sense of detachment. Now, our editors encourage us to create human-interest stories instead. This shift renders images and narratives more ‘authentic’ and garners increased engagement.”*

The increasing dependence on humanitarian narratives aligns with Entman's (1993) model, especially considering the rise in human-centered evaluations and the use of visually engaging images to evoke empathy. Such narratives resonate profoundly with audiences, portraying Palestinians as innocent victims and stirring a significant sense of injustice. Several participants were queried about the framing used by international media. One young political science graduate remarked:

*“CNN portrays it as a clash or conflict. Yet, it is not a level playing field. How can such neutral terms be used when one side has fighter planes while the other has children armed only with stones?”*

The linguistic choices made are integral to framing, influencing audience perceptions of the conflict (Goffman, 1974). Recognition of the significance of labels was noted by participants, who pointed out the distinctions between “martyrs” and “casualties,” “resistance” and “terrorism,” and “targeted strikes” and “massacres.”

#### 4.2. Echo Chambers and Polarization

The second concern relates to the echo chamber and narrative polarization. Users frequently noted that, while social media facilitates connections with a global network of like-minded individuals, it concurrently diminishes exposure to diverse viewpoints. A 22-year-old engineering student commented.

*“OK, so, like, everyone in my feed seems to support Gaza. When I didn't react, I assumed everyone felt the same. However, when I checked my cousin's feed in the U.S., it was filled with pro-Israel posts. I was shocked.”*

The observation made by Sunstein (2017) regarding the entrapment within information cocoons is particularly telling. These algorithm-driven echo chambers serve to reinforce preexisting beliefs. In Jordan, both ideological influences and digital platforms have contributed to the formation of organizational cocoons. This scenario has sparked concerns among journalists. An investigative reporter remarked:

*“Currently, we're facing trolling from both political sides on Twitter (X); we're labelled traitors for any comments that express nuance. There's no nuance, no grey area, just clearly black and white.”*

Political analysts discussed a “discourse war.” One analyst noted:

*“My narratives are weaponising. Whether it's Palestine or the opposite side, this all-or-nothing rhetoric threatens humanity and offers little space for authentic policy dialogue.”*

This perspective significantly affected public sentiment. While there was widespread support for the Palestinian cause, opinions differed sharply on the appropriate response: should it involve peaceful protests or violent militant actions? This aspect of social media often sparked outrage, hindering meaningful discussion and suppressing dissenting views.

#### 4.3. Tap Distrust in Mainstream Media and the Turn to Alternative Narratives

Nearly all interviewees expressed skepticism towards mainstream media, particularly regarding perceived Western bias in headlines, the selection of news stories, and the portrayal of events as depicting “both sides.” Such practices are regarded as both practically and morally unacceptable. One journalist in his 30s recalled:

*“Like the one where I remember the headline read that ten Jews and a hundred Palestinians were dead. That sense of balance is not neutral — it always obscures the level of violence.”*

Citizen journalism and digital influencers have gained more from technology than traditional media, as social media plays a vital role in this shift. A high school teacher based in Amman noted:

*“On TikTok, I follow a Palestinian medic. There he is, giving us live updates right this second. I trust him more than I trust the BBC.”*

This perspective aligns with Tufekci's (2017) assertion that credibility on digital platforms stems from authenticity rather than institutional authority. Platforms like TikTok, Twitter (X), and Telegram have surfaced as alternative avenues for shaping

narratives, enabling everyday users and activists to navigate around conventional editorial limitations. Moreover, even mainstream Jordanian journalists have acknowledged the necessity of adapting to these shifts. A television presenter commented:

*“In our coverage, we now cite sources encountered in social media. Ten years ago, that was unthinkable. However, we cannot run away from trends because trends shape public opinion more than our newsrooms do.”*

Furthermore, some expressed irritation regarding the excessive focus on emotional narratives, arguing that it oversimplifies the conflict. A political analyst warned:

*“When Gaza itself is framed within purely affective means (all the tears, all the bomb footage and wreckage), the risk is that the deeper undercurrents, such as the occupation, the siege, and long-standing geopolitical forces, remain overshadowed or ignored entirely. That is a significant part, but not the whole picture.”*

This dynamic between emotional urgency and analytical depth is evident in broader discussions about framing theory and agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993).

