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# FRAMING THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE ATTACKS:

## a content analysis of Arabic online newspaper coverage



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**ABSTRACT** – This study examines the news reporting of the tragic events at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, focusing on the coverage of the Israeli armed forces' assault on the mosque by three major Arab newspapers: Al-Ayyam, Al-Ittihad, and Asharq Al-Awsat. Utilizing a framing analysis approach, this research investigates how these media outlets reported the Israel-Palestine conflict from May 7, 2021, to May 13, 2021. The study research questions are as follows: (1) What is the depth of coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict? (2) How did these newspapers tone their coverage of the conflict? (3) What major frames were used in their reporting? (4) What themes emerged in the coverage of the conflict? Given the highly sensitive and politically charged nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the study avoids assumptions and perceptions, treating the media as a polemic entity. Employing content analysis, the study identifies divergent frames and media representations across the three newspapers. Despite general consistency with national and international political contexts, significant differences were found in their coverage. Notably, Asharq Al-Awsat aligned its coverage with Egypt's position, reflecting the political dynamics between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In contrast, the Israeli media frame positioned Israel as defending its rights, asserting the legitimacy of its territorial claims. The study reveals how the Palestinian perspective is framed differently, often highlighting the land as inherently Palestinian. The findings demonstrate how political affiliations and media systems influence the framing of the Israel-Palestine conflict, offering new insights into the comparative coverage of this issue in Arab media. This research contributes to journalism studies by highlighting the variance in media frames of the Israel-Palestine conflict within different political and media systems and underscores the role of framing in shaping public perceptions of this ongoing crisis.

**Keywords:** Israel-Palestine conflict. Al-Aqsa Mosque. Media framing. Arab newspapers. Content analysis. Framing theory. Media representation. Middle East media. Conflict coverage. Political framing. Journalism research. Arab media. News reporting. Palestinian-Israeli relations.

## **O ENQUADRAMENTO DOS ATAQUES À MESQUITA DE AL-AQSA: uma análise de conteúdo da cobertura de jornais árabes online**

**RESUMO** – Este estudo examina a cobertura jornalística dos trágicos eventos na Mesquita de Al-Aqsa, com foco na cobertura do ataque das forças armadas israelenses à mesquita por três importantes jornais árabes: Al-Ayyam, Al-Ittihad e Asharq Al-Awsat. Utilizando uma abordagem de análise de enquadramento, esta pesquisa investiga como esses veículos de comunicação noticiaram o conflito Israel-Palestina de 7 a 13 de maio de 2021. As questões de pesquisa são as seguintes: (1) qual a profundidade da cobertura do conflito Israel-Palestina? (2) Como esses jornais moderaram sua cobertura do conflito? (3) Quais foram os principais enquadramentos utilizados em suas reportagens? (4) Quais temas emergiram na cobertura do conflito? Dada a natureza altamente sensível e politicamente carregada do conflito Israel-Palestina, o estudo evita suposições e percepções, tratando a mídia como uma entidade polêmica. Empregando análise de conteúdo, o estudo identifica enquadramentos e representações midiáticas divergentes nos três jornais. Apesar da consistência geral com os contextos políticos nacionais e internacionais, foram encontradas diferenças significativas na cobertura. Notavelmente, o Asharq Al-Awsat alinhou sua cobertura com a posição do Egito, refletindo a dinâmica política entre o Egito e a Arábia Saudita. Em contraste, a cobertura da mídia israelense posicionou Israel como defensor de seus direitos, afirmando a legitimidade de suas reivindicações territoriais. O estudo revela como a perspectiva palestina é enquadrada de forma diferente, muitas vezes destacando a terra como inerentemente palestina. As descobertas demonstram como as afiliações políticas e os sistemas de mídia influenciam o enquadramento do conflito Israel-Palestina, oferecendo novas perspectivas sobre a cobertura comparativa dessa questão na mídia árabe. Esta pesquisa contribui para os estudos de jornalismo ao destacar a variação nos enquadramentos midiáticos do conflito Israel-Palestina em diferentes sistemas políticos e de mídia e ressalta o papel do enquadramento na formação das percepções públicas dessa crise em curso.

**Palavras-chave:** Conflito Israel-Palestina. Mesquita de Al-Aqsa. Enquadramento

mediático. Jornais árabes. Análise de conteúdo. Teoria do enquadramento. Representação mediática. Mídia do Oriente Médio. Cobertura de conflitos. Enquadramento político. Pesquisa jornalística. Mídia árabe. Reportagem. Relações palestino-israelenses.

## **ENMARCANDO LOS ATAQUES A LA MEZQUITA DE AL-AQSA: un análisis de contenido de la cobertura periodística digital árabe**

**RESUMEN** – Este estudio examina la cobertura periodística de los trágicos sucesos en la Mezquita de Al-Aqsa, centrándose en la cobertura del asalto de las fuerzas armadas israelíes a la mezquita por parte de tres importantes periódicos árabes: Al-Ayyam, Al-Ittihad y Asharq Al-Awsat. Mediante un enfoque de análisis de encuadre, esta investigación indaga cómo estos medios informaron sobre el conflicto israelí-palestino entre el 7 y el 13 de mayo de 2021. Las preguntas de investigación son las siguientes: (1) ¿Cuál es la profundidad de la cobertura del conflicto israelí-palestino? (2) ¿Cómo matizaron estos periódicos su cobertura del conflicto? (3) ¿Qué encuadres principales utilizaron en sus reportajes? (4) ¿Qué temas surgieron en la cobertura del conflicto? Dada la naturaleza altamente sensible y políticamente cargada del conflicto israelí-palestino, el estudio evita suposiciones y percepciones, tratando a los medios como una entidad polémica. Mediante el análisis de contenido, el estudio identifica encuadres y representaciones mediáticas divergentes en los tres periódicos. A pesar de la coherencia general con los contextos políticos nacionales e internacionales, se encontraron diferencias significativas en su cobertura. Cabe destacar que Asharq Al-Awsat alineó su cobertura con la postura de Egipto, reflejando la dinámica política entre Egipto y Arabia Saudita. En contraste, el encuadre mediático israelí posicionó a Israel como defensor de sus derechos, afirmando la legitimidad de sus reivindicaciones territoriales. El estudio revela cómo la perspectiva palestina se enmarca de manera diferente, a menudo destacando la tierra como inherentemente palestina. Los hallazgos demuestran cómo las afiliaciones políticas y los sistemas mediáticos influyen en el encuadre del conflicto israelí-palestino, ofreciendo nuevas perspectivas sobre la cobertura comparativa de este tema en los medios árabes. Esta investigación contribuye a los estudios periodísticos al destacar la variación en los encuadres mediáticos del conflicto israelí-palestino dentro de diferentes sistemas políticos y mediáticos, y subraya el papel del encuadre en la configuración de la percepción pública de esta crisis en curso.

**Palabras clave:** Conflicto israelí-palestino. Mezquita Al-Aqsa. Encuadre mediático. Periódicos árabes. Análisis de contenido. Teoría del encuadre. Representación mediática. Medios de comunicación de Oriente Medio. Cobertura de conflictos. Encuadre político. Investigación periodística. Medios árabes. Cobertura de noticias. Relaciones palestino-israelíes.

## **1 Introduction**

The conflict began on April 12, 2021, when Israeli police started imposing restrictions around the Damascus Gate (Husseini, 2021). This escalated on May 7, 2021, during Ramadan, when Israeli armed forces cracked down on unarmed worshipers at Al-Aqsa Mosque using stun grenades, tear gas, and rubber-coated steel bullets. This led to deadly airstrikes on the besieged Gaza Strip. Online newspapers have reported that Israeli authorities limited

the number of people admitted for prayers, causing frustration and an increase in violent confrontations between Israeli police and Palestinians in the region (Farrell & Ayyub, 2021). Israeli police, armed with rubber bullets, stun grenades, and tear gas, confronted Palestinians and dispersed protests ahead of the Jerusalem Day rally organized by Israeli right-wing parties. They also took control of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its compound, Haram esh-Sharif, also known as the Temple Mount, which houses the holiest Hebrew place of worship, the Wailing Wall. This conflict has destabilized the security situation in Egypt and sparked widespread protests from Palestinian authorities. Throughout the conflict, Hamas has launched over 4.350 rockets into Israeli territory, while the IDF has conducted about 1.450 airstrikes in response (Hamid & Morris, 2021).

