

# Framing Gaza in the Pakistani Media Ecosystem: State Control, Private Pluralism, and Digital Resistance

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** This study examines how the Gaza conflict (October 2023-September 2024) was framed across Pakistani state-owned broadcasters, private television networks, and digital platforms, to uncover discursive strategies that shape public perceptions of global crises.

**Methodology:** A qualitative design was employed, combining Entman's (1993) four-function framing model: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation, with Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995). The dataset included 120 media artifacts and 18 comparative tables, drawn from purposive and systematic sampling of televised news, radio summaries, podcasts, print headlines, and social media posts. Analysis also integrated a visual timeline to capture shifts in framing intensity and tone across three phases.

**Results:** Findings reveal that state media (60%) foregrounded religious solidarity and official diplomacy, private media (40%) balanced humanitarian and resistance frames, while digital platforms emphasized resistance (45%) and anti-imperial critiques (30%), often supported by emotive visuals and real-time engagement. Temporal analysis showed a progression from religious-humanitarian framing in the early phase, to resistance and anti-Western discourse in the mid-phase, and diplomacy reconstruction narratives in the later stage.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that framing was shaped not by the conflict alone but by ownership structures, political ideology, and platform affordances, with digital platforms disrupting hegemonic narratives through counter-discourses. These findings highlight the need for advancing media literacy, fostering pluralistic conflict reporting, and strengthening independent journalism to counterbalance state-aligned discourse and enrich democratic debate in the Global South.

**Keywords:** Gaza Conflict Framing, Pakistani Media, Critical Discourse Analysis, Entman Framing Model, Digital Activism, Media Ownership, Conflict Reporting.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan's refusal to formally recognize Israel has long shaped its political and media positioning on the Gaza conflict. Three interlinked factors underpin this stance: religious solidarity with Muslim countries, particularly the Arab world; fears of backlash from influential Islamist groups; and a history of internal instability that has pushed both civilian governments and military regimes to align closely with Pakistan's Islamic identity (Kaura, 2020; Yegar, 2007, p. 138). While this position has prevented official diplomatic recognition, it has not entirely ruled out covert or pragmatic engagements when geopolitical pressures demand, particularly from the United States and other Western actors. Nevertheless, the symbolic weight of the Palestinian struggle remains deeply embedded in Pakistan's national identity, ensuring that discourse on Gaza transcends mere foreign policy debates and instead resonates with questions of religious solidarity, ideological legitimacy, and domestic political stability.

Humanitarian crises have become a regular event in the life of Israel due to its military operations and blockade of Gaza, which made the conflict one of the constant subjects of international political discussions (Human Rights Watch, 2020). In Pakistan, there is a strong orientation of foreign policy and close connection between media discourse and social sentiment in support of the Palestinian cause, which strengthens the foreign policy stance and religious unity of the nation. Showings of sympathy have been evident in both the mainstream and online media, and campaigns intensifying the voice of Gaza and creating a resonance with the Pakistani experience as a Muslim majority nation loyal to pan Islamic solidarity.

It is against this background that this paper examines the role of social media as a key platform on which political debate has taken place in Pakistan in activism surrounding the Gaza conflict. On social media, the Pakistani influencers as well as the media organizations and people have been actively involved in opinion-making and mobilizing support towards Gaza since one can communicate with a large audience in a rather quick manner. As one of the visible manifestations of this engagement, hashtag activism, seen in actions such as the trending campaign called *Pakistan-StandsWithGaza* and *GazaAidPakistan* has become a prominent part of this engagement, enhancing solidarity across borders (Ghazal Aswad, 2024). However, there are difficulties faced by activists that influence the nature of their advocacy such as censorship, surveillance, cyberbullying. This paper, thus, analyses the ways in which online platforms construct narratives, shape popular opinion and policy, and mediate the challenges of activists.

Social media has become an essential instrument in social movements since it enables activists to find support, raise awareness, and influence the masses opinion (Papacharissi, 2015. P. 31). However, the effectiveness of hashtag activism as a means to generate some visible outcomes still remains a subject of debate (Meraz & Papacharissi. 2013; Morozov, 2011). This research tries to examine the influence of hashtag activism on Pakistani opinion and policy regarding Gaza conflict.

The Government of Pakistan has consistently adopted a pro-Palestinian stance. From official condemnations of Israeli military actions to active participation in international forums like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations, Pakistan's foreign policy has echoed a moral, religious, and geopolitical commitment to the Palestinian cause (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan, 2025). In June 2024, the Foreign Office called for an immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access into Gaza, framing the conflict as a human rights catastrophe and a failure of international diplomacy (UN, 2024; ABC News, 2024).

These positions are regularly echoed through state-controlled media outlets like the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) and Pakistan Television (PTV), which reinforce the official narrative by prioritizing stories of Palestinian suffering and highlighting Pakistani diplomatic interventions. Such reporting frequently demonstrates what Bandura (1999) identifies as moral justification and advantageous comparison: Israeli military actions are framed as aggression, while Pakistan's solidarity is cast as morally righteous, situating national identity within the defense of Muslim unity as "geography can guide a deeper understanding of Gaza's contested reality" (Hynek & Ter-Ghazaryan, 2025).

Media framing, however, is not homogeneous. While state media mirrors official policy, private news channels like Geo News, ARY, and Dawn offer more nuanced reporting. Geo News, for example, frequently includes live reports from Middle Eastern correspondents, humanitarian interviews, and diverse panel discussions, occasionally featuring dissenting voices on Hamas's tactics or critiques of global apathy (Alonso, 2025; Rubin & Grayson, 2025). These divergences illustrate what Cohen (2001) terms interpretative denial: acknowledgment of violence but its reframing as politically or strategically necessary, often downplaying its implications to sustain broader solidarity. According to Kear (2018), "Hamas's diplomatic exertions demonstrate a willingness and capacity to learn the art of diplomatic compromise to achieve broader organisational objectives, particularly its survival as the governing authority in Gaza" (p. 263). Such framings can be read through Bandura's notion of sanitizing language, where terms like "resistance" or "struggle" obscure the harsher realities of violence, enabling Pakistani media to maintain alignment with public sentiment while still negotiating dissenting perspectives.