#### 4.4. Performative Solidarity and the Digital Resistance

The final theme focused on actions taken in the digital realm. For many participants, activities such as reposting, utilizing hashtags, or updating profile pictures were considered significant. However, some perceived these actions as merely performative. One university student remarked on Instagram, “My friends post Palestine flags but go to parties the next night. Is that genuine support or just a fad?” This connects to Bennett and Segerberg’s (2012) model of digitally networked action, where individualized expressions—like hashtags or image reposting—form collective identity frames. In this study, such actions reflected both emotional resonance and political positioning, particularly among younger participants who constructed solidarity through curated affective sharing. This criticism highlights the concept of performative solidarity, in which public displays often prioritize self-interest over authentic engagement and action. Participants distinguished between what they saw as “genuine” digital activism and symbolic gestures lacking substance. Authentic solidarity was described as sustained engagement, participation in protests, or direct support efforts. In contrast, performative acts were perceived as trend-driven. These distinctions were often tied to trust in the actor’s consistency and whether offline actions accompanied posts. Several participants noted that while awareness is useful, digital actions should be contextualized within broader advocacy movements. Nevertheless, numerous participants defended digital activism as a legitimate form of resistance. A social media influencer with 50,000 followers commented:

*“Even if someone reposts a video for clout, it still gets viewed. Awareness expands. Impact is impact, and who cares about the reasons?”*

This aligns with Papacharissi’s (2015) assertion that emotional expressions—even if performative—help sustain discussions and create a sense of urgency around issues. Analysts note that Jordanian social media has influenced certain brands and politicians, compelling them to take public stances on Gaza, which reflects real-world consequences. Nonetheless, some interviewees questioned the efficacy of online engagement. A 40-year-old male political analyst remarked:

*“Hashtags are important, but policy carries more weight. If institutions fail to act, then it becomes merely symbolic, as social media merely raises awareness.”*

This highlights the ongoing tension between symbolic and substantive action, emphasizing a fundamental aspect of modernity and the intricacies of digital politics.

#### 4.5. New Elements Emerging By Group

Examining the three participant groups reveals distinct priorities:

- Social media users concentrated on emotionally impactful stories, identity-driven solidarity, and skepticism towards the media, alongside a desire for community validation.
- Journalists with objectivity and who develop a personal connection to the Palestinians, going against traditional standards, try to meet the new generation’s opinions.
- Analysts underscored narratives of enduring impacts on Jordanian society and policy.

Various sentiments and queries emerged from participants’ interviews:

- Who determines the framing of outrage and why?
- Is reposting sufficient, or is it merely shouting into a void?
- Why is it so challenging for Western media to perceive alternative perspectives?

These inquiries reflect significant meta-awareness among participants, not only regarding the conflict but also their roles in interpreting, amplifying, and reacting to its portrayal on digital platforms. Data indicate that, within the Jordanian context, social media serve as more than mere information vehicles; they function as arenas of identity, emotion, and political stance. The narrative surrounding the Gaza conflict is fluid, fiercely debated, and emotionally charged, intertwined with platform features, cultural narratives, algorithmic sorting, and geopolitical discourse. These narratives not only shape public opinion but also actively generate it. Acknowledging this complex interplay of media, identity, and ideology elucidates how digital communities in Jordan and similar regions of the Global South respond to international crises like the Gaza situation—not just by consuming information but by participating as influential actors in the framing process itself.

## 5. Discussion

This study investigates the discourse surrounding the Gaza conflict within Jordanian digital discussions, aiming to understand how it shapes public opinion on the topic. Qualitative interviews with social media users, journalists, and political analysts

reveal that social media platforms function not just as communication channels but also as spaces for developing emotional, moral, and political identities in conflict. The themes identified in the analysis, humanitarian framing, echo chambers, media distrust, and digital activism, underscore the increasingly intricate and interwoven relationship between media and public sentiment in Jordan as the year 2020 approaches.