The high-intensity counterstrikes against civilians and Arab and international media houses have invoked criticism around the world and have mounted great diplomatic pressure on Israel to put an end to the conflict. Israeli police employed force against Hamas, the militant group that governs Gaza, by using artillery bombardments and airstrikes, killing more than twenty Palestinians and hitting both military and non-military infrastructure, including residential buildings, media headquarters, and refugee and healthcare facilities (Qasem & Hussein, 2018). After eleven days, Israel and Hamas agreed to a cease-fire, with both sides claiming victory. The fighting killed more than 250 Palestinians and at least 13 Israelis, wounded nearly 2.000 others, and displaced 72.000 Palestinians (Pampackal, 2021).

Al-Tel (2021) warned that "Israel is sowing a new uprising war throughout the Muslim world". Notably, several politicians, international human rights activists, and critics have condemned the use of force against unarmed worshipers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Rizova and Panayotova (2021) pointed out that international laws that consider attacks on cultural and religious sites as "war crimes" include the 1954 Hague Convention, the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the Rome Statute of 1998, and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2.347 passed in 2017.

This study recognizes the significance, sensitivity, and timely relevance of examining the news reporting of the tragic event at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It applies a framing analysis approach to examine the coverage by Arab newspapers of the Israeli armed forces' assault on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Considering the sensitive nature of the Israel-

Palestine conflict, it is assumed that the media should be treated as a polemic entity, thus avoiding any assumptions and perceptions. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1. What is the depth of coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict?

RQ2. How did Al-Ayyam, Al-Ittihad, and Asharq Al-Awsat tone their coverage of the current conflict between Israel and Palestine?

RQ3. What were the major frames used by these three media outlets in their reporting on the Israel-Palestine conflict?

RQ4. What themes emerged in the reporting of the conflict by Al-Ayyam, Al-Ittihad, and Asharq Al-Awsat, respectively?

In the following sections, this study will present an analytical perspective on the coverage of the Al-Aqsa Mosque attack from May 7, 2021, to May 13, 2021.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

The research exposes semi-hierarchical variables inside the model, revealing the interconnected nature of micro and macro-level elements shaping combat reporting. It highlights the significance of safety, ethics, and the complex interplay between personal experiences and professional responsibilities, as well as the changing role of technology, which can both support and hinder journalistic endeavors (Fahmy et al., 2024).

To substantiate the information acquired from on-site investigations, we meticulously analyzed data from three distinct organizations advocating for press freedom: the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ), and the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS). Additionally, we examined instances of complete or partial destruction of edifices and facilities explicitly designated as press infrastructure.

Our assessment reveals that no fewer than 40 journalists and media practitioners lost their lives while in their residences. Furthermore, a minimum of 40 journalists and media personnel affiliated with what Israel categorizes as Hamas-linked media have been reported as fatalities. Forbidden Stories, along with our collaborators, identified at least 18 journalists who were killed,

injured, or purportedly targeted by aerial drones, in addition to six media office buildings that suffered total or partial destruction. Notably, at least 14 journalists were adorned in press vests at the time of their deaths, injuries, or alleged targeting.

The data we have gathered indicates that in certain instances, journalists may have been intentionally targeted, despite their clear identification as members of the press. Among the 80 journalists and media workers who received protective vests from Press House, a collaborative workspace and community hub for journalists in Gaza, 11 were reported killed. This emblematic structure itself was obliterated by an Israeli airstrike. “The Press House represented my pen, my voice, my vision, my listening”, articulated Ahmed Qanan, one of the institution’s founders. “What anguishes me is that I now feel like an amputee following its destruction by the Israeli military apparatus” (Forbidden Stories, 2024).

Results derived from comprehensive interviews with key figures in rolling news channels reveal multiple determinants that shape the organizational principles of these media entities. Additionally, the findings suggest that the dilemma between prioritizing accuracy or expediency will persist as a challenge for both news channels. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge regarding organizational principles within newsrooms. It enhances the ongoing discourse on the obstacles faced by newsrooms as a consequence of technological advancements, particularly from the standpoint of rolling news channels (Ahmad, 2025).

The Occupied Palestinian Territory is facing a severe crisis marked by 56 years of Israeli military rule and 16 years of a Gaza blockade, compounded by internal Palestinian divisions and ongoing conflict. The latest escalation of violence, starting in October 2023, has resulted in significant casualties, with tens of thousands of Palestinians and hundreds of Israelis killed, and over 240 hostages taken. Ninety percent of Gaza’s 2.1 million residents are now displaced, struggling with shortages of necessities like shelter, food, and medical care. In the West Bank, Palestinians in Area C and East Jerusalem confront restrictive Israeli policies, escalating violence, and housing challenges, creating a coercive environment that violates human rights. The humanitarian sector is actively working to support the needs of those affected across the territory (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — OCHA, 2025).

Following the devastation caused by Hamas’s onslaught

on October 7, 2023, the number of scholarly articles discussing human rights breaches in Gaza dramatically rose. This analysis examines contributions made between October 2023 and April 2024, emphasizing the scholarly community's call for the recognition and reinstatement of human rights in Gaza. Three key themes emerged: "expression", "emotionality", and "expectations". Scholars express personal concern about the humanitarian impact of Israel's activities and condemn them as "apartheid", "ethnic cleansing", or "genocide". There is also disappointment towards Western powers for supporting these crimes, alongside demands for rapid political action to secure a truce and help Gaza's rehabilitation, further challenging the efficiency of the UN (Noor et al., 2025).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict grew more intense after Hamas attacked southern Israel on October 7, 2023, and Israel responded militarily. This study analyzes the coverage of the early phases of the 2023 Israel-Gaza War by Al Jazeera English (AJE) and BBC using critical discourse analysis. Despite no quantitative differences in the use of the active voice, considerable qualitative disparities occurred, particularly in how Palestinians and death counts were presented. While the BBC refrained from concentrating on Israel's possible war crimes, AJE offered a more impartial story. The ramifications of these divergent discourses in worldwide media are discussed in the study (El Damanhoury et al., 2025).

The results of the study suggested that journalists in these nations endure violence in numerous forms, as follows: torture, jail, shutdown of their websites, and restriction of information. In the four nations analyzed, the results indicated that there is substantial censorship (self-censorship and government censorship) of the information offered to the public, an aspect that is contradictory to the Arab Constitution, as well as international law, thereby breaching human rights legislation. Furthermore, governments disseminate false information on covid-19 while doing nothing to promote an independent media landscape (AlAashry, 2022).

The conflict between Palestine and Israel is considered one of the most uncontrolled conflicts globally (Ali et al., 2020; Gamus, 2024). The Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites, has been a focal point of contention in this war. Media coverage of the attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque has varied widely across different outlets and regions, reflecting diverse political, religious, and cultural viewpoints. This literature review examines existing research on how media coverage

of incidents at the Al-Aqsa Mosque has shaped public perception and contributed to the broader narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It is important to emphasize the profound religious significance of Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims worldwide. This holy Islamic site, known as “Al-Haram Al-Sharif” or the Temple Mount, is located in the Unesco World Heritage site of the Old City in East Al-Qods (Kamil, 2020; Lecoquierre, 2023). Al-Aqsa has been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with numerous incidents of violence and clashes occurring in and around its compound. Understanding the historical and political context of these incidents is crucial for analyzing media coverage.

## **2.2 Previous incidents and media coverage**

Past research has documented various incidents at Al-Aqsa Mosque and their coverage in international media. The authors chose to focus on those that occurred in the last ten years. In late 2015, the Al-Aqsa compound was the site of strife during the Second Intifada, as violence escalated in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. Much of the violence stemmed from the conflict over access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound (Kamil, 2020; Warraich et al., 2024). Moreover, the “Al-Aqsa Flood” is a crucial event that marked a significant moment for Palestinians. On October 7, 2023, Palestinians reaffirmed the independence of Al-Aqsa in response to the actions of the occupiers, who had turned the Al-Aqsa Mosque into a military base. This event also saw a dangerous increase in attacks on Palestinian prisoners (Bensalem, 2024). The actions and subsequent reaffirmation highlighted the ongoing conflict and the importance of Al-Aqsa Mosque to the Palestinian people. Meanwhile, Abazadze (2024) states that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is caused by several factors: ethnic, national, historical, and religious, arguing that Palestinians are only allowed limited access to Al-Aqsa Mosque, raising fears of a division of the site between Muslims and Jews, similar to the division of the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron in the 1990s. The authors explain that media coverage of the conflict reports that Israel’s control of the Old City violates international law, which states that an occupying power cannot claim sovereignty or make permanent changes to the occupied territory.

