

The Influence of the Media in Shaping Public Opinion and How Society Views It

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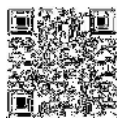
ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengembangkan bahan ajar Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) berbasis digital menggunakan aplikasi *Canva* untuk meningkatkan efektivitas pembelajaran di SMK Al Washliyah Jakarta. Latar belakang penelitian didasari rendahnya minat dan motivasi peserta didik terhadap PAI akibat metode pembelajaran konvensional yang kurang menarik dan minimnya media visual. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan *Research and Development (R&D)* dengan model pengembangan *ADDIE* yang mencakup tahap *Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, dan Evaluation*. Subjek penelitian meliputi guru PAI dan siswa kelas XI program AKL, MP1, dan MP2. Instrumen pengumpulan data terdiri atas wawancara, angket, dan tes. Hasil validasi ahli menunjukkan bahan ajar *Canva* memiliki tingkat kelayakan "sangat layak" dengan skor rata-rata 97%. Uji coba kepada siswa menunjukkan adanya peningkatan pemahaman konsep keislaman dan antusiasme belajar. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa bahan ajar digital berbasis *Canva* dapat menjadi solusi inovatif untuk menciptakan pembelajaran PAI yang interaktif, menarik, dan relevan dengan kebutuhan zaman.

This study aims to develop digital-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching materials using the Canva application to improve learning effectiveness at SMK Al Washliyah Jakarta. The background of the study is based on the low interest and motivation of students in PAI due to unattractive conventional learning methods and the lack of visual media. The study used a Research and Development (R&D) approach with the ADDIE development model that includes the stages of Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The research subjects included PAI teachers and 11th-grade students of the AKL, MP1, and MP2 programs. Data collection instruments consisted of interviews, questionnaires, and tests. The results of expert validation showed that the Canva teaching materials had a "very feasible" level of feasibility with an average score of 97%. Testing on students showed an increase in understanding of Islamic concepts and enthusiasm for learning. This study concluded that Canva-based digital teaching materials can be an innovative solution for creating interactive, engaging, and relevant PAI learning to meet the needs of the times.



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INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the media plays an enormous role in influencing public knowledge and opinion of different world events. Most of the information the public consumes is from mainstream media and social media, which have interests, framing, and narratives of their own. When it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the media's role is extremely significant because it can dictate how the world perceives who the victims are and who the perpetrators of violence are. While facts on the ground

indicate that Israel has systematically infringed on the human rights of Palestinians, not all media cover this in an objective or proportional manner. Most news coverage distorts the narrative, equating the positions of the occupier and the occupied, and camouflage acts of genocide as acts of "self-defense." This process illustrates how the media does not only report reality but constructs social reality itself. By using language, images, and certain narrative framing, the media can direct public opinion to sympathize with, disregard, or even blame the victims. This is especially perilous when society depends on information from one point of view only, without knowing the intentional manipulation of discourse. Public opinion in Indonesia regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict is not wholly determined by historical consciousness or factual information but is shaped considerably by the stream of information from digital media, not all of which can be ethically and journalistically responsible.

Based on this background, the research seeks to address several key research questions: (1) how the media shapes public opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, (2) what forms of narrative manipulation are employed in reporting the conflict, and (3) how media coverage influences Indonesians' perspectives on the genocide experienced by Palestinians.

In line with these questions, the study also has three main objectives: (1) to analyze the role of the media in shaping public perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, (2) to identify the framing strategies and narratives commonly used in presenting information about the conflict, and (3) to explain how media constructions affect the understanding and attitudes of the Indonesian people in responding to this humanitarian issue.

The review of the literature in this research is founded on three pillars: the theory of social media construction, framing theory in mass communication, and existing research on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the global media discourse. These three strands of approach constitute the groundwork for examining the manner in which the media take an active part in influencing not just the way society perceives the conflict, but also its political and moral stances regarding the matter.

Social reality, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued, is a collective construct established through interaction and institutions, one of which includes the media. Here, the media act as a dominant agent in the determination of truth and collective perceptions. What constitutes "fact" in the war has usually passed through a process of selection, interpretation, and representation by the media. Society, therefore, tends not to experience reality itself, but a symbolically constructed version of reality.