The frequent appearance of humanitarian framing among social media users and traditional journalists points to the growing dominance of emotional narratives in discussions of conflict, war, and humanitarian crises. This observation aligns with Papacharissi's (2015) arguments that digital media facilitate the development of what she terms "affective publics" (p. 4), integrating emotional expression into everyday civic and political participation. Findings also support earlier works such as those of Halperin (2015) and Östman (2012), which demonstrated that emotionally charged content related to global conflicts tends to reach broader audiences and generate greater engagement, particularly among younger users. Interviewed users in Jordan express the belief that images and videos shared online serve as unfiltered and authentic representations of Palestinian suffering. Comparatively, similar studies in Lebanon and Egypt (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Tufekci, 2017) highlight the role of emotional framing in mass mobilization. However, unlike those contexts, Jordan's digital discourse on Gaza reflects a hybrid dynamic—part activism, part state-influenced constraint—where public expression must navigate both emotional urgency and political boundaries.

Alarmed global perceptions of social media's ability to fragment public debate into echo chambers and foster algorithmic polarisation appear to also affect the Jordanian digital landscape (Sunstein, 2017). Along with the ideological homogeneity of participants' digital lives, this trend has amplified support for Palestinian causes while increasing suspicion of antithetical or centrist ideas. In contexts like Jordan, where political language is tightly interwoven with cultural identity, regional solidarity, and historical memory, this risk raises concerns regarding democratic dialogue. Ideal articulations of disagreement in public spheres online have almost vanished from numerous spaces, reflecting a broader trend of generating digital populism where affect takes priority over argumentative reason (Schulz et al., 2020).

The novelty of this study lies in documenting how emotional framing not only fosters online solidarity but also narrows discourse through the formation of polarizing echo chambers. In Jordan, where digital discourse intersects with national identity and historical memory, emotional content becomes both a tool for empathy and a vector for ideological rigidity. This research greatly enhances the comprehension of the roots of scepticism regarding mainstream media. Western outlets have faced challenges regarding bias perception; however, the scepticism expressed by participants largely relates to the belief that views on Palestine are systematically silenced. Similar to the findings presented above, this aligns with certain conclusions from earlier research (Fuchs, 2017; Herman & Chomsky, 2021) as well as a recently published influential monograph arguing that Arab audiences engage with Western coverage of conflicts involving the Middle East within the context of a long history of asymmetric power and geopolitical exploitation (Al-Ghazzi & Kraidy, 2020). Consequently, users in Jordan have increasingly sought out social media personalities, amateur accounts, and journalists. Users from the Global South tend to place greater trust in peer messenger information compared to institutional news outlets (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020).

**Performance Solidarity vs. Accountable Activism:** A significant theme in the data was the conflict between performative solidarity, performance activism, and follow-up activism. Critics argue that merely reposting content or using hashtags without subsequent action constitutes empty engagement (Morozov, 2012). However, many participants perceive these acts as valuable contributions to an awareness ecosystem. In a context where narratives are highly contested, the notion that "visibility is power" holds particular weight. Furthermore, recent insights from Papacharissi (2021) suggest that expressive actions on social media, whether intentional or incidental, help forge what she terms "networked affective alliances," which encourage lasting political participation. Participants recognized that digital involvement transcended mere self-expression; it represented a form of collective advocacy, echoing Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) concept of 'connective action.'

It was found that the line between professional journalism and citizen media has begun to disappear. Jordanian journalists indicated that tone and visual style had been adjusted to meet audience emotional expectations, even if this challenged traditional neutrality. This evolution is described conceptually by Chadwick's (2013) framework of a "hybrid media system." Elsewhere, Carlson and Lewis (2021) have also linked the "emotionalisation of news" to increased access to metrics that measure audience emotions. These changes go beyond mere surface modifications, representing deep epistemic shifts. Conventional ideas of "truth" and "objectivity" are increasingly being substituted or enriched with values like emotional authenticity and moral integrity.