Hitman and Lewin (2024) have explored the evolution of Muslim and Jewish narratives regarding the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Inquiring

into the various layers of these narratives, particularly their religious components, they stressed the manipulative nature of these stories.

Having said that, it is crucial to note that studies have shown that the framing of these events often reflects the political stance of the media outlet. For instance, Western media have been criticized for portraying Israeli actions in a more favorable light, while Arab media emphasize Palestinian suffering and resistance.

### **3 Media framing and bias**

Several studies have analyzed bias in media reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Western media outlets often frame the conflict in a way that aligns with political and ideological biases, focusing on narratives that justify Israeli actions while minimizing Palestinian perspectives (De Vries & Majlaton, 2021; Bhowmik & Fisher, 2023; Abdulhadi, 2019; Baden & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2017).

Mushtaq (2023) has examined coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over nearly ten years in 13 leading Israeli, Palestinian, and international media outlets. He examines whether conflict news becomes more similar or different across different media, identifying drivers of enduring similarity, gradual convergence, and temporary biases (differences). The study found a slow, context-dependent convergence trend in the news, with temporary alignments and imbalances in response to major conflict events.

In the same vein, Barari and Yacoub (2024) explain that Israeli media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is often accused of bias, favoring hardline Zionist policy goals. Through a content analysis of Israeli newspapers, they found that *The Times of Israel* and *Israel Hayom* frame their narratives to support unilateral Zionist control and normalize militarized policies. *The Jerusalem Post*, meanwhile, builds a pro-Israel narrative using political language and an 'us vs. them' approach. Strategic omissions in these publications deny Palestinian grievances and legitimacy, while emotive reporting justifies the use of disproportionate force.

Moreover, using textual analysis, Bhowmik and Fisher (2023) examined CNN's coverage of the 12-day conflict between Israel and Palestine in May 2021, highlighting the role of counter-discourse by elite social members in influencing conflict coverage in mainstream media. The results of their study show that CNN primarily used a

war journalism approach to frame the conflict. However, calls from U.S. Congress members to consider Palestinian human rights led to coverage that aligned with peace journalism.

In the meantime, comparative studies between Arab and Western media reveal stark differences in reporting. Arab media, such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, typically frame the Al-Aqsa incidents within the broader context of Palestinian resistance and Israeli occupation (Hroub, 2021; Mushtaq, 2023). For example, the May 2021 clashes at Al-Aqsa Mosque received extensive global media coverage. Research by Hroub (2021) indicates that Arab media outlets emphasized the violation of Muslim holy sites and the aggression against peaceful worshipers, while many Western outlets reported the incidents as part of broader hostilities between Israel and Hamas.

In sum, coverage of the attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque is a complex and multifaceted issue affected by historical context, media framing, and political bias. Understanding the nuances of media coverage is crucial to understanding how public perceptions are shaped and how they, in turn, influence the broader discourse about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this study, special focus will be placed on media frames, specifically in Arabic-language newspapers, that cover the Israeli security forces' assault on peaceful worshipers at Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan in May 2021.

### **3.1 Origin of framing theory**

Erving Goffman introduced the Framing theory in 1974 in his book *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993). Essentially, the theory, rooted in sociology and psychology, suggests that the media shapes public discourse around a particular subject through explicit representation (Greg & Mantell, 2014). The application of the framing theory involves the selection, representation, and portrayal of media content, impacting not only media studies and journalism but also various interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary fields (Emma Waterton & Steve Watson, 2013; Jorge Holguera & Illera, 2018).

### **3.2 Framing theory and representation of the Palestine conflict**

The media's portrayal of the Palestine-Israel conflict has often been criticized for bias and one-sidedness. Researchers argue that media framing of the Palestine conflict is influenced by powerful nations, such as the US (Chomsky & Herman, 1988; Wolfsfeld, 1997), aligning with national interests and politics of authoritative countries. Coverage of the conflict tends to emphasize Israel's security concerns while neglecting the suffering and perspective of Palestine, with British newspapers showing bias (Hassan, 2012).

Newspaper coverage not only exhibits bias but also reflects various countries' foreign policies. Suleiman (2008) noted that US-based newspapers framed the Palestine conflict based on foreign policy and national interests, often presenting a negative frame. Edward Said believed that Western media often stereotypes the Palestine-Israel conflict. The New York Times and the Jakarta Post were biased in their portrayal, adopting sensitive reporting in news construction. Al-Jazeera and RT news networks tended to be more pro-Palestine in a humanitarian context, while CNN and BBC displayed anti-Palestine sentiments in support of Israel (Shahzad et al., 2023). Print newspapers from Britain, the US, Canada, and Australia depicted Palestine destructively while portraying Israel positively as a victim in the conflict (Dalia Attar & Gretchen King, 2023).

Arab and other Muslim countries' media often depict the Palestine conflict differently, focusing less on Israel's security concerns and highlighting humanitarian aspects and resistance against Israeli occupation (Elmasry, 2009). Arab media portrays Palestine as a victim, while Western countries label it as a militant and terrorist region. Indonesian newspapers *Republika* and *Suara Pembaruan* presented differing views on Palestine due to ideological differences, with *Republika* blaming Israeli aggression and *Suara Pembaruan* depicting Palestine negatively. Gulf media outlets like *Al-Arabiya* and *Al-Jazeera* employed a moderate framing process, emphasizing different perspectives, sanitizing suffering, and decontextualizing aggressive actions, illustrating the sensitivity of the Palestine conflict (Tamar Liebes, 1992).

Media coverage of the Gaza War by BBC Arabic, BBC World, *Al-Jazeera Arabic*, and *Al-Jazeera English* lacked a coherent discursive strategy at the lexical level. Their political, cultural, and social backgrounds shape their behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs,

influencing viewers' interpretations of news events. The study identified three main readings of the media coverage: an oppositional (counter-hegemonic) reading, a dominant reading, and a subliminal (subconscious) reading, highlighting the impact of different perspectives on news reception. The findings suggest that while the actions of a protagonist in the conflict may be seen as legitimate in terms of provocation, they could be viewed as illegitimate concerning proportionality, indicating complex moral evaluations of the war (Nour Shreim, 2012).

### 3.4 Research gap

The examined literature sheds light on several topics, including historical context, actor portrayals, and variations in framing across Middle Eastern and Western media. It offers an insightful analysis of how the Israel-Palestine conflict is framed in online media. While there are still gaps in our knowledge of media portrayal, these studies have made a substantial contribution. One obvious gap is the lack of research on how larger specific events, such as the 2021 conflict, influence geopolitical and economic interests and political alignments, affecting online media's editorial choices and framing techniques.

Although the literature review provides a thorough account of the development and uses of framing theory, there is a clear lack of connection between this theoretical foundation and the later section's specific focus on the Israel-Palestine conflict. The general discussion of framing theory does not seem to have an obvious connection to the examination of media coverage of the events in May 2021. The cohesion of the literature review could be improved with a clearer transition or connection. Additionally, including new research or breakthroughs about framing in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict would make the review more applicable to current field discussions.

This study aims to analyze the role of the Israel-Palestine conflict by examining Palestinian and Israeli Arabic-language daily newspapers. Specifically, it will focus on media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the May 2021 issue, which occurred during Ramadan and continued until a ceasefire was implemented on May 21. The study is conducted within the theoretical framework of framing (Goffman, 1974).

## 4 Materials & methodology

To investigate media frames about the Israeli Defence Forces' attack on the Al-Aqsa mosque, the researchers used a qualitative study approach in conjunction with the content analysis method. The fact that content analysis may seamlessly and effectively integrate qualitative and quantitative elements lends credence to Bryman's (2012) assertion that it is a special technique for assessing news data. Micro-framing analysis, as established by scholars such as Entman (1993) and Iyengar (1991), forms the basis of the study's analytical technique, which provides a nuanced take on how events are depicted.