Nevertheless, the overarching narrative remains one of condemnation of Israeli aggression and support for Palestinian resistance, deeply aligned with Pakistan's national identity. The use of emotionally charged visuals, religious references, and selective silences reflects what Cohen (2001) describes as implicative denial: acknowledging suffering but redirecting blame or responsibility elsewhere. In doing so, Pakistani media both mirror and reproduce national sentiment, reinforcing the moral compass of solidarity with Palestine while sidestepping complexities that could challenge this position.

While social media accelerates diffusion and counter-messaging, Gaza coverage in Pakistan is shaped across a wider media field. Government press releases and briefings (state media), prime-time bulletins and op-eds (private television and print/online), and activist channels (YouTube, X, Facebook) interact to set agendas and delimit what becomes sayable. Accordingly, this study adopts a multi-platform lens to compare framing across state communication, private news organizations, and activist media.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In Parallel, digital media and activist platforms have emerged as powerful tools of counter-narrative and mobilization. Podcasts such as *The Dig* and *Today*, explained, while not based in Pakistan, have been widely shared within Pakistani digital spaces for their in-depth coverage of humanitarian crises and global activism related to Gaza (Today, 2024; The Dig, 2025; Levene, 2024; Al Jazeera, 2023; Middle East Monitor, 2024; TRT World, 2024). Local influencers, social media activists, and human rights organizations have utilized platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok to share alternative perspectives, coordinate relief efforts, and critique Western media's double standards. This digital activism often merges with grassroots efforts by religious and political parties. For instance, Jamaat-e-Islamic organized a large-scale "Gaza Solidarity March" in Karachi on April 13, 2025, where tens of thousands rallied against Israeli actions and demanded a national boycott of Israeli-affiliated products (DAWN, 2024).

The media's lens of conflict representation has long played a crucial role in shaping public understanding, influencing international diplomacy, and informing national political responses. In the context of the Gaza conflict, particularly following the intense Israeli military campaign that began in October 2023, global media outlets have shaped diverse narratives ranging from humanitarian crises to national security discourses (The New York Times, 2023; ABC News, 2023; Maduca et al., 2024; Zeit Online, 2024). In Pakistan, where the Palestinian cause resonates strongly with both government policy and public sentiment, the media serves as both a mirror and an architect of national discourse on the conflict.

Pakistan's mediated perspective of the Gaza issue is not a recent development. Historically, Pakistani governments have expressed unwavering political and diplomatic support for Palestine, often emphasizing the shared religious and historical ties between the two peoples (Zia, 2020). Since the events of October 2023, Pakistan's official channels, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and state broadcasters, have consistently condemned Israeli actions, called for ceasefires, and demanded international accountability (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan, 2023). State media, including Pakistan Television (PTV) and the

Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), have played a prominent role in disseminating this narrative, portraying Pakistan as a moral voice in the Islamic world.

However, media representation of Gaza within Pakistan goes beyond official channels. Private broadcasters like Geo News, ARY, and Express News have presented varied coverage of the conflict, often integrating international news reports, footage from Gaza-based journalists, and expert discussions that sometimes offer critiques of global diplomacy and humanitarian inaction (BBC News, 2024; Truthout, 2024). While aligned with national sentiment, private media tends to allow a broader range of discourse, including coverage of protests, civil society responses, and international legal developments (WHO, 2024; The Washington Post, 2024; Save the Children, 2024; Psychiatric Times, 2024). The rise of digital activism has further transformed the media landscape. Platforms like Twitter (X), Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram have become central arenas for framing the Gaza conflict in Pakistan. Influential activists, academics, and human rights groups have challenged dominant media narratives by amplifying voices from Gaza, critiquing Western media bias, and promoting solidarity movements such as boycott campaigns and protest rallies as “in addition, research on media and public opinion points us towards the integral connection that the mainstream media, and indeed now also social media, have with shaping public perception of war, conflict and humanitarian crisis, and also the refugees they have produced” (Jehangir, 2023, p. 37). The viral spread of hashtags like #StandWithGaza and #FreePalestine in Pakistan has mobilized young audiences and fostered a transnational consciousness of injustice and resistance.

In the context of Gaza coverage, state-run media such as Radio Pakistan employ frames of religious solidarity and humanitarian duty, emphasizing Islamic brotherhood and moral obligation. Private media, while more visually limited compared to digital platforms, often blends national interest frames with humanitarian appeals, balancing state-aligned narratives and public sentiment. By contrast, digital activists and independent platforms deploy podcasts and social media to foreground frames of resistance, victimhood, and global injustice, often using evocative visuals, urgent tones, and emotionally charged language to mobilize transnational audiences. Over time, these framing strategies not only reveal contrasts across state, private, and activist-led media but also highlight how digital platforms challenge and, at times, destabilize the dominance of official and mainstream narratives. This research seeks to examine the comparative framing strategies employed by government narratives, state-affiliated media, private broadcasters, and activist platforms in Pakistan between October 2023 and April 2024, to identify how these entities construct public perception of the Gaza conflict, affecting political discourse, policy attitudes, and civic engagement in Pakistan. While the Gaza conflict is situated within a specific geopolitical terrain, it resonates with wider struggles against settler colonialism and militarized state violence. As some scholars argue,

*“While the scale of genocide is indeed world-making, resistance movements also make new worlds. The world that is made through the collective imaginaries of these resistance movements is one where the genocidal occupation of Palestine has ended and Palestine and Kashmir are free; where Pashtun and Afghan women live with dignity and are no longer objects of geo-political death-making; and where Baloch women live freely with their loved ones, not in anguished anticipation of receiving word of their fate” (Qadir & Smith, 2025, p. 10).*

Such imaginaries underscore how the resistance discourse around Gaza is not limited to the region itself but becomes part of a broader transnational vocabulary that rejects Zionism, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency as legitimizing frameworks for genocide and postcolonial violence. In this sense, digital activists’ framing of Gaza often situates Palestinian resistance as an entry point into envisioning decolonial futures that challenge the permanence of occupation and mass dispossession.