Also, framing theory as developed by Entman (1993) is essential in examining how the media "packages" conflict news. Framing refers to the manner in which the media chooses some aspects of a reality and emphasizes them in order to impart special meaning. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, framing is essential in who gets to be the aggressor and who gets to be the victim. Western media tend to employ symmetrical frames, presenting the conflict as a conflict between two equal sides, even when the power dynamic between Israel and Palestine is extremely unequal. Frames like "clash" or "mutual violence" tend to obfuscate that what is occurring is unilateral occupation and oppression. Studies by Nossek (2004) demonstrate how the media has a tendency to echo the geopolitical stance of the country from which it originates. The US media, for instance, has been largely criticized for hiding or legitimizing Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians. Alternative and independent media, on the other hand, provide more room for accounts of victims and human rights abuses. Studies by Hroub (2022) also illustrate how Middle Eastern media reports on this conflict more openly, naming it as a modern colonialism and genocide.

This literature review illustrates that media is not a passive domain but an active political field. Thus, it is essential to recognize that public opinion is forged through symbolic and ideological processes that cannot be divorced from the economic, political, and even military interests underlying the media itself. This literature offers a conceptual basis for comprehending the dynamics of public perception of the Israel-Palestine conflict, especially within the context of the wholesale manipulation of information and narratives in the digital era.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative design with critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate the ways in which the media constructs the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its impact on public opinion. This was considered appropriate since its primary aim is to uncover the structure of meaning, implicit

ideologies, and power relations as expressed through media texts. In this context, the media are not merely viewed as a transmitter of information, but as a player that actively constructs social consciousness and public opinion through language use and representations.

The main data used in this research are news reports, opinion pieces, and social media posts on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from different media sources, both global and local. Media sources used include CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, The New York Times, among other alternative media like Middle East Eye and Electronic Intifada. Secondary data in the form of public reactions captured through comments, tweets, and public forums on Twitter and Instagram were also analyzed to determine the level to which media framing affects public reactions.

The data collection methods were conducted through the documentation method by saving digital news that came out during the period of the escalation of conflict (e.g., October 2023–January 2024). The news selected was based on keywords like "Gaza," "Israel attacks," "Hamas," "Palestinian civilians," and "ceasefire." The data was analyzed based on Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse analysis model, which includes three dimensions: text analysis, discourse practices (text production and consumption), and social practices (the ideological and power contexts behind the text).

Furthermore, the writer also provided a review of the literature of the existing studies to make the data interpretation more robust. The research validity was ensured by data triangulation and openness in referring to sources. With this approach, it is expected that the research can vividly explain how media discourses affect public opinion and how they contribute to the formation of social and political attitudes of society regarding the problem of genocide in Palestine.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Media as Agents of Social Reality Construction

Modern media is no longer merely a channel for conveying information, but has evolved into a major agent in shaping public perceptions of social reality. In the perspective of social construction theory developed by Berger and Luckmann (1966), reality is something that is formed through repeated social interaction. Media plays a central role in this process by constructing narratives, selecting facts, and filtering certain information deemed newsworthy, while other information is excluded or downplayed. This process is not neutral; it carries ideological, economic, and political interests that influence how an issue is constructed.

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the media has played a significant role in shaping global public opinion. Instead of showing the power imbalance between the occupier and the occupied, many mainstream media outlets in the West present this conflict as a clash between two equal parties. The use of terms such as "clash," "violence," or "conflict" without explicitly mentioning the form of occupation or human rights violations committed by Israel shows how the media constructs a reality that tends to obscure the structural facts behind the violence.

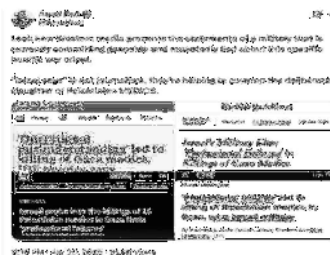


Image 1. Western Media Accused of Echoing Israeli Narrative in Gaza Medic Killings

One of the most common strategies used by the media to shape public perception is through framing; the selection of words, perspectives, and visuals that guide readers toward a specific interpretation. For example, when the media only shows rockets launched from Gaza without showing the destruction caused by Israeli airstrikes, the public receives an incomplete picture that tends to blame the Palestinians. This reinforces Van Dijk's (1998) assertion that media texts contain hidden structures of power and ideology behind seemingly objective narratives.