The primary objective of the research was to ascertain the methods used by news outlets to cover the Israel-Palestine conflict in May 2021 and to provide an explanation of the information provided to their audience. This analytical method is consistent with the findings of Moy et al. (2016), who investigated micro-level frame building. Their study clarifies how certain leaders utilise the information they are provided to change the way others see issues and occurrences, which has a big influence on public opinion.

The construction of the theme sheet (table 1), which is sometimes called the coding sheet, was centered on journalistic components. To be precise, the classification procedure comprised grouping news articles or reports under the heading "Journalist". Following that, the headlines were coded according to categorizations such as informative, expressive, or appellative. Themed photographs were coded in parallel to distinguish between archive images, images, and videos. In addition, the news sources were arranged methodically according to news agencies, reporters, Arab media representatives, and international media organisations.

In addition, a three-part categorization system was utilised to evaluate the tone of the news stories: "positive", "negative", and "neutral". This classification corresponds to comparable approaches utilised by Machungo (2012) and is a tool for determining the general opinion and significance of the Palestine-Israel dispute. The use of these frames and tone classifications provides an organised method for examining news stories, giving rise to a more sophisticated comprehension of how the conflict is portrayed and evaluated in terms of its effect in media narratives.

Furthermore, the thematic analysis involved an investigation of the subject named "Issue". The present study entailed a comprehensive

exploration of vocabulary and terminologies linked to notable occurrences in April and May of 2021. These events included the Ramadan events, the property dispute in Sheikh Jarrah, political instability, intensification, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Arab communities residing in Israel, the diplomatic and ceasefire negotiations in Gaza, and the subsequent responses from both Israeli and Palestinian authorities.

The frameworks applied by Neuman et al. (1992) and Valkenburg et al. (1999) in their individual research projects served as the model for the theme and coding structures used in this study. The names of the frames that were found were “the conflict”, “responsibility”, “media interest”, and “individual interest”. A nominal number code, ranging from 1 to 4, was assigned to each frame. This categorization allows for a systematic classification of news content based on these frames.

**Table 1**

*Thematic sheet (themes with codes)*

Journalistic	‘News, report’
Headline	Informative, expressive, or appellative
photos/ videos	Archive image/ image, Videos
Newspaper Source	Agencies, Reporters, Reps of Arab media outlets, and foreign media
Newspaper tone	Positive, Negative, and Neutral
The issues	April–May 2021 Ramadan events Sheikh Jarrah property struggle Political instability Escalation Al-Aqsa Mosque Arab communities in Israel Gaza Diplomacy and ceasefire Aftermath Israeli and Palestinian reactions
Framing	Conflict Responsibility Media interest Individual interest

Source: elaborated by the authors based on (AlAshry, 2021; Alkalliny, 2017)

To ensure coding reliability and minimize potential biases, the researchers incorporated multiple coders who independently analyzed the same texts. This practice promoted inter-coder reliability, minimizing subjective interpretations, and promoted consistency in the coding process.

#### **4.1 Sampling procedure**

This study used a two-stage sampling approach. Notably, in the first phase, a 24-day consecutive-day sample strategy was used for every media organisation. The objective of this strategy was to detect a methodical fluctuation in the news coverage of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. A total of 528 news pieces were methodically collected from May 6 to May 31, 2021. Importantly, for this study, news articles served as the analytic unit. Correspondingly, a purposive sample technique was used in the second phase. The authors searched the websites of three chosen news organizations, namely, Al-Ayyam, Al-Ittihad, and Asharq Al-Awsat, using the terms “Israel-Palestine conflict” and “Israel-Palestine conflict”. The objective was to collect news reports, particularly reflective of the current happenings at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Mainly, because to document the initial response and reactions to the conflict that began on the evening of April 13th during Ramadan, a sample period of choice was established. The Israeli police broke into the Al-Aqsa Mosque this time and disconnected the loudspeaker cables that the muezzin used to proclaim the prayer hour. Notably, President Reuven Rivlin was giving a Memorial Day speech at the Western Wall below; this was done to prevent getting in the way of his speech. “A racist hate crime”, as President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian National Authority called it, the incident marked the start of the conflict (Kingsley, 2021).

As part of a qualitative content analysis, the data were subjected to a thematic analysis. Additionally, descriptive statistics were employed to examine the frames and tones that were noticed in different media platforms.

## 4.2 Selection criteria of newspaper (websites)

Al-Ayyam (Palestinian), Al-Ittihad (Israeli), and Al-Sharq Al-Awsat (London-based) were the three newspapers that the researcher chose to examine. Because it was more convenient to collect data online, information was obtained from their websites. The chosen newspapers were also beneficial since their archives were easily accessible, which made the data collection procedure easier.

The authors selected Al-Ayyam daily because it has the second-highest readership in the region. Also, it has an intellectual readership. Moreover, Al-Ayyam is distinguished from the other two main daily newspapers by providing more in-depth and exclusive information, making it stand out for its thorough coverage. It provides a wide range of comments, which adds to its unique identity in the media.

According to the Al-Ayyam website on December 27, 2023, it is identified as a daily political newspaper in Palestine. The Al-Ayyam Foundation for Press, Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, a Ramallah-based organisation founded in 1995, is the publisher of this newspaper.

However, reporting stories has intrinsic worth, but newspapers tend to place more importance on their political and financial sponsors. This tendency is especially noticeable in the Palestinian context, where the Palestinian Authority (PA) is a major source of advertisements and plays a crucial role, coupled with substantial financial support from major Palestinian business entities and foreign non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It is noteworthy that the PA also provides free newspaper distribution to other workplaces, falsely increasing the figures of both circulation and income. Al-Quds has 50.000 copies, Al-Ayyam 10.000, and Al-Hayat 8.000, according to the editors of these journals. The real circulation counts, however, are probably far lower, and it is important to recognise that these estimates are probably overestimations (Berger, 2013).

The Al-Ittihad newspaper was selected for this study because of its distinct position as the Arabic bi-weekly periodical published by the Israeli Communist Party since 1944. According to Landau (2015), Al-Ittihad stands apart from its competitors due to its unique Arab identity, which is shown in the makeup of its editorial board, the people that contribute, its sophisticated aesthetic, and its clearly political stance. Al-Ittihad is mostly used as a vehicle for party propaganda, while it does occasionally publish literary works

by Arab authors who are not communists. Especially noteworthy is the newspaper's tendency to criticise the Israeli government's official policies harshly, calling them Machiavellian and serving the interests of Western imperialist countries.

Al-Ittihad is a Haifa-based daily newspaper published in Arabic and founded in 1944 in Israel. Known for being the oldest Arab media organisation in Israel, it is regarded as one of the most important periodicals in this regard. Al-Ittihad is owned by Maki, the Israeli Communist Party, and has been a vital organ of the National Liberation League in Palestine, making significant contributions to the media scene. Especially, this daily has been the only pre-state Arabic-language journal to continue publishing after Israel declared its independence (Al-Ittihad, 2023).

Furthermore, Asharq Al-Awsat is one of the main media brands of the Saudi Research and Marketing Group (SRMG) and is the leading Pan-Arab daily. Since it first appeared in print in London in 1978, the daily has built a storied history via its consistent coverage, excellent journalism, and insightful interpretations of major international events.

Asharq Al-Awsat's work throughout the past 45 years has been led by a group of eminent journalists, seasoned editors, skilled reporters, and respected columnists. The publication has gained a great deal of notoriety for its insightful analysis of important topics and its interviews with prominent people, many of whom are world leaders. Consistently displaying an unbroken dedication to unbiased and objective reporting, Asharq Al-Awsat has been the go-to source for politicians, professionals, analysts, and everyone with an interest in the area or beyond (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2023).

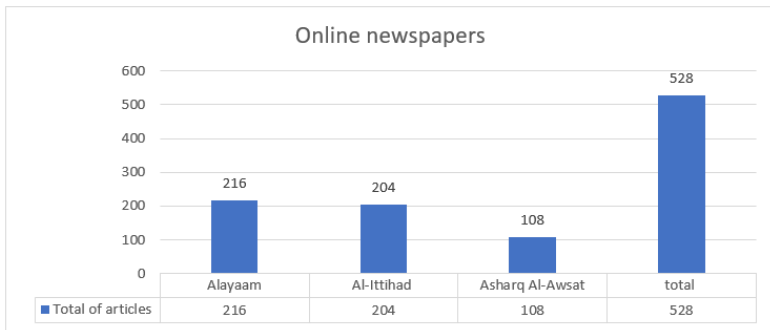
## 5 Findings

To address the research queries, this study has categorised its findings into five themes based on information from four different media sources, each of which describes the Israel-Palestine conflict. This approach is in line with the framing theory of mass communication. Other frames that have emerged as important results of this research include conflict, responsibility, media interest, stereotypes, and conspiracy theories. These are notable. After applying the specific sample criteria, a thorough examination of news articles was carried

out. The results of figure 1 showed that, between May 6, 2021, and May 31, 2021, 216 reports from Al-Ayyam, 204 from Al-Ittihad, and 108 from Asharq Al-Awsat addressed the Israel-Palestine conflict.