It is important to have a grasp of the sociopolitical dynamics in Jordan in order to understand how they operate on top of one another with their geopolitical ties. While a lot is being said about the socio-political context of the situation with Iran, both in Jordan and on the international level, one simply cannot underestimate the significance of the socio-economic reform to the narrative. Another especially intriguing part is the large Palestinian population in Jordan, and the complex, at times razor-tense, relationship that demographic has with Israel and the West. This situation provides a new perspective for examination. Massad (2016) digs deeper and looks into the interesting relationship between Palestinian identity and how solidarity is enacted through media usage across Jordan and neighbouring territories. Understanding how these kinships form and diversify in daily practices, such as sharing content, allows the researchers to better grasp the nuances and complexities of identity, resistance, and community in this context. Drawing on data until October 2023, this study engages a deeper social magnifying lamp that can give a fuller view of how those processes are inscribed on everyday practices, humanizing the political and showing entanglement as the name of the game in Jordan.

Furthermore, the results hold important ramifications for policymakers, media professionals, and educators. While the engaging nature of digital content can effectively rally public support, it may simultaneously promote a binary, oppositional mindset that obstructs meaningful dialogue. To address this superficial engagement without straying emotionally, media educators might propose "citizen survival kits" through digital literacy initiatives that equip participants to engage critically with emotionally charged content (Östman, 2012). Policymakers must understand three dynamics, as they are vital for anticipating and managing national discourse during crises.

This study has certain limitations as well. Its qualitative focus on Jordan restricts generalizability to broader national or regional contexts. However, future research might take a more thorough approach by performing comparative studies among

Arab nations or creating a quantitative scale to evaluate the prevalence and impact of specific frames. Additionally, while this study centred on user perceptions and interpretations, examining the content shared on social media and the algorithms employed on these platforms would enrich these findings.

## 6. Conclusions

This research offers insights into social media discussions about the Gaza conflict from a Jordanian viewpoint and its effects on society's perception. Based on interviews with social media users, journalists, and political analysts, the research reveals that the digital landscape serves not merely as a neutral information conduit but as an active, dynamic platform where stories, identities, and emotions converge. The strong presence of humanitarian and moral framing, emotional reactions, and a general distrust of mainstream media underscores the substantial shifts in public discourse in Jordan over the years, largely due to social media.

Emotional cues, narrative imagination, and collective identity significantly influence public sentiment about the Gaza conflict. Participants in Jordanian social media actively disseminate prevailing narratives rather than merely absorbing information. These elements are deeply embedded in the national landscape due to the conflict's proximity and the Palestinian cause's significance to Jordanian identity.

Positioning the analysis within media framing and connective action enriches the discussion on whether digital media facilitates or obstructs public opinion formation in conflict environments. This approach highlights non-institutional voices and evolving expectations of traditional journalism. However, research indicates that while social media boosts engagement and elevates overlooked individuals, it also leads to echo chambers and increases viewpoint polarisation, prioritising emotional reactions over rational analysis. This research aims to deepen understanding of how conflict narratives evolve across media environments, stressing the importance of regional and cultural contexts in shaping digital communication patterns and public interpretation of global events. Practitioners and policymakers must focus on enhancing media literacy programs and encouraging constructive dialogue, particularly during heightened tension and polarisation.

Future research should employ cross-national comparisons to investigate how different Arab societies approach conflict framing on social media. Integrating digital ethnography with content analysis would also help unpack how algorithms shape discourse. This study confirms that in Jordan, the social media framing of Gaza serves as both a reflection and a producer of identity politics, emphasizing the urgent need for media literacy programs that strike a balance between emotional expression and critical dialogue.

## 7. Limitations

While this study provides rich qualitative insights, several limitations remain. Interviewer bias may have influenced participants' responses, particularly in emotionally charged discussions. The absence of platform-specific comparisons (e.g., TikTok vs. Twitter) limits the analysis of how features influence framing. Additionally, participant demographics skewed toward urban, educated participants, potentially omitting the voices of rural or marginalized individuals. Consequently, the findings may not apply broadly outside contexts such as the political environment in the USA. The goal is not to create sweeping generalizations but to cultivate a profound understanding of the distinct dynamics of Jordanian social media and its influence on public opinion.

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