It should also be noted that the construction of reality is not only present in news texts, but is also reinforced through social media. Digital algorithms filter information based on users' interaction

patterns, which has the potential to create echo chambers and narrow access to more diverse perspectives. In this context, social media has become a new battleground for narratives, where the reality of Palestine can be challenged or even further manipulated by those with greater digital influence. Thus, media does not merely reflect reality but creates and shapes it according to specific interests. As consumers of information, society must be aware that what they see, hear, and read about the Israel-Palestine conflict is heavily influenced by the social construction processes carried out by media. Without critical awareness, public opinion is easily manipulated and directed away from the truth.

Framing Strategies in Reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Framing is one of the main strategies used by the media in shaping public understanding of an event. According to Entman (1993), framing is the process of selecting certain aspects of reality to highlight in order to obtain a specific meaning. In other words, the media not only conveys facts, but also emphasizes certain elements so that the public interprets them in accordance with the desired narrative. In reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, framing strategies are an important tool for shaping perceptions of who is the perpetrator of violence and who is the victim.

One of the most common forms of framing is labeling, which involves labeling the parties involved in the conflict. For example, Palestinian fighters are often referred to as “militants” or “terrorists,” while the Israeli army is referred to as “defense forces.” These terms are not semantically neutral; the word “terrorist” carries negative connotations that automatically trigger fear and hatred, while the word “defense” implies legitimate and legal actions. In many cases, however, it is Palestinian civilians who are the primary victims of Israeli military attacks. With this kind of framing, the public is led to sympathize with Israel, even though the reality shows a very clear imbalance of power.

Another example of framing can be seen in the selection of news focus. Many mainstream Western media outlets more often report on rocket attacks from Gaza into Israeli territory, even though their impact is far smaller than the massive bombardment carried out by Israel on civilian areas in Gaza. In this case, the news is not entirely false, but the choice of focus distorts reality. Palestinian rocket attacks are presented as the start of the conflict, not as a response to Israel's occupation or prolonged blockade. Such framing creates a narrative that the conflict began with “Palestinian violence,” making Israel's response seem justified as an act of self-defense.

Framing also takes the form of removing historical context. Many media outlets fail to explain that Gaza has been blockaded for more than 15 years, or that Israel's construction of illegal settlements in the West Bank is a violation of international law. Without this context, readers or viewers only see the conflict as a momentary event, rather than as a long series of systemic oppression that has been going on for decades. This reinforces the notion that the conflict is “mutually aggressive,” rather than structural colonization.

Visual framing is also an important aspect in shaping opinion. The images used in the news have a major influence on the emotional response of readers. When the media shows photos of frightened Israeli children but rarely shows the bodies of Palestinian children destroyed by bombs, public empathy will unconsciously lean toward the side that appears more “human.” This visual framing is often done systematically to direct public opinion without the need to convey data or facts directly. The framing strategies employed by the media not only impact individual perceptions but can also influence the political stance of a nation or group toward the conflict. In the international arena, Israel's legitimacy as a country with the “right to defend itself” is often reinforced by media narratives that normalize violence against Palestinians. Conversely, Palestinian resistance is positioned as a form of extremism that must be suppressed, without considering the underlying roots of oppression.

By understanding this framing strategy, the public is expected to develop a critical awareness that the information received through the media is not a complete reflection of reality, but rather a representation that has been shaped by certain interests and power structures. Therefore, it is important to compare various news sources, read the broader context, and question the dominant narratives presented by the media.

Representation of Power Imbalance in Western Media Narratives

One of the most critical aspects of media coverage on the Israel-Palestine conflict is the persistent distortion of power relations between the two parties. While the reality on the ground shows a stark

imbalance where Israel operates as a technologically advanced state actor with full military capabilities, and Palestine remains a besieged and occupied territory many Western media outlets frame the conflict as a symmetrical confrontation. This misrepresentation obscures the colonial nature of the occupation and undermines public understanding of the structural violence imposed upon the Palestinian people.