**Figure 1**

*Distribution of news stories of the selected newspapers*



### 5.1 The depth of coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict

Table 2 provides an analysis of the story format used by Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ayyam to cover a conflict, highlighting significant differences and trends. Asharq Al-Awsat published the highest percentage of news articles at 51.1%, followed by Al-Ittihad at 41.8%, and Al-Ayyam. In contrast, Al-Ayyam had the highest number of reports, with 121 articles, compared to Al-Ittihad's 88 and Asharq Al-Awsat's 42. Overall, Al-Ayyam had the highest total number of articles (216), followed by Al-Ittihad (204) and Asharq Al-Awsat (108). The mean scores indicate that Al-Ayyam's articles were more variable or complex in format, with a mean of 1.5602, compared to Al-Ittihad's 1.4314 and Asharq Al-Awsat's 1.3889. The standard deviations were similar across the newspapers, indicating consistent variation in article formats. The Z values showed that Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Ittihad had higher than average representation in the data, while Al-Ayyam had lower. P values of 0.001, 0.005, and 0.012 indicate statistically significant differences in the story formats among the newspapers. This analysis reveals distinct editorial approaches: Asharq Al-Awsat emphasizes news, Al-Ittihad maintains a balance with a slight preference for reports, and Al-Ayyam focuses more on reporting. So that Chi2= 11.053 & SD= 2 & p-value= 0.004 & Pearson's R= -0.139 & p-value= 0.043.

**Table 2**  
*News story format the conflict by the newspapers*

Journalistic	<i>Al-Ayyam</i>		<i>Al-Ittihad</i>		<i>Asharq Al-Awsat</i>		Total N	F	ig.
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
News	95	41.8	116	51.1	66	23.8	277	5.612	0.004
Report	121	48.2	88	35.0	42	16.7	251		
N	216		204		108		528		
Mean	1.5602		1.4314		1.3889		1.4754		
SD	0.4975		0.4965		0.4898		0.4999		
Z value	-2.52		2.80		3.35		1.6		
P value	0.012		0.005		0.001		0.109		

## 5.2 Headlines tone of the newspaper about the conflict

Table 3 provides an examination of the tone of headlines related to crises in three newspapers: Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ayyam. The data shows significant differences in how each newspaper frames its headlines. Informative headlines were most prevalent in Al-Ittihad, comprising 44.5% of its headlines, followed by Al-Ayyam at 36.9%, and Asharq Al-Awsat at 18.4%. Expressive headlines were common in Al-Ayyam, which had 46.8%, compared to 26.8% in Al-Ittihad and 26.3% in Asharq Al-Awsat.

Appellative headlines, which aim to persuade or call to action, were most frequent in Al-Ittihad, making up 55.6% of its headlines, a significant contrast to Asharq Al-Awsat's 21.8% and Al-Ayyam's 22.5%. The total number of headlines analyzed was fairly similar across the newspapers, with Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Ittihad each having 184 headlines and Al-Ayyam slightly more at 186.

The mean scores for the tone of headlines were highest for Al-Ittihad at 2.1359, followed by Asharq Al-Awsat at 2.037, and Al-Ayyam at 1.8226, indicating a higher tendency for Al-Ittihad to use a varied tone in its headlines. The standard deviation was also highest for Al-Ittihad (0.84155), suggesting greater variability in headline tone compared to Asharq Al-Awsat (0.7353) and Al-Ayyam (0.70191).

Statistical analysis further underscores these differences.

A Chi-squared value of 33.951 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000 indicates that the differences in headline tones are statistically significant. Additionally, Pearson's R value of 0.128 with a p-value of 0.04 suggests a weak but significant correlation between the newspapers' headline tones. Finally,  $\chi^2 = 33.951$  &  $DF = 4$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  & Pearson's  $R = 0.128$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.04$ , Al-Ittihad tends to use more informative and appellative tones in its headlines, while Al-Ayyam favors expressive tones. Asharq Al-Awsat shows a more balanced approach but with a lower overall tendency towards varied headline tones. These differences reflect distinct editorial strategies and approaches to conflict reporting among the three newspapers.

**Table 3**

*Headlines tone of the newspaper about the conflict*

Headline	Al-Ayyam		Al-Ittihad		Asharq Al-Awsat		Total N	F	Sig.
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Informative	65	44.5	54	36.9	27	18.4	146		
expressive	89	46.8	51	26.8	50	26.3	190		
appellative	32	22.5	79	55.6	31	21.8	142	7.985	0.000
N	186		184		184		478		
Mean	1.8226		2.1359		2.037		1.9916		
SD	0.70191		0.84155		0.7353		0.77698		

### 5.3 Photos/ videos of the conflict in the selected newspapers

In examining the representation of conflict photos and videos across three major newspapers – Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ayyam – a detailed analysis reveals notable differences in the usage and types of visual content. A total of 498 visual elements were analyzed, with Asharq Al-Awsat contributing 108, Al-Ittihad 204, and Al-Ayyam 186. This distribution indicates that Al-Ittihad had the highest number of visuals, followed by Al-Ayyam, with Asharq Al-Awsat having the least.

When focusing on archive images, 136 visuals were identified, making up 27.2% of the total visuals. Asharq Al-Awsat had 37 archive images, representing 32.3% of its visuals. Al-Ittihad presented 44 archive images, constituting 40.4% of its total, and Al-

Ayyam included 55 archive images, the highest proportion at 49.2%. These percentages show that Al-Ayyam relied most heavily on archive images, while Asharq Al-Awsat used them the least. Current images were more prominently used, with 201 instances accounting for 20.3% of the total visuals. Within this category, Asharq Al-Awsat had 41 current images (30.3%), Al-Ittihad 61 (49.2%), and Al-Ayyam 99 (49.2%). Both Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam had a similarly high proportion of current images, whereas Asharq Al-Awsat used fewer.

Videos constituted a smaller portion, with 161 instances, making up 18.6% of the total. Asharq Al-Awsat included 30 videos (61.4%), Al-Ittihad 99 (19.8%), and Al-Ayyam 32 (19.8%). Interestingly, Asharq Al-Awsat had a significantly higher proportion of videos compared to the other two newspapers, which had similar lower proportions. The mean number of visuals per category was 2.0502 for Asharq Al-Awsat, 1.9352 for Al-Ittihad, and 2.2696 for Al-Ayyam, with standard deviations (SD) of 0.7714, 0.78862, and 0.7946, respectively. These values suggest a relatively consistent but slightly varied usage of visual content among the newspapers.

The (2) test revealed significant differences in the usage patterns ( $\chi^2 = 48.444$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ). Additionally, Pearson's R indicated a modest positive correlation ( $R = 0.069$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.044$ ), suggesting a relationship between the type of visual content used and the newspaper.

The comparative analysis highlights that Al-Ittihad uses the most visual content overall, while Al-Ayyam relies more heavily on archive images. In contrast, Asharq Al-Awsat has a distinctive higher proportion of videos. These differences underscore varying editorial choices and strategies in the visual representation of crises among the newspapers, so  $\chi^2 = 48.444$  &  $df = 4$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  & Pearson's  $R = 0.069$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.044$ .