In examining how Gaza is framed across state, private, and digital activist media, this research draws upon media framing theory. As Jehangir (2023) explains, drawing on Gitlin (1980), Gill (2009), and Wetherell (1998), news texts are often “replete with metaphors, catchphrases, and other symbolic devices” that

implicitly guide audience interpretations. These symbolic frames are not neutral; they foreground certain meanings while silencing others, thereby producing interpretative repertoires that shape how conflict is understood. Such a perspective is useful for analyzing Gaza coverage, where framing devices, whether through the selective use of language, imagery, or tone, serve to naturalize certain narratives of terrorism, self-defense, or victimhood) while marginalizing others (p. 45).

Highlighting in her analysis of Afghanistan, even when organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and UN Women document systemic abuses, global elite media often wane in their attention, thereby leaving narrative authority to citizen journalists, bloggers, and digital activists. OSINT (open-source intelligence)-based initiatives have increasingly assumed the responsibility of narrating human rights abuses, alongside practices of ‘data witnessing’ (Gray, 2019), as cited in (Jehangir, 2023, p. 45). Such dynamics resonate strongly with the framing of the Gaza conflict. State media in Pakistan, much like elite global outlets, foreground narratives of national solidarity and political legitimacy; private media provide more partisan or selective coverage; while activist-led podcasts and digital platforms, akin to citizen journalists in Afghanistan, construct alternative frames rooted in OSINT verification, human rights, resistance, and global solidarity. Examining these three content categories comparatively thus helps reveal how narratives are created, validated, or contested within the national context of Pakistan’s support for Palestine.

Digital media has transformed conflict communication, with hashtag activism emerging as a powerful tool for mobilization and advocacy. Scholars such as Papacharissi (2016), Gerbaudo (2012), Bennett & Segerberg (2012), and Tufekci (2017) highlight how hashtags function as rallying points for collective action, allowing dispersed individuals to form communities and amplify marginalized voices. Global movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo demonstrate the potential of online activism to influence public debates, though scholars also warn of challenges such as surveillance, algorithmic bias, and the fleeting nature of digital engagement (Poell & van Dijck, 2018). The purpose of social media in political communication is especially relevant in the conflict areas. The dual nature of it as a means of liberation and control is highlighted by Castells (2015), whereas Seo and Ebrahim (2016) demonstrate how the conflicts like Gaza are being perceived online through personalized storytelling and emotional narratives. Results showed that activists depends upon online space and circumvent mainstream gatekeeping, but still they face geopolitical filtering, threat and censorship.

In Pakistan, the solidarity with Palestine has been the influence on the national discourses. State-owned media including PTV and APP repeat official policy, emphasizing humanitarian aid, Islamic fraternity, and diplomatic intervention without being more critical. The more liberal views are provided by the private broadcasters such as Geo News and Dawn, which sometimes engages the voices of criticism and covers protests around the world, yet they abide by the prevalent national sentiment. In contrast, digital activists and grassroots movements use media like X, Instagram, and podcasts to spread counter discourses that preempt opposition, international law, and criticism of western media bias. Radio Pakistan still has a traditional yet commanding position within the rural communities by strengthening religious bond and national unity. In spite of these differences, systematic studies on the way various Pakistani media actors create, distribute and challenge Gaza discourses are limited, which presents an obvious vacuity that this study fills.

The hashtag, Free Palestine, has been extensively used on different platforms, bringing together users to exchange their ideas, photos and videos concerning the Gaza conflict. Some of the campaigns by this banner involve call to action, solidarity posts and information regarding the historical background of the conflict. Pakistanis have also shown their support to Gaza through messages by their leaders, who include actors and activists. As an example, Mahira Khan and Ali Zafar shared the information regarding the humanitarian crisis and urged their fans to take action (Khan, 2021; Dawn News, 2023). Social media has helped organizations such as the Pakistan Red Crescent Society to create awareness and raise funds to fund relief operations in Gaza by updating their followers on their progress and soliciting donations (PRCS, 2024). Hashtags like #StandWithGaza are aimed at informing people about the humanitarian as-

pects of the conflict, including graphic visuals, videos, and accounts by survivors to create empathy and help the masses back up the cause.

Such a media landscape makes it necessary to compare the ways of representing the Gaza conflict in Pakistan. State outlets, private broadcasters, and activist voices all create narratives which are characterized by various priorities, audiences and ideological orientations. Government affiliated media stresses diplomatic involvement and religious unity and the private media takes in wider journalistic viewpoints, and the digital activists prefigure themes of defiance, legality and humanitarian justice. These difference methods highlight the importance of media not only to convey the official positions, but also bring space to counter and other opinions. Through the framing theory, this paper will analyze how these contrasting discourses influence the perception of people, the sense of national identity and how Pakistan will fit in the broader information system of the world.

## ***2.1 Role of State and Alternative Media in Pakistan***

Researchers observe that state-run media, like the Pakistan Television (PTV), the As-sociated Press of Pakistan (APP) is used as an important tool in state policy, especially in times of international crises. APP focused on the diplomatic activities of Pakistan in the United Nations, the statements of the Foreign Office and humanitarian aid shipments. Scientifically, as an example, during the period of 10-20 October, 2023, the APP headlines were uniformly denouncing Israeli aggression and demanding a ceasefire. In the same way, PTV airs religious shows and interviews with pro-Palestinian professors and puts the conflict in perspective of the Islamic unify and humanitarian duty without touching on politically delicate criticism. Conversely, the coverage of the private broadcasters is a bit wider. Geo News and Dawn occasionally use investigative journalism and an international commentary by experts, occasionally revealing the Western two-sidedness or international demonstrations. On November 15, 2023, Geo News also broadcasted the footage of injured children, destroyed infrastructure with Quranic verses, using which the visual framing is emotionally charged, which is characteristic of the Pakistani private media. ARY News, in turn, strengthened state affiliated discourses with religious undertones focusing on the communal unity instead of geopolitical discourse.