The concept of symbolic power, introduced by Bourdieu (1991), helps explain how media can naturalize and legitimize unequal power structures through discourse. In the case of Israel-Palestine, symbolic power is exercised when media adopt language that equates the actions of the occupier with those of the occupied. For example, headlines that read “Israel and Hamas trade fire” imply a bilateral conflict, as though both sides possess comparable power, military resources, and political leverage. Such language erases the long-standing occupation, systematic blockade, and humanitarian crises experienced predominantly by Palestinians.

Moreover, Western media often rely on official Israeli sources while marginalizing Palestinian voices. This results in disproportionate representation, where Israeli government statements are cited as authoritative, while Palestinian accounts particularly from civilians and grassroots organizations are either ignored or presented with skepticism. This editorial bias reinforces a narrative in which Israeli perspectives are normalized and Palestinian resistance is portrayed as irrational or violent.

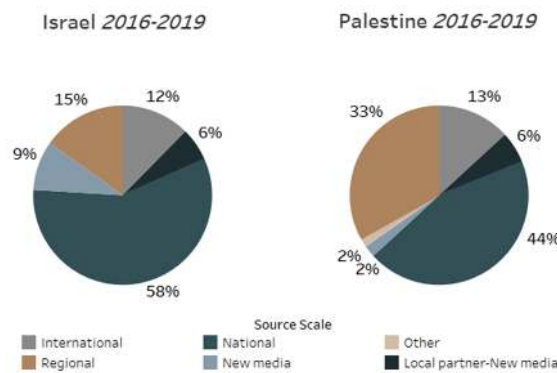


Figure 1. Media Coverage of Israel vs. Palestine (2016–2019): National Sources Dominate for Israel, Diverse Sources for Palestine

Visual framing is also a powerful tool in the representation of conflict. Western media often publish images of Israeli civilians in shelters or attending funerals, invoking sympathy and fear. In contrast, the much greater suffering of Palestinian civilians especially children rarely receives comparable emotional emphasis. When images of Palestinian casualties are shown, they are frequently stripped of personal context, making them appear as abstract statistics rather than real individuals with lives and families. This dehumanization process contributes to the erosion of global empathy and weakens calls for justice.

Correspondingly, Western outlets frequently portray Israel as a nation "defending itself," a framing that has significant ideological implications. The “right to self-defense” becomes a shield for military aggression, whereas Palestinian resistance is cast in criminal or terrorist terms. Such a binary framing aligns with orientalist attitudes that see the West and its allies as civilized and lawful, while non-Western actors especially Muslim or Arab populations are painted as chaotic, radical, and threatening (Said, 1978). This deeply rooted bias distorts public perception and delegitimizes Palestinian claims to sovereignty and human rights. The use of euphemisms and passive voice contributes to obfuscating responsibility. Phrases such as “clashes erupted” or “violence broke out” are frequently employed to describe Israeli bombings or military raids. These expressions remove agency from the actors involved and obscure the fact that state violence is being enacted upon a largely defenseless population. As a result, audiences are less likely to view Israeli actions as aggressive or unjust, and more likely to accept them as unfortunate necessities.

In sum, the narratives of the Western media often operate within a framework that favors the powerful while minimizing or distorting the suffering of the oppressed. This unequal representation not only impacts international public opinion but also shapes diplomatic responses and policy positions at

the global level. By maintaining the illusion of balance in reporting, Western media sustain a narrative that legitimizes occupation and suppresses meaningful solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

The Role of Social Media in Shaping Alternative Public Opinion

While traditional media outlets have long dominated global discourse on the Israel-Palestine conflict, the advent of social media has introduced new dynamics in how narratives are constructed, contested, and consumed. Social media platforms such as Twitter (now X), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become crucial arenas for information dissemination, activism, and alternative storytelling. These digital spaces allow individuals especially Palestinians and independent journalists to bypass institutional filters and share real-time accounts of violence, displacement, and resistance. Consequently, social media has emerged as a powerful counterforce to mainstream media narratives that often marginalize or distort Palestinian voices.