**Table 4***Photos/videos of the conflict in the selected newspapers*

Photos	<i>Al-Ayyam</i>		<i>Al-Ittihad</i>		<i>Asharq Al-Awsat</i>		Total N	F	Sig.
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Archive image	55	40.4	44	32.3	37	27.2	136		
image	99	49.2	61	30.3	41	20.3	201	14.973	0.000
Videos	32	19.8	99	61.4	30	18.6	161		
N	186		204		108		498		
Mean	1.8763		2.2696		1.9352		2.0502		
SD	0.67446		0.7946		0.78862		0.7714		

**5.4 News sources during the conflict coverage**

Table 5 provides insights into the distribution and utilization of news sources by three prominent newspapers – Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ayyam – during their coverage of the conflict. The analysis reveals significant variations in the sources relied upon for news content. A total of 528 news sources were examined across the newspapers. Asharq Al-Awsat contributed 114 sources, Al-Ittihad, 240, and Al-Ayyam, 216. This distribution indicates that Al-Ittihad relied most heavily on news sources, followed closely by Al-Ayyam, while Asharq Al-Awsat had the fewest sources.

News agencies constituted a substantial portion, with 134 instances, representing 23.8% of the total sources. Asharq Al-Awsat used 32 agency sources (45.5%), Al-Ittihad, 61 (30.5%), and Al-Ayyam, 41 (30.5%). This distribution highlights a higher reliance on agencies by Asharq Al-Awsat compared to the other two newspapers. Sources attributed to reporters accounted for 122 instances, comprising 20.4% of the total. Asharq Al-Awsat used 25 reporter sources (34.4%), Al-Ittihad, 42 (45.0%), and Al-Ayyam, 55 (56.1%). Al-Ayyam notably relied more heavily on reporters compared to the other newspapers. Representatives from Arab media outlets were cited 158 times, making up 22.7% of the total sources. Asharq Al-Awsat had 36 such sources (41.7%), Al-Ittihad, 66 (35.4%), and Al-Ayyam, 56 (35.4%). This category shows a relatively balanced usage among the newspapers, with slight variations in proportions.

Foreign media sources were utilized 114 times, constituting 13.1% of the total sources. Asharq Al-Awsat included 15 foreign media sources (30.7%), Al-Ittihad, 35 (56.1%), and Al-Ayyam, 64 (56.1%). Both Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam relied significantly more on foreign media compared to Asharq Al-Awsat.

The mean number of sources per category was 2.5606 for Asharq Al-Awsat, 1.7639 for Al-Ittihad, and 2.7417 for Al-Ayyam, with standard deviations (SD) of 1.16402, 0.7781, and 1.24756, respectively. These values indicate variations in the diversity and quantity of sources used across the newspapers.

The ( $\chi^2$ ) test results ( $\chi^2 = 21.676$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) indicate significant differences in the distribution of news sources among the newspapers, reflecting distinct editorial strategies and preferences. The analysis underscores that while all three newspapers covered the conflict, they varied significantly in their reliance on different types of news sources. Al-Ittihad tended to use a higher number of overall sources, while Al-Ayyam leaned more on reporters and foreign media. These differences highlight diverse editorial approaches and the strategic selection of sources in conflict reporting by each newspaper, ( $\chi^2 = 20.241$  &  $df = 6$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.003$  & Pearson's  $R = -0.042$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.043$ ).

**Table 5**

*News sources during the conflict coverage*

	<i>Al-Ayyam</i>		<i>Al-Ittihad</i>		<i>Asharq Al-Awsat</i>		Total N	F	Sig.
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Agencies	41	30.5	61	45.5	32	23.8	134		
Reporters	55	45.0	42	34.4	25	20.4	122		
Reps' Arab media outlets	64	56.1	35	30.7	15	13.1	114	21.676	0.000
foreign media	56	35.4	66	41.7	36	22.7	158		
N	216		240		72		528		
Mean	2.625		2.7417		1.7639		2.5606		
SD	1.06667		1.24756		0.7781		1.16402		

## 5.5 The tone in the conflict between Israel and Palestine

Table 6 provides a comprehensive analysis of the tone used by Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ayyam in their coverage of the conflict. The data reveal distinct patterns in the portrayal of events through positive, negative, and neutral tones across the three newspapers. A total of 530 instances of tone were analyzed, with Asharq Al-Awsat contributing 110, Al-Ittihad, 204, and Al-Ayyam, 216. This distribution shows that Al-Ayyam had the highest number of tone instances, followed by Al-Ittihad, while Asharq Al-Awsat had the fewest. Positive tones were identified in 113 instances, accounting for 21.2% of the total tones analyzed. Asharq Al-Awsat used 24 positive tones (29.2%), Al-Ittihad, 33 (29.2%), and Al-Ayyam, 56 (49.5%). This distribution indicates that Al-Ayyam employed a significantly higher proportion of positive tones compared to the other two newspapers.

Negative tones were present in 188 instances, constituting 35.5% of the total tones. Asharq Al-Awsat included 20 negative tones (36.7%), Al-Ittihad, 69 (52.6%), and Al-Ayyam, 99 (52.6%). Both Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam used more negative tones compared to Asharq Al-Awsat, with Al-Ittihad leading in this category. Neutral tones accounted for 169 instances, making up 31.9% of the total. Asharq Al-Awsat had 66 neutral tones (60.3%), Al-Ittihad, 36 (36.0%), and Al-Ayyam, 61 (36.0%). This distribution shows that Asharq Al-Awsat relied more heavily on neutral tones compared to the other newspapers.

The mean distribution of tone types per newspaper was 2.2189 for Asharq Al-Awsat, 2.3818 for Al-Ittihad, and 2.3382 for Al-Ayyam, with standard deviations (SD) of 0.77363, 0.82375, and 0.74166, respectively. These values indicate slight variations in the use of tone across the newspapers. The ( $F$ ) test results ( $F = 41.213$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) indicate significant differences in the tone employed by the newspapers in conflict coverage. Additionally, Pearson's  $R$  ( $R = 0.194$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.044$ ) suggests a modest positive correlation, indicating a relationship between newspaper tone and editorial stance. The analysis reveals that ( $F$ ) = 41.213 &  $df = 4$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  & Pearson's  $R = 0.194$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.044$ , with Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam tended to use more negative tones in their conflict reporting compared to Asharq Al-Awsat. Al-Ayyam also stood out for employing a higher proportion of positive tones. Asharq Al-Awsat, on the other hand, leaned more towards neutral tones in its coverage. These findings reflect varying

editorial choices and possibly different editorial philosophies among the newspapers in framing the conflict through tone.

**Table 6**  
*Newspaper tone*

	Al-ayyam		Al-Ittihad		Asharq Al-Awsat		Total N	F	Sig
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Positive	56	49.5	33	29.2	24	21.2	113		
Negative	99	52.6	69	36.7	20	10.6	188		
Neutral	61	36.0	102	60.3	66	39.0	169	12.283	0.000
N	216		204		110		530		
Mean	2.0231		2.3382		2.3818		2.2189		
SD	0.73732		0.74166		0.82375		0.77363		

## 5.6 The newspapers' frames regarding the conflict

Table 7 presents an analysis of how Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ayyam framed the conflict, revealing distinct editorial perspectives and focuses across different frames. A total of 498 instances of frames were analyzed, with Asharq Al-Awsat contributing 108, Al-Ittihad, 204, and Al-Ayyam, 186. This distribution shows that Al-Ittihad used the most frames, followed closely by Al-Ayyam, while Asharq Al-Awsat had the fewest. The conflict frame was prominent, with 104 instances, constituting 33.6% of the total frames. Asharq Al-Awsat utilized 35 conflict frames (42.3%), Al-Ittihad, 44 (24.0%), and Al-Ayyam, 25 (24.0%). This indicates that Asharq Al-Awsat emphasized conflict more prominently compared to the other newspapers.

Frames related to responsibility were identified in 100 instances, making up 21.0% of the total frames. Asharq Al-Awsat had 21 responsibility frames (30.0%), Al-Ittihad, 30 (49.0%), and Al-Ayyam, 49 (49.0%). Both Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam focused more on attributing responsibility compared to Asharq Al-Awsat. The media interest frame accounted for 73 instances, comprising 14.7% of the total frames. Asharq Al-Awsat included 10 media interest frames (42.4%), Al-Ittihad, 31 (43.8%), and Al-Ayyam, 32 (43.8%). This category shows a relatively balanced approach among the newspapers in highlighting media interest. Frames related to stereotypes were present in 90 instances, representing 18.1% of the total frames. Asharq Al-Awsat used 20

stereotype frames (44.4%), Al-Ittihad, 40 (33.3%), and Al-Ayyam, 30 (33.3%). Asharq Al-Awsat stood out for focusing more on stereotypes compared to the other newspapers. Conspiracy theories were identified in 131 instances, making up 26.3% of the total frames. Asharq Al-Awsat had 22 conspiracy theory frames (45.0%), Al-Ittihad, 59 (38.1%), and Al-Ayyam, 50 (38.1%). Both Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam used conspiracy theory frames more frequently compared to Asharq Al-Awsat. The mean number of frames per category was 3.0884 for Asharq Al-Awsat, 2.75 for Al-Ittihad, and 3.1961 for Al-Ayyam, with standard deviations (SD) of 1.50526, 1.56555, and 1.52832, respectively. These values indicate variations in the emphasis on different frames across the newspapers.