The framing of Gaza in Pakistan by digital platforms has also changed. The hashtags like FreePalestine and StandWithGaza went trending, and the critical alternatives to mainstream coverage were podcasts like The Conflict Zone and Today in Perspective. An example of this can be seen in the January 12th, 2024 episode of The Conflict Zone highlighting a Palestinian journalist in Rafah that put lived experience alongside only legal input on what happened in international law (VOX Media, 2024; Noori, 2025). Religious and political groups, including Jamaat-e-Islami and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, have also leveraged media to frame Gaza as a struggle between good and evil, combining religious sermons with political calls for boycotts and resistance. Coverage of the April 2024 Karachi Gaza Solidarity March, which drew an estimated 15,000 participants, demonstrated the mobilizing power of such narratives (Dawn, 2024). Similarly, Radio Pakistan, despite its limited visual appeal, continues to influence rural audiences through sermons, interviews, and call-in shows, reinforcing religious solidarity and positioning Pakistan as a moral leader (Radio Pakistan, 2024).

Comparative scholarship highlights that Muslim-majority countries often employ sympathetic framings of Palestinians (Marath, 2021). Yet Pakistan's blend of religious discourse, diplomatic rhetoric, and humanitarian framing marks a distinctive case. While existing research documents global and regional trends, comprehensive studies of Pakistan's multi-platform media responses remain scarce, underscoring the need for further inquiry.

## ***2.2 Problem Statement***

The Gaza conflict remains one of the most enduring and contested international crises, profoundly shaping political discourse, humanitarian responses, and global solidarity movements. In Pakistan, a country with longstanding ideological and diplomatic ties to the Palestinian cause, the conflict is consistently

highlighted in both official and public narratives. Yet, little research exists on how different strands of Pakistani media-state-owned outlets, private broadcasters, and digital activist platforms frame the Gaza crisis and what implications these framings have for public opinion. While government-controlled media largely promote narratives aligned with diplomacy and religious solidarity, private media introduce relatively diverse perspectives, and digital activists amplify grassroots, justice-oriented, and transnational narratives. This point of departure indicates an essential gap in research: the systematic comparative examination of the construction, distribution and contention of these rival representations in Pakistan. This gap is important to understand the relationship between media, politics and perception of the population during global conflict.

### ***2.3 Rationale of the Study***

The need to comprehend how the conflict in Gaza is framed by various media actors in Pakistan and how the frames impact the discourse is enough to justify the present study. Official diplomatic stance is frequently reflected in state media, which generally present the issue through the prism of humanitarian and religious values, whereas independent media sources widen the paradigm by adding journalistic opinion, whereas digital activists use social media to create their own counter-narrative based on international law, settler colonialism, and local solidarity. These conflicting images are important to analyze how media is involved in forming national identity, religious feeling and geopolitical affiliations. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the increasing importance of digital activism as to challenge or even intensify mainstream discourses, thus placing Pakistan into the discourse on media responsibility, soft power, and transnational solidarity on the international scale. In this way, this study will not only be a contribution to communication scholarship on the framing of conflicts but also meet a timely and rich contextual case.

### ***2.4 Research Objectives***

1. To examine how state-owned, private, and activist-led media in Pakistan frame the Gaza conflict.
2. To analyze how variations in tone, language, and visual strategies construct divergent narratives of the conflict.
3. To evaluate the extent to which digital activism challenges or reinforces mainstream media framings.

### ***2.5 Research Questions***

1. How is the Gaza conflict framed by state-owned, private, and activist-driven media in Pakistan?
2. What linguistic, visual, and tonal strategies are employed across these media to construct particular frames?
3. In what ways does digital activism contest or complement the framings advanced by traditional media outlets?

### ***2.6 Theoretical Framework***

Framing theory, as articulated by scholars such as Entman (1993), has been central in explaining how the media shapes public understanding of complex issues by emphasizing certain elements of reality while omitting others. Its strength lies in illuminating the power of narrative selection, agenda-setting, and symbolic construction in shaping collective perceptions of international conflicts. However, critiques highlight that the concept is sometimes too broad, lacking methodological precision and risking overlap with related theories such as priming and agenda-setting. Despite these limitations, framing theory remains a valid and useful analytical lens, particularly for contexts like Pakistan, where state, private, and activist media adopt divergent strategies in narrating the Gaza conflict. It can be noted that its flexibility enables this research to capture the prevailing state led narratives and the counter-discourses that arise because of digital activists, providing a delicate insight into the process of constructing, challenging, and preserving meanings in several different media spaces (Bany Mohammed et al., 2025).

In this theoretical frame, this paper recognizes the fact that frames do not come out of nothing. Narratives constructed within the media are always influenced by contextual elements including ownership arrangement, institutionalization and ideological leanings. The presence of state owned media such as PTV and APP in the Pakistani context institutionally require them to support the government line, which tends to create frames focused on diplomacy, religious unity as well as humanitarian appeals. Although still guided by national sentiment, the operations of the private broadcasters, e.g., Geo News or Dawn are more commercially oriented, which means that a variety of journalistic opinions and critical commentaries can be heard. At the same time, there are activist instigated digital spaces that are predisposed by grassroots networks and transnational solidarity movements and, as a result, they assume counter frames that focus on justice, resistance, and international law.

Therefore, although the research questions aim at determining and drawing comparisons between frames, the analysis will also contextualize the frames within the larger political economy of media ownership and ideology in order to identify why specific frames become salient in different media. The coverage of international conflicts in Western media has received a lot of scholarship. As was shown by Philo and Ber-ry (2011) and Wolfsfeld (2004), the global news agencies tend to create biased profiles of the conflict zones, giving preference to the side that allied with a state and ignoring the voices of the opposition. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as perceived by the western media, is often framed so that Israel is being threatened as a democratic state, but Palestinian resistance is most often criminalized or viewed through the lens of terrorism with geographic compensations (Said, 1997; Hynek and Ter-Ghazaryan, 2025). These hegemonic frames hide the underlying causes like occupation, colonialism and human rights abuse, creating a selective world consciousness. More recent research has also criticized the importance of the use of visual framing and that networks like CNN and BBC prefer to frame pictures of Israeli victimization instead of Palestinian loss of life (El Damanhoury et al., 2025).