One of the most significant advantages of social media is its decentralization. Unlike legacy media, which operates within strict editorial hierarchies and geopolitical alliances, social media enables a more horizontal flow of information. Palestinian users on platforms like Instagram and TikTok have leveraged the power of visual storytelling using photos, videos, infographics, and personal testimonies to communicate their lived realities directly to global audiences. In many cases, these raw, unfiltered narratives have succeeded in generating empathy and outrage far beyond what is typically achieved through sanitized mainstream coverage.

The hashtag activism associated with movements like #SaveSheikhJarrah, #GazaUnderAttack, and #FreePalestine demonstrates how social media has become a digital battleground for public opinion. These campaigns often go viral within hours, reaching millions of users across national and linguistic boundaries. The use of emotionally resonant content especially images of injured children, destroyed homes, or tearful testimonies foster a strong affective connection between the global public and the victims of aggression. Unlike traditional news segments, which may present violence in abstract or statistical terms, social media posts humanize the conflict and make its consequences visible and urgent.

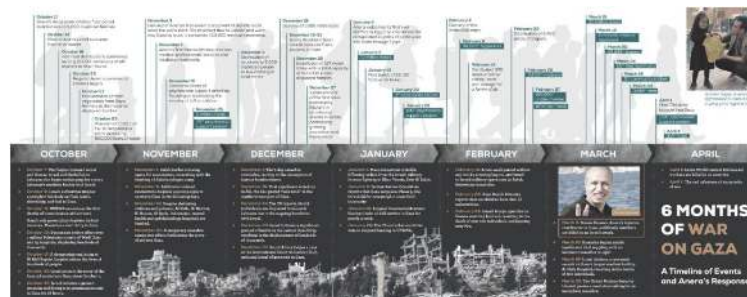


Image 2. Infographic Timeline titled “6 Months of War on Gaza: A Timeline of Events and America’s Response”

However, the democratization of narrative on social media does not come without challenges. One major issue is algorithmic suppression, where content critical of Israeli state actions or supportive of Palestinian resistance is allegedly down-ranked, shadow-banned, or removed altogether. Several users, including prominent activists and human rights organizations, have reported that their posts about Gaza or the occupation were flagged as “sensitive,” resulting in reduced reach or complete deletion. This suggests that, despite its liberatory potential, social media remains embedded within digital infrastructures that are susceptible to political influence and corporate interests.

The speed and emotional intensity of social media content can sometimes lead to the circulation of misinformation, overgeneralizations, or sensationalized claims. While mainstream media is often criticized for omission or bias, social media faces the risk of distorting facts in the opposite direction amplifying outrage without sufficient verification. This creates a double-edged sword: social media empowers marginalized voices, but it also requires a high degree of media literacy and critical evaluation from users to avoid falling into ideological echo chambers or manipulative content cycles.

Despite these limitations, social media has fundamentally reshaped how the Israel-Palestine conflict is perceived globally. In many instances, online campaigns have forced traditional media to adjust their coverage, include previously ignored perspectives, or even issue corrections. The global

outcry generated through platforms like TikTok and Twitter has also pressured governments and international organizations to acknowledge humanitarian violations that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. These developments reflect the growing power of digital civil society to intervene in global narratives and disrupt hegemonic storytelling.

In essence, social media is not merely an alternative news outlet; it is a site of contestation, resistance, and solidarity. For many, especially younger generations, their understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict is shaped less by newsrooms in New York or London and more by viral posts from Gaza, East Jerusalem, or diaspora activists. As such, social media is both a tool of empowerment and a terrain of ideological struggle where narrative authority is constantly challenged, renegotiated, and, at times, reclaimed by those whose voices have historically been silenced.

Public Perception in Indonesia and the Influence of Media

Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority country and a strong supporter of Palestinian self-determination, presents a unique sociopolitical context in which public opinion on the Israel-Palestine conflict is deeply embedded in religious, historical, and humanitarian narratives. Despite the general sentiment of solidarity with Palestine, public perception is not solely driven by cultural or ideological affiliation; rather, it is significantly shaped by how the conflict is mediated through both mainstream and social media.

Mainstream media in Indonesia generally aligns with pro-Palestinian sentiments, often highlighting the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and covering the conflict using emotive language and religious framing. Television channels such as Metro TV, TV One, and Kompas TV frequently air reports on civilian casualties, displaced families, and destroyed infrastructure, reinforcing the portrayal of Palestinians as victims of unjust aggression. Newspapers and news portals similarly focus on expressions of sympathy from Indonesian politicians, Islamic organizations, and civil society movements. This editorial direction resonates strongly with national values that emphasize anti-colonialism and support for oppressed peoples.

However, such coverage is not without its limitations. Indonesian media outlets often rely heavily on international news agencies many of which are Western-based for their visual and factual content. Consequently, some framing biases originating from those agencies are reproduced locally. For example, it is not uncommon for headlines in Indonesian media to echo phrases like "Israel retaliates against Hamas," subtly framing the conflict as reactive rather than aggressive. Although unintended, this language contributes to a less critical understanding of the power dynamics involved in the occupation and military actions.

Social media, on the other hand, has emerged as a double-edged instrument in shaping public discourse in Indonesia. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter (X), and TikTok are flooded with user-generated content expressing outrage, solidarity, and calls for action often through hashtags such as #PrayForGaza, #SavePalestine, and #BoycottIsrael. These movements tend to garner mass participation, especially among younger demographics who rely on digital platforms as their primary source of information. The virality of such content fosters emotional identification and active engagement, such as donations, online petitions, and street protests.



Image 3. A Large Protest in Support of Palestine in Jakarta 2023

Nevertheless, the digital space is not free from manipulation. Disinformation, misleading images, and oversimplified narratives are frequently circulated, contributing to public confusion. In some cases, conspiracy theories and religious extremism also infiltrate these discussions, framing the conflict in purely apocalyptic or sectarian terms. These risks polarize public opinion and detracting from more

nuanced, rights-based perspectives. Moreover, the repetition of graphic images and emotionally charged videos while useful in mobilizing empathy can sometimes desensitize audiences or create compassion fatigue.

Along with that, the algorithmic amplification plays a substantial role in determining which narratives gain visibility in the Indonesian digital space. Content that evokes strong emotional reactions is more likely to be promoted by platform algorithms, regardless of its factual accuracy or ethical presentation. This can create echo chambers where users are exposed predominantly to one-sided representations, reinforcing pre-existing beliefs and leaving little room for critical engagement or diverse viewpoints. Despite these challenges, the overall orientation of Indonesian public opinion remains firmly supportive of the Palestinian cause. National sentiment is often reinforced by political statements from figures such as the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and prominent Islamic organizations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. These endorsements lend moral legitimacy to public expressions of solidarity and encourage further engagement through institutional channels.

To sum up, media both traditional and digital plays a decisive role in shaping how Indonesians understand and respond to the Israel-Palestine conflict. While pro-Palestinian sentiments are widespread, the depth and quality of public understanding remain dependent on how information is framed, disseminated, and interpreted. To foster a more informed and critically aware public, there is a pressing need for improved media literacy, diversification of news sources, and greater emphasis on context-rich reporting that highlights the structural roots of the conflict rather than episodic violence alone.

Discourse Analysis of Selected News Reports

To illustrate how framing, language, and ideological positioning operate within media narratives on the Israel-Palestine conflict, this section conducts a brief discourse analysis of selected news reports from prominent global outlets. Drawing on Fairclough’s (1995) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis involves textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural context. This section highlights the structural features of media texts and their influence on public perception.

The first example comes from a headline published by The New York Times during a major escalation in Gaza in late 2023, *“Israel and Hamas Trade Blows as Conflict Escalates.”* At a surface level, the phrase “trade blows” suggests a reciprocal, equal exchange of aggression, akin to a boxing match between equally matched opponents. However, this linguistic construction obscures the overwhelming asymmetry between a state actor with one of the most advanced militaries in the world and a besieged, occupied population with limited defensive capabilities. The passive voice further removes agency and responsibility for specific acts of violence, suggesting that the conflict is an inevitable cycle rather than a consequence of systemic occupation and colonization.

In contrast, coverage from Al Jazeera English, a Qatar-based news outlet, presented a markedly different narrative; *“Israeli Airstrikes Kill Dozens of Palestinians, Including Children, in Gaza.”* This headline uses active voice, directly attributing the action (“kill”) to a specific actor (“Israeli Airstrikes”) and centering the victims (“Palestinians, including children”). It communicates the gravity of the situation and the human cost of military aggression, while also implicitly highlighting the power imbalance between Israel and Gaza. Al Jazeera’s editorial stance tends to frame the conflict within a postcolonial, anti-imperialist lens, thereby producing counter-narratives often absent in Western outlets.



Image 4. New York Times Criticized for Softening Gaza Headlines

The divergence in these two examples reveals how language serves as a vehicle for ideology. Western outlets often employ euphemisms such as “retaliation,” “clashes,” or “flare-ups,” which mask the origins and power structures of the conflict. This discursive practice serves to neutralize criticism of Israeli actions while portraying Palestinian responses as spontaneous or illegitimate. In doing so, such outlets shape international audiences’ understanding of the conflict in ways align with Western diplomatic alliances and geopolitical interests. Moreover, the selection of sources within articles further reinforces these ideological positions. Western media tend to cite Israeli government officials and military spokespersons more frequently than Palestinian civilians or independent human rights observers. This disproportionate representation constructs a hierarchy of credibility, where the voice of the occupier is granted authority, while the voice of the oppressed is either diminished or cast into doubt. Fairclough (2001) refers to this as “the discursive construction of legitimacy,” wherein power is maintained not only through physical dominance but through control of narrative.

Visual framing also plays a significant role. In reports from BBC News, images often depict Israeli citizens taking cover in shelters or grieving at funerals, humanizing the Israeli experience of fear. Meanwhile, imagery from Gaza if present is frequently sanitized, decontextualized, or stripped of identifiable victims. When dead bodies or destroyed homes are shown, they are often presented in wide-angle shots that obscure personal narratives. This contributes to a form of dehumanization that makes it easier for global audiences to dissociate from the suffering of Palestinians.

A deeper layer of analysis also reveals the presence of inter-textuality the way certain phrases or assumptions are recycled across different media and over time. Phrases like “cycle of violence” or “long-standing tensions” are employed so frequently that they become normalized, making it appear as though the conflict is intractable and devoid of solutions. This rhetorical move discourages political engagement and instead promotes apathy, resignation, or fatalism among global viewers.



Image 5. Israel Raids Gaza Hospital amid Ongoing War

Taken together, these patterns of discourse are not incidental; they are reflective of broader ideological forces at work in global media systems. Through the selective use of language, sourcing, and imagery, news organizations participate in the construction of geopolitical knowledge that privileges certain narratives while marginalizing others. This, in turn, has material consequences shaping foreign policy, determining aid allocations, and influencing public pressure (or lack thereof) on state actors involved in the conflict.

Ultimately, discourse analysis reveals the subtle but powerful ways in which media representations reinforce existing power dynamics. By critically examining how different outlets report the same events, it becomes clear that objectivity is often more myth than reality. The framing choices made by journalists and editors are not neutral but are embedded in social, political, and economic contexts that shape public understanding of what is just, acceptable, or true.

Media Literacy as an Urgent Need in the Digital Era

In an era saturated with information, the ability to critically interpret, analyze, and evaluate media content commonly referred to as media literacy has become not only a useful skill but an essential civic competence. Particularly in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, where narratives are often manipulated to serve political, ideological, or strategic interests, media literacy serves as a crucial

defense mechanism against misinformation, bias, and propaganda. Without this competency, individuals are vulnerable to consuming and internalizing distorted representations that ultimately shape unjust worldviews and policy preferences.

The urgency of media literacy stems from the proliferation of fragmented media ecosystems. Audiences are no longer passive recipients of information from centralized news broadcasters but active participants in digital platforms where algorithm-driven content circulates rapidly and often without verification. This shift has enabled the spread of alternative narratives including those from marginalized voices but has also facilitated the viral distribution of misleading or decontextualized content. In such an environment, the distinction between journalism, opinion, and disinformation becomes increasingly difficult to discern.

Studies in media education, such as those by Hobbs (2010), emphasize that media literacy must extend beyond technical skills to include critical consciousness the ability to recognize how power, ideology, and framing influence media production. For instance, a media-literate individual would not only question a headline like “Israel Responds to Hamas Attacks” but also seek to understand the broader context: Who defines the event? What is left unsaid? Whose voices are amplified or excluded? What historical structures inform this narrative? By raising these questions, media literacy empowers citizens to resist manipulative representations and engage more meaningfully with complex global issues.