The ( $\chi^2$ ) test results ( $\chi^2 = 3.538$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.03$ ) suggest significant differences in the framing of the conflict among the newspapers. Pearson's R ( $R = 0.1667$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.044$ ) indicates a positive correlation, implying a relationship between the chosen frames and the editorial stance. The analysis highlights ( $\chi^2 = 23.306$  &  $DF = 8$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.003$  & Pearson's  $R = -0.087$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.045$ , distinct editorial choices in framing the conflict among Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ayyam. Asharq Al-Awsat tended to emphasize conflict and stereotypes, while Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam focused more on responsibility and conspiracy theories. These differences underscore varied editorial perspectives and priorities in how the newspapers framed and presented the conflict to their audiences.

**Table 7**

*The newspaper frames regarding the conflict*

Major frames	Al-ayyam		Al-Ittihad		Asharq Al-Awsat		Total N	Sig.	F
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Conflict	25	24.0	44	42.3	35	33.6	104		
Responsibility	49	49	30	30	21	21	100		
Media interest	32	43.8	31	42.4	10	13.6	73		
Stereotype	30	33.3	40	44.4	20	22.2	90		
Conspiracy theories	50	38.1	59	45.0	22	16.7	131	0.03	3.538
N	186		204		108		498		
Mean	3.1667		3.1961		2.75		3.0884		
SD	1.42152		1.52832		1.56555		1.50526		

## 5.7 The newspaper emerging themes during analysis

Table 8 presents an analysis of the themes covered by Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ayyam during the period, highlighting the issues and topics that received focus across the newspapers. A total of 498 instances of themes were analyzed, with Asharq Al-Awsat contributing 108, Al-Ittihad, 204, and Al-Ayyam, 186. This distribution indicates that Al-Ittihad covered the most themes, followed closely by Al-Ayyam, while Asharq Al-Awsat covered fewer themes overall.

April–May 2021 Ramadan Events: this theme was addressed in 35 instances, making up 7.0% of the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat covered 9 instances (25.7%), Al-Ittihad, 11 (42.8%), and Al-Ayyam, 15 (42.8%). Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam focused more on this specific event compared to Asharq Al-Awsat. Sheikh Jarrah Property Struggle: the struggle over Sheikh Jarrah properties was mentioned in 42 instances, constituting 8.4% of the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat covered 8 instances (19.0%), Al-Ittihad, 21 (50.0%), and Al-Ayyam, 13 (30.9%). Al-Ittihad extensively covered this issue compared to the other two newspapers. Political Instability: political instability was addressed in 33 instances, accounting for 6.6% of the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat discussed it in 10 instances (30.3%), Al-Ittihad in 9 (27.2%), and Al-Ayyam in 14 (42.4%). Al-Ayyam focused more on political instability compared to the other newspapers.

The theme of escalation was mentioned in 45 instances, making up 9.0% of the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat covered it in 11 instances (24.4%), Al-Ittihad in 18 (40.0%), and Al-Ayyam in 16 (35.5%). Al-Ittihad focused more on escalation compared to the other newspapers. Al-Aqsa Mosque: this theme was mentioned in 53 instances, constituting 10.6% of the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat covered it in 15 instances (28.3%), Al-Ittihad in 19 (35.8%), and Al-Ayyam in 19 (35.8%). There was a relatively balanced coverage of the Al-Aqsa Mosque across all newspapers. Reactions from Israelis and Palestinians were addressed in 49 instances, accounting for 9.8% of the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat covered it in 16 instances (32.6%), Al-Ittihad in 13 (26.5%), and Al-Ayyam in 20 (40.8%). Al-Ayyam focused more on reactions compared to the other newspapers. Arab Communities in Israel: this theme was mentioned in 62 instances, making up 12.4% of the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat covered it in 9 instances (14.5%), Al-Ittihad in 29 (46.7%), and Al-Ayyam in 25 (40.3%). Al-Ittihad extensively covered Arab communities in Israel compared to the other newspapers. The theme of Gaza was mentioned in 66 instances, constituting 13.3% of

the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat covered it in 10 instances (15.1%), Al-Ittihad in 30 (45.4%), and Al-Ayyam in 26 (39.3%). Al-Ittihad focused more on Gaza compared to the other newspapers.

Diplomacy and ceasefire were addressed in 73 instances, accounting for 14.7% of the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat covered it in 13 instances (17.8%), Al-Ittihad in 29 (39.7%), and Al-Ayyam in 31 (42.4%). Al-Ayyam focused more on diplomacy and the ceasefire compared to the other newspapers. The aftermath theme was mentioned in 54 instances, making up 10.8% of the total themes. Asharq Al-Awsat covered it in 7 instances (12.9%), Al-Ittihad in 25 (40.7%), and Al-Ayyam in 22 (40.7%). Both Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam focused more on the aftermath compared to Asharq Al-Awsat. The mean number of themes covered per category was 3.0884 for Asharq Al-Awsat, 2.75 for Al-Ittihad, and 3.1961 for Al-Ayyam, with standard deviations (SD) of 1.50526, 1.56555, and 1.52832, respectively. These values indicate variations in the coverage and emphasis on different themes across the newspapers.

The analysis underscores varied editorial focuses and priorities in covering the conflict among Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ayyam. Each newspaper exhibited distinct patterns in addressing specific issues and themes related to the events during the period, reflecting diverse editorial choices and possibly different audience interests and perspectives.

**Table 8**

*The newspaper emerging themes during analysis*

	<i>Al-Ayyam</i>		<i>Al-Ittihad</i>		<i>Asharq Al-Awsat</i>		Total N
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
April–May 2021 Ramadan events	15	42.8	11	31.4	9	25.7	35
Sheikh Jarrah property struggle	13	30.9	21	50	8	19.0	42
Political instability	14	42.4	9	27.2	10	30.3	33
Escalation	16	35.5	18	40	11	24.4	45
Al-Aqsa Mosque	19	35.8	19	35.8	15	28.3	53
Israeli and Palestinian reactions	20	40.8	13	26.5	16	32.6	49
Arab communities in Israel	25	40.3	29	46.7	9	14.5	62
Gaza	26	39.3	30	45.4	10	15.1	66
Diplomacy and ceasefire	31	42.4	29	39.7	13	17.8	73
Aftermath	22	40.7	25	46.2	7	12.9	54

## 6 Discussion

The results of this study show that significant differences exist in the way national media cover conflict. This was evident from the differences in the tone of coverage of the three online news sites examined here. The Al-Ayyam, a Palestinian political daily newspaper, was clearly more critical of the conflict, as expected, than the Al-Ittihad (Israeli newspaper) and Asharq Al-Awsat, which is an Arabic international newspaper. This was particularly true for the Al-Ittihad website, which contained predominantly negative coverage and tended to incorporate a large number of negative moral terms to condemn the conflict.

For example, on 29 May 2021, a headline said: “*Fascist settler gangs fire live bullets at Palestinians west of Salfit*”. The term Fascist, implying, according to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, that “often capitalized: a political philosophy, movement, or regime (such as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition” (Webster, 1828).

The most important reason for this difference in the conflict coverage is rooted in the differences in public opinion in each country. The public in the Middle East was critical of the Israel–Palestine conflict in 2021, but an intervention emerged from Egypt and Qatar, an attempt to control the Palestinian situation, and Egypt supported Palestine with medical supplies and reconstruction. This widespread criticism was, naturally, reflected in the other media houses, as McQuail noted, which are deeply rooted in the socio-political environment in which they operate (McQuail, 1994).