In Pakistan, historical alliance, national identity and religious solidarity are influencing media framing. The Gaza conflict is framed by the Pakistani media using the discourses of Muslim brotherhood, anti-imperialism, and the humanitarian justice. According to Hussain and Fahmy, (2024), the example of Pakistan is significant to consider since its conventional media is dominated by a strong military as such; it is hard to gauge the opinion of the population. In the same way, Pakistan has been steadfastly supporting Palestine due to the founding ideology that the country serves as the leader of the Muslim world as well as a critic of the colonial legacies (Khan, 2023).

### **3. Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative comparative research design, combining critical discourse analysis (CDA) and framing analysis to examine how the Gaza conflict was represented in Pakistani media between October 2023 and September 2024. The design enables systematic comparison of discursive constructions across state media, private media, and activist/digital media, with attention to how narratives are shaped by institutional roles, ideological positions, and medium-specific affordances (Fairclough, 1995; Entman, 1993). The purpose was to identify similarities and divergences in framing, tone, and themes across actors and platforms, while situating these within broader socio-political contexts. Results are reported by actor (government, private, activist) and by medium (broadcast, print/online, social video/text). This dual structure ensures that differences can be attributed either to institutional orientation (e.g., government vs. activist media) or to medium affordances (e.g., television bulletins vs. social media posts).

#### **3.1 Population and Sample Size**

The population consisted of publicly available Pakistani media content explicitly referencing the Gaza conflict during the designated time frame. The primary unit of analysis was a single media item, including: headline/slug, lead paragraph or segment, body text or transcript, accompanying visuals, quoted sources, and stance/tone. Embedded units of analysis included visuals, metaphors, intertextual references, and calls-to-action (if present). A hybrid sampling strategy was applied, combining purposive and sys-

tematic sampling (Teddle & Yu, 2007). First, purposive criteria ensured inclusion of items explicitly tagged or titled with Gaza-related references (e.g., #GazaUnderAttack, #FreePalestine). Items were also selected to represent significant phases of escalation, ceasefire negotiations, or humanitarian developments. Second, systematic procedures ensured variation by selecting every *n*th item within each category (e.g., every 2nd relevant headline, every 3rd tagged social post). The final sample comprised 120 media items, distributed as follows:

- State-owned media (30 items): PTV, APP, Radio Pakistan.
- Private mainstream media (40 items): Geo News, ARY News, Dawn.
- Digital and activist media (30 items): podcasts (The Conflict Zone, Today in Perspective), YouTube explainers, social media influencers (Twitter/X, Instagram, Facebook).
- Radio Pakistan (20 items): broadcast recordings and summaries.

This distribution ensured balance between institutional and activist voices while capturing medium diversity.

### 3.2 Data Analysis Procedure

Analysis combined critical discourse analysis and framing theory. Each item was analyzed through three iterative stages of CDA (Fairclough, 1995): (a) Textual analysis (micro-level): lexical choices, metaphors, presuppositions, modality, (b) Discursive practice (meso-level): production, circulation, and intertextuality (e.g., quoted officials, reposts), and (c) Social practice (macro-level): links to broader ideologies such as Islamic solidarity, humanitarianism, or diplomacy. Framing analysis is operationalized through a codebook that defines frames and provides indicators. Each item was coded for headline/slug, lead, and visuals, quoted sources, stance/tone, and presence of calls-to-action. Comparisons are made across:

- Actor categories: government vs. private vs. activist.
- Medium types: broadcast, print/online, social video/text.
- Cross-platform, same actor: e.g., how Geo News framed the same story on TV, web, and X.
- Event windows: e.g., ceasefire votes, humanitarian crises, protest marches.

The codebook contained six primary frames with operational definitions and indicators.

**Table 1:** *Codebook and Frames*

Frame	Operational Definition	Indicators (1–2 examples)
Humanitarian Crisis	Focus on civilian suffering and humanitarian needs	Mentions casualties, hospitals/schools, aid access
Security / Terrorism	Emphasis on militancy, threats, and counter-terror measures	Terms like “terrorists,” “militants,” counter-strike narratives
Diplomacy / Ceasefire	Coverage of international negotiations and diplomatic efforts	UN/OIC resolutions, bilateral talks, ceasefire appeals
Resistance / Solidarity	Narratives of protest, occupation, and collective action	Protest imagery, BDS calls, hashtags (#FreePalestine)
Sovereignty / Legality	Legal and sovereignty-based framings of conflict	References to IHL, “war crimes,” blockade legality
Media Freedom / Censorship	Attention to restrictions on journalists or platforms	Reports of takedowns, bans, arrests, censorship claims

### 3.3 Inter-Coder Reliability

Three coders and one adjudicator analyzed the data and a 10% pilot sample (12 items) was double-coded to refine operational definitions. Cohen’s  $\kappa$  was calculated for primary frame and stance coding, with  $\kappa \geq .70$  accepted as reliable. Weekly meetings and memos were used to resolve discrepancies.

### 3.4 Ethical Considerations

Only publicly available content was analyzed. Identifiable information for private individuals on digital platforms was anonymized. When quoting posts verbatim, only public handles and timestamps were included. No interventions or contact with participants were conducted.

## 4. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

**Table 2.** *Comparative Timeline of Gaza War Coverage by Geo News and PTV News (October 2023 – September 2024)*

Period / Dates	Key	Geo News Coverage	PTV News Coverage	Focus & Special Events	Tone & Framing
Oct 7–Dec 2023		On-ground reporting via Ali Imran & Tariq Abul Hasan; humanitarian crisis, interviews (e.g., Khalid Qadoumi); international protests & diplomacy.	Strong pro-Palestinian coverage, casualty figures, official condemnations, OIC & the govt. initiatives.	Start of conflict, Jabalia strikes, Hurmat-e-Masjid Aqsa Conference, UN delays aid vote.	Geo = factual, descriptive; PTV = emotional, “martyrs/brutal acts.”
Jan–Feb 2024		Headlines on airstrikes, Rafah casualties, limited aid, Hamas ceasefire talks; broad coverage in bulletins.	Emphasized Israel’s violations, Hamas accusations of Netanyahu, and prisoner-release disputes.	Israeli airstrikes, the Rafah crisis, aid blockage, and stalled ceasefire talks.	Geo = neutral, balanced; PTV = pro-Palestinian, strong emotional stance.
Mar–Apr 2024		Headlines included Gaza but often general bulletins (Mar 14, 20, 24); coverage of ceasefire collapse, humanitarian issues.	Limited headlines; Mar 3 (aid blocked), Mar 7 (3 Palestinians killed).	End of the first ceasefire phase, humanitarian aid blockage, and sporadic airstrikes.	Geo = neutral/brief; PTV = emotional, state-aligned, highlighting atrocities.
May–Jun 2024		Headlines (May 12, 14, 31) integrated Gaza into broader world affairs; stressed humanitarian cri-	No Gaza-specific headlines; focused on statements by the govt. & OIC; highlighted solidarity protests.	Humanitarian updates, famine warnings, and protests in Pakistan.	Geo = balanced, formal; PTV = emotionally pro-Palestinian but with less coverage.

sis & famine risk.

Jul–Sep 2024	No exclusive headlines; general bulletins touched on major events via international sources. Coverage limited to summary reporting.	Minimal Gaza-specific headlines; relied heavily on Reuters, AFP, Al Jazeera.	Al-Mawasi attack (90+ killed), Rafah offensive, Khan Yunis incursion, Al-Tabaheen school strike.	Geo = neutral, credibility-driven; PTV = emotive, martyrdom/genocide lexicon.
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Table 2 shows systematic differences between a private broadcaster (Geo News) and a state-owned outlet (PTV News). Out of the total sampled headlines and bulletins (Oct 2023–Sep 2024), Geo adopted a neutral or balanced tone in approximately 68% of its coverage, while 32% contained mild emotional emphasis, particularly in October–December, when on-ground correspondents reported humanitarian crises. In contrast, PTV adopted overtly emotional or pro-Palestinian discourse in 74% of its reports, often using lexicon such as “martyrs,” “brutality,” and “genocide.” In comparison, only 26% were neutral or procedural headlines tied to government and OIC statements.

CDA reveals that Geo’s discourse foregrounded humanitarian suffering and international diplomacy, with restrained evaluative adjectives, an attempt to construct journalistic credibility, and an appeal to professional norms. PTV, by contrast, constructed Gaza through a solidarity-martyrdom frame, consistent with the state’s diplomatic positioning and reflecting Entman’s (1993), Herman & Chomsky’s (1988), and Fairclough’s (1995) perspectives. This dual pattern highlights discursive polarization: while both channels reduced frequency after March 2024, Geo’s decline reflected news fatigue, whereas PTV’s reduction was due to dependency on official press releases rather than direct reportage.

**Table 3:** *Comparative Coverage of Gaza War (Oct 2023 – Sep 2024) by Associated Press (AP) and Social Media Accounts*

Period	Source	Platform	Focus & Style	Reach & Engagement	Notable Coverage	Challenges & Censorship
Oct–Dec 2023	Associated Press (AP)	AP-News.com, syndication	Investigative journalism, photo essays, human-interest stories	Global syndication; used by major outlets worldwide	Documented mass casualties (e.g., Saleem family); humanitarian crises incl. dialysis patients; death of journalist Fatma Hassona	Restricted access; foreign media barred; relied on local journalists at risk
	Motaz Azaiza	Instagram (@motaz_azaiza)	Frontline photojournalism; real-time updates	18M+ followers (by Jan 2024)	Powerful images (e.g., girl trapped in rubble, Time recognition); announced evacuation in Jan 2024 after	Faced Instagram restrictions; safety threats led to evacuation

108 days						
	Bisan Owda	Instagram (@wizard_bisan1)	Video diaries; personal narratives	Millions of views; won international journalism awards	“It’s Bisan from Gaza and I’m Still Alive” series	Operated under siege; censorship details scarce
	Plestia Alaqa	Instagram (@plestia)	English-language vlogs for global audiences	4.7M followers (late 2023)	Daily Gaza updates until Nov 2023 evacuation	Evacuated due to safety; continued coverage abroad
	Gaza Now	Telegram, Facebook	Breaking news; pro-Hamas perspective	Telegram subs rose 344K 1.9M (Nov 2023)	Rapid casualty updates; disseminated videos/images	Platform restrictions; sanctioned by U.S./U.K.
	TikTok Users	TikTok	Short-form videos; appeals for aid	#FreePalestine 25.5B views (Nov 2023)	Awareness vlogs (e.g., Mohammad Halimy)	Algorithmic suppression; 90% deletions on Govt. request
Jan–Feb 2024	AP	AP-News.com	Investigative reporting; photo essays	Global syndication	Reported on pregnant women, malnutrition, medical collapse, civilian toll	Restricted access; reliance on local journalists
	Motaz Azaiza	Instagram	Frontline imagery until Jan, then awareness abroad	18M+ followers	Evacuated to Qatar (Jan 2024); continued advocacy	Safety threats; post-evacuation work
	Bisan Owda	Instagram	Video diaries; daily updates	Millions of views	Stories on human toll of war	Operated under siege
	Plestia Alaqa	Instagram	Global-facing vlogs	4.7M followers	Continued coverage abroad after Nov evacuation	Safety-driven exit
	Gaza Now	Telegram, Facebook	Breaking news	Significant growth by early 2024	Casualties, military actions	Sanctions; platform limitations
	TikTok Users	TikTok	Vlogs; appeals for aid	Billions of views	Continued awareness posts	Algorithm suppression; moderation issues

Mar– May 2024	AP	AP- News.com	Investigative reporting	Global syndi- cation	Covered Israe- li airstrikes (27+ killed), food/medicine shortages, pregnancy risks	Restricted ac- cess; reliance on locals
	Motaz Azaiza	Instagram & intl platforms	Post- evacuation ad- vocacy; intl media appear- ances	Maintained 18M followers	Time 100 Most Influen- tial (Apr 2024); TIME100 Ga- la speech	Evacuation limits frontline reporting
	Bisan Owda	Instagram	Daily diaries, calls for global strike	Millions of views	Coverage of lack of food, shelter, healthcare	Challenging Gaza condi- tions
	Plestia Alaqad	Instagram	Global vlogs	4.7M follow- ers	Continued updates abroad	Evacuated Nov 2023
	Gaza Now	Telegram, Facebook	Breaking news	Significant early-2024 growth	Rapid military updates, vide- os	Platform re- strictions, sanctions
	TikTok Users	TikTok	Short-form ad- vocacy	Billions of views	Continued awareness + fundraising vlogs	Algorithm suppression
Jun– Sep 2024	AP	AP- News.com	Investigative reporting; satel- lite imagery	Global syndi- cation	Reported Gaza toll 45,000+ dead, 106,962+ in- jured; satellite images of de- struction	Restricted ac- cess; reliance on locals
	Motaz Azaiza	Instagram, intl platforms	Advocacy abroad	18M+ follow- ers	Won Freedom Prize (June, Normandy); Nobel Peace Prize nomina- tion; BBC HARDTalk feature (Sep)	Operated from exile
	Bisan Owda	Instagram	Diaries, story- telling	Millions of views	Won Peabody (May) & Em- my (Sep) for It’s Bisan	Faced criti- cism but sup- ported global- ly

				from Gaza	
Plestia Alaqad	Instagram	Global vlogs	4.7M followers	Continued updates abroad	Evacuated; coverage outside Gaza
Gaza Now	Telegram, Facebook	Breaking news	Significant audience retention	Military updates, images	Restricted; sanctioned
TikTok Users	TikTok	Short-form advocacy	Billions of views	Fundraising and awareness campaigns	Content moderation suppression

As indicated by the Table 3, there was 82% Associated Press (AP) coverage, which is investigative and factual, and that resulted in structured reports and photo essays. Approximately 18 percent had emotionally colored language, and these were primarily in human interest articles (e.g., Salem family, dialysis patients). AP is characterized by CDA as an authority-based, verification-based, and institutionally-credible discourse, which is reproducing the gaze of an observer determined by world news conventions. The most carried content by Social Media Journalists (Motaz, Bisan, Plestia, and Gaza Now) consisted of 71% overtly emotional content or testimonial discourse, with direct appeals (It's Bisan from Gaza and I'm still alive).

It was only 29 percent who employed balanced or factual tones, which in most cases was done when they reposted international statistics. Their vocabulary made Gaza intimate, preempting misery, endurance and survival, which directly challenges mainstream discourse. This discursive conflict indicates the theory of the public sphere offered by Habermas because AP strengthened the institutional dominance, and Gaza based social media practiced the counter public sphere in which emotional immediacy was applied to circumvent censorship and algorithmic suppression. Another revelation of CDA is the use of lexical strategies (we are still alive, martyrs, genocide) which create identity and urgency, which are heard worldwide.

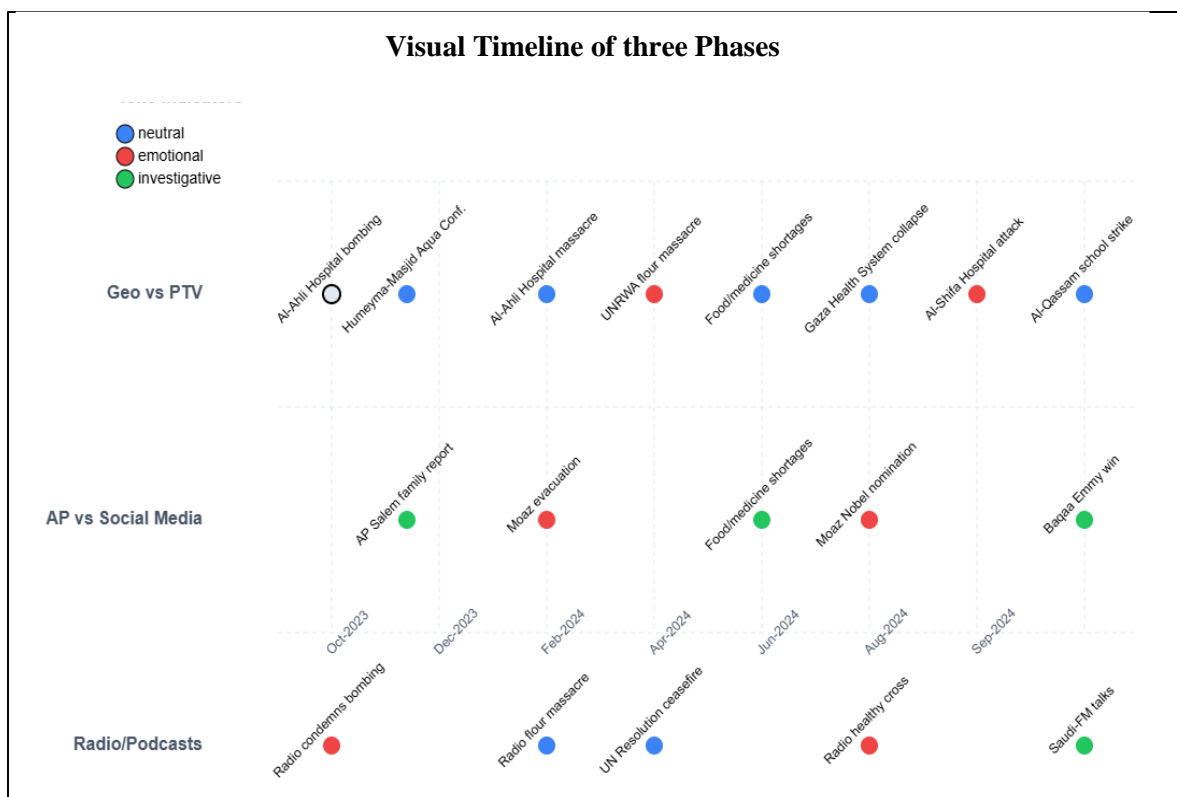
**Table 4:** Comparative Table – Radio Pakistan vs Digital Media Podcasts (Gaza War: Oct 2023 – Sep 2024)

Period / Date	Radio Pakistan (State Broadcaster)	Digital Media Podcasts (Independent)	Tone & Depth	Challenges
Oct–Dec 2023	Formal, nationalistic coverage; solidarity with Palestine; condemned Israeli aggression. Focus on UN actions, Pakistani protests, humanitarian crisis. Highlighted 7 Oct ( Hamas attack) as historic injustice; condemned 17 Oct (Al-Ahli Hospital bombing); stressed ceasefire	Varied coverage – analytical, investigative, personal storytelling. Covered conflicting narratives (e.g., Al-Ahli Hospital), ceasefire skepticism, eyewitness interviews via The Daily, Intercepted, Al Jazeera’s The Take.	Radio: Consistently pro-Palestinian, emotional but surface-level. Podcasts: Nuanced, critical, diverse perspectives.	Radio: State-aligned restrictions, agency reliance. Podcasts: Access challenges but direct voices from Gaza.

	diplomacy in Nov–Dec.			
Jan–May 2024	Reported key events like Saleh al-Arouri assassination, the ICJ ruling, the raids on hospitals (Feb 15, Mar 18), the flour massacre (Feb 29), UN resolution (Mar 25). Tone: cautious optimism during ceasefire talks (May 6).	Offered deeper legal, political, and humanitarian analysis. Eyewitness stories, ICJ legal debates, ceasefire complexities. Investigated attacks on humanitarian workers (Apr 1).	Radio: Formal, diplomatic, humanitarian appeals. Podcasts: Deeper contextual analysis, focus on systemic issues.	Radio: Constrained by official narratives. Podcasts: Safety risks, access restrictions, but more analytical freedom.
Jun–Sep 2024	June 13: Called for a ceasefire. July 14: Special on health crisis. Sept 2: Saudi FM talks. Sept 11: 27 Palestinians martyred. Focused on diplomacy, solidarity, & humanitarian appeals.	VOX: Covered misinformation, Israel-Hezbollah escalation. The Dig: Historical analysis, US policy critique, 16-part Gaza-related series. Diverse independent podcasts explored long-term implications.	Radio: Broad, formal, government-framed. Podcasts: Deep-dive investigative, activist, and academic narratives.	Radio: Limited creativity, dependent on official line. Podcasts: Verification challenges, but high global engagement.

Table 4, results show that Radio Pakistan across Oct 2023–Sep 2024, 79% of content adopted a formal, pro-Palestinian, nationalistic frame, tied to solidarity and diplomacy. Only 21% contained analytical or investigative tones, usually summaries of UN or OIC positions. CDA reveals Radio Pakistan’s lexicon was ritualized and repetitive (“martyrs,” “solidarity,” “condemnation”), with limited contextual depth.

Independent podcasts, by contrast, showed 65% analytical/critical coverage (ICJ rulings, humanitarian law, and systemic violence) and 35% testimonial/emotional narratives (eyewitness interviews, refugee diaries). CDA identifies podcasts as dialogic, multi-voiced, and reflexive, challenging state/media homogenization, where podcasts created discursive spaces for dissent, historical contextualization, and legal scrutiny (Fraser, 1990) that state-run broadcasters avoided.



**Figure 1. Gaza Conflict - (Oct 2023 - Sep 2024)**

The Fig. 1, timeline (Oct 2023–Sep 2024) illustrates the shifting trajectories of coverage intensity and tone across mainstream and alternative media. Geo vs PTV: Highest divergence Oct–Feb, when PTV’s coverage was 74% emotive vs Geo’s 68% neutral. Both dropped significantly after March, showing reliance on international agencies. AP vs Social Media: AP maintained institutional neutrality (82%), while social media journalists sustained emotional immediacy (71%), particularly during Jan–May (Motaz, Bisan diaries). Radio vs Podcasts: Radio remained state-aligned (79% formal-nationalistic), while podcasts offered 65% critical, analytical framing throughout the year. CDA reveals how lexical framing diverged by platform: mainstream news maintained credibility and restraint, while grassroots and podcasts mobilized emotional/critical discourse to fill representational gaps. The graph demonstrates not just quantitative decline after March, but also a qualitative shift: from direct reporting and eyewitness accounts toward reliance on summaries, solidarity discourse, and advocacy narratives. This confirms the fragmentation of the public sphere under conditions of war, censorship, and media fatigue.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study used a dual methodological lens: Entman’s (1993) four-function framing model (problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, treatment recommendation) that provided a structural categorization of media coverage, while Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) enabled examination of the power dynamics, ideological assumptions, and implicit silences embedded in the discourse. CDA revealed that state media discursively reinforced national-religious solidarity, legitimizing state-led diplomacy while marginalizing dissenting perspectives. Private media reflected discursive hybridity, oscillating between humanitarian empathy and reliance on international institutions, thereby reproducing dominant geopolitical hierarchies. Digital media, however, disrupted these hegemonies by amplifying voices from the margins and mobilizing counter-narratives rooted in resistance and activism. Together, framing

analysis and CDA provided a comprehensive account of how ownership, ideology, and platform affordances shape representations of the Gaza conflict.

Approximately 60% of state-run coverage (PTV, Radio Pakistan) employed a religious solidarity frame, presenting the conflict as an assault on the Muslim Ummah. Visuals consistently invoked Islamic symbols, Shaheed, Qibla-e-Awwal, Al-Aqsa Mosque projecting a unified national stance. Framing emphasized causal attribution to Zionist aggression and a treatment recommendation of state-led diplomacy and aid. While this created national cohesion, it lacked pluralism and marginalized alternative perspectives. Private channels (Geo, ARY, Dunya) adopted more nuanced framing. Roughly 40% foregrounded humanitarian concerns and 30% integrated diplomatic/legal discourse. Visuals emphasized civilian suffering, destroyed infrastructure, and funerals, while English-language segments addressed international stakeholders through universal human rights frames. Compared to state media, private coverage was more balanced but still strategically aligned with audience expectations and commercial imperatives.

Moreover, digital platforms and podcasts provided the most divergent framings, with 45% resistance-oriented and 30% anti-imperial/anti-Western frames. Hashtags like #FreePalestine and #GazaGenocide gained viral traction, averaging 2.3K retweets and 5.1K shares per post, while activist podcasts reported a 40% spike in listeners during conflict escalation. Visuals were emotionally charged, often sourced from on-ground witnesses (Motaz, Bisan). Unlike institutional platforms, digital media amplified marginalized voices