In the case of the Israel-Palestine conflict, lack of media literacy often leads to oversimplification. Many consumers fail to distinguish between legitimate resistance and terrorism, between occupation and conflict, or between humanitarian aid and political alignment. This conceptual confusion is dangerous; it not only dilutes solidarity movements but also justifies the continuation of violence through moral relativism. A well-informed public, on the other hand, is more likely to advocate for ethical journalism, support human rights, and pressure policymakers to adopt fairer stances on international crises.



Figure 2. Critical Questions for Evaluating Sources

Importantly, media literacy must be institutionalized. Schools, universities, religious institutions, and civil society organizations must play an active role in promoting media education. In countries like Indonesia where emotional solidarity with Palestine is strong but analytical frameworks are often weak there is an urgent need to integrate critical media education into curricula and public discourse. Media campaigns, workshops, and accessible publications can help build a more critical and resilient information culture that resists manipulation and embraces nuance.

On top of that, social media platforms and news organizations also bear ethical responsibility. Algorithms that prioritize viral moments over accuracy must be reevaluated, and platforms should invest in tools that promote contextualized, balanced content. At the same time, newsrooms should commit to transparency, provide context alongside reports, and include voices from the ground especially those that have historically been silenced or misrepresented.

From the arguments presented, media literacy is not a luxury in today’s interconnected world; it is a form of resistance against epistemic injustice. The ability to decode media representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict is fundamental to building informed public opinion, mobilizing global solidarity, and ultimately striving toward a more just and humane international order. Without media

literacy, the public becomes a passive echo of dominant power structures. With it, the public becomes a force for accountability and truth.

CONCLUSION

This research has examined the influence of media in shaping public opinion on the Israel-Palestine conflict, with a particular focus on how narratives are constructed, manipulated, and received by global and local audiences. By analyzing both traditional and social media, this study underscores that media is not a passive reflector of events, but an active agent in producing social meaning, political legitimacy, and ideological alignment.

Throughout the discussion, it has been demonstrated that mainstream Western media frequently engages in framing practices that obscure the power asymmetry between Israel and Palestine. Through selective language, passive constructions, and editorial biases, these outlets often depict the conflict as symmetrical, thereby minimizing the structural violence inherent in military occupation and colonial domination. Meanwhile, media platforms that challenge this dominant framing such as Al Jazeera or independent journalists on social media offer alternative narratives that emphasize Palestinian suffering and resistance, though these are frequently marginalized or suppressed by algorithmic systems and platform policies.

In the Indonesian context, public support for Palestine is strong, shaped by religious, historical, and humanitarian solidarity. Yet, even within this supportive environment, media literacy remains an essential tool to critically evaluate the content and representations that influence public perception. Without sufficient critical engagement, the risk of absorbing distorted narratives whether from foreign agencies or emotionally charged social media posts remains significant.

The discourse analysis conducted in this research reveals that media power lies not only in what is said but also in what is left unsaid. The omission of historical context, the unequal representation of sources, and the framing of events as isolated incidents rather than manifestations of systemic injustice all contribute to the normalization of occupation and the delegitimization of resistance. This process ultimately shapes global public opinion, foreign policy decisions, and levels of international accountability.

Additionally, the research highlights the growing importance of social media as a space of resistance, activism, and alternative information dissemination. Although not free from problems such as misinformation and algorithmic bias, social media allows previously silenced voices particularly Palestinians themselves to present their lived experiences to a global audience. These platforms have begun to challenge hegemonic narratives and mobilize new forms of solidarity that transcend traditional geopolitical alliances.

In conclusion, the media's role in shaping public opinion about the Israel-Palestine conflict is neither neutral nor incidental. It is deeply embedded in systems of power, ideology, and technological control. The findings of this research reaffirm that media literacy is a critical necessity not only for understanding this particular conflict but for navigating global issues in an age where information is abundant yet often unreliable. Future efforts must focus on expanding access to critical media education, supporting independent journalism, and challenging the institutio

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