Further, Al-Ittihad claims to represent the voices of the Israelis based in Haifa. Notably, it is considered one of the oldest and most influential Arab language newspapers in Israel. Further, it pledges to align with the Israeli Communist Party and proclaims to represent ordinary people in the “Arab street”. Boqa (2009) has noted that Israel-owned Al-Ittihad constitutes a kind of “political revolution” in the Middle East, influencing governments and challenging the Palestinian on Arab news discourse. However, the online newspaper was established in 1944 during Mandatory Palestine and has never openly criticized the Israeli government. Essentially, Al-Ittihad’s

negative coverage can be viewed as one of the state's rights to seize Palestinian lands, and inside the journalism, there is a complete file of the Palestinian issue that covers the events, but from the Israeli point of view.

Another possible reason for the differences in the tone of coverage. One reason could be dominant journalistic values. Asharq Al-Awsat is an Arabic international newspaper with the value of objectivity, which could perhaps explain why the Asharq Al-Awsat coverage examined here was predominantly neutral in tone. This is consistent with Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (2007), who concluded that Western journalistic tradition stresses the value of objectivity, which could perhaps explain why the U.S. and British coverage examined here was predominantly neutral in tone.

Connolly-Ahern and Golan (2007) suggested that Muslim countries enjoy less press freedom than their non-Muslim counterparts in Europe. Hence, the negative tone of coverage in the Arabic language may reflect a significant difference from a set of journalistic values, and this was clarified in the Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, and on the contrary, in the Palestinian newspaper, which is trying to raise awareness of the issue in Europe and America to find a quick solution to it.

In addition to tone, some of the main characters that appear in images on the coverage highlight important differences between the Israel and Palestine conflict in the online newspapers; the three newspapers depend on the images to describe the story about the conflict. Conflict and violence were always emphasized. For example, the photo describes, "Palestine is being destroyed and the Middle East, every effort should be made to stop the conflict" and similarly, on the next day: "Israeli forces have begun their attack, and on the other side, rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Israeli airstrikes targeting the Gaza Strip".

The heavy focus on images of violence was typified by pictures and videos of decimated buildings, dead soldiers, and wounded civilians. This type of conflict framing, coupled with an often negative tone, presented the world reader with a dismal and violent picture of the conflict. By analyzing the newspaper sources, Al-Ittihad depends on agencies with a percentage (45.5%) focused on the discussion about the future of Palestine and the rebuilding of the country in the three prestigious Arab news outlets. The focus was on fighting, the losses, the victims of the conflict, and current developments. Thus,

the Egyptian leaders saw a war with high human costs and heavy civilian casualties. Surprisingly, the results showed no differences in the use of sources between the three online newspapers. All of the sites examined here relied mostly on government sources cited. It is plausible that the newspapers quoted mostly Egyptian leaders, whereas the Western media, for example, China, Norway, and Tunisia, requested a public United Nations Security Council meeting for 14 May, while the United States objected. Truce efforts by Egypt, Qatar, and the United Nations showed no sign of progress. Amr arrived in Tel Aviv for discussions on how to achieve a “sustainable calm” ahead of a United Nations Security Council meeting on 16 May, as suggested in prior research (Salameh, 2018).

The representation of the distribution of news frames across the online newspaper is represented by story frames. Al-Ayyam newspapers often framed the conflict in terms of no long-term benefits, discussing the possibilities for the Palestinian government and the need to receive help and involvement from the larger international community. Coalition online newspapers included interviews with Egyptian and Qatari officials who often talked about the future possibilities for freedom and stability for Palestine and its citizens. For example, Al-Ittihad emphasized the military success of their troops, focusing on the conflict and that this is a right of Israeli tactics and strategy. Thus, the online users were presented with strikingly different pictures of the war: fired from Gaza, a squad of Israeli police officers entered the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and then they cut the cables to the loudspeakers that broadcast prayers to the faithful from four medieval minarets. On the other hand, “It was the night of April 13, the first day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. It was also Memorial Day in Israel, which honors those who died fighting for the country”.

Finally, there were some notable differences between the three online newspapers. In contrast to Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Ayyam seemed to focus more on stereotypes in personal stories and the human cost of conflict through the use of the media interest frame. This finding is consistent with Kellner's (2003) examination of the coverage of the Gulf TV War; television served as a conduit for George Bush's war policies, and also stressed the opposition to the war more frequently through the use of the anti-war protest frame, while silencing anti-war voices and foregoing spirited discussion of the complex issues involved.

The tone of the news coverage on the Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper was also decisively more negative than Al-Ayyam. It seems that Al-Ayyam's objective to appeal to pan-Arabic sentiments makes it more likely to exhibit negative and episodic framing of the Israel conflict. Additionally, as the three newspapers online focus on themes that emerged from Al-Ayyam, Al-Ittihad, and Asharq Al-Awsat, in reporting the conflict, as opposed to a newspaper, Al-Ittihad's internet coverage of the April–May 2021 Ramadan events.

In fact, as one of the few media outlets with reporters inside Palestine after the beginning of the conflict, Asharq Al-Awsat had a unique opportunity to provide images to the world, focusing on “Diplomacy and ceasefire Aftermath”. Al-Ayyam, on the other hand, focuses on detailed analysis, and balance is a journalistic ideal. The tone of its coverage may reflect these values in Israeli and Palestinian reactions. Finally, a few interesting differences about the “Political instability” were also observed between Al-Ittihad and Al-Ayyam. The elite Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper was more likely to focus on the rebuilding of Palestine than its Al-Ayyam counterpart. The Al-Ittihad was also more likely to use official government sources than the Al-Ayyam, which is consistent with (Dimitrova & Connolly, 2007) findings.

## 6.1 Limitations and further research

The results of the present study were based on the online coverage of a limited number of online newspapers. Future studies should include news outlets on the State of Israel's coverage of the conflict and other newspapers in the Arab world, as well as news outlets from Western European countries, to know the different views of the Palestinian issue. The data used in this analysis were collected during the conflict period. Therefore, the analysis is limited to the official conflict period. The official conflict period may have given way for a long period of time, perhaps the restoration of stability, or another escalation of the conflict and the framing of the conflict.

Three newspapers were used to make comparisons: an Israeli, a Palestinian, and an Arab newspaper. It is also possible that the selected newspapers were not indicative of a comprehensive national media in the countries surveyed. Although previous studies of Israeli newspapers in Arabic were not used to represent Israel, there was no evidence similar to the Arab world. Therefore, Arabic-

speaking newspapers were chosen to be cited more often for the analysis; however, it is unclear how representative these sources are of the wider Arab media.

## 7 Conclusion

The study also expands the sparse cross-cultural literature on framing, the divergent frames between the Palestinian, Israeli, and Middle Eastern online newspapers. The three media houses were generally consistent with the national and international political environment. Despite conventional wisdom, though, the study found many differences between this news. One of the most important differences is that Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper wants to support Egypt's position, and this is due to the relationship between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which has a political dimension within the Arab region. In this conflict, and finally, the position of the Israeli newspaper is that Israel is defending its rights if the Palestinian people are exposed to it, and the Palestinian people must believe that this land is the land of Israel, as might have been anticipated. This suggests that media framing of issues such as conflict, since the Declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, is influenced not only by the dominant political environment and national history but also by journalistic values and routines that may, to some extent, transcend national borders and do not present all of the conflict.

Notably, "The tale of the Palestinian and Israeli conflict" in the Arab media was a story of destruction and violence. The "story of the conflict" in the media of the coalition revolved around the conflict and the seizure of Palestinian lands that led to the displacement of the people of Palestine, or conflict, in every period of the year. While the analysis of the Arab, Palestinian, and Israeli newspapers in this study focuses on the Palestinian state's losses to the conflict at present, the coalition media focused on the "greater good" in the future of Palestine. As Moy et al. (2019) have suggested, exposure to specific frames can have effects on the evaluations of issues made by recipients of those frames. The results of this study suggest, therefore, a concrete rationale for the universal public opinion about the Palestinian and Israeli conflict between Palestinians, Israeli, and Arab citizens.

Even though much online news and reporting of the conflict relied on similar newswire sources as the foreign statements from

America and Europe, while the most controversial statement was Egypt's immediate intervention to save the conflict (Waxman, 2019), online newspapers made radically similar news choices in terms of framing and tone. These findings enrich our understanding of online media houses; this indicates that it has many characteristics to know the differences in viewpoints of three newspapers that have media agendas, unlike traditional media houses. This study adds to prior journalism research by showing how Palestinian and Israeli conflict coverage differs in countries with different political and media systems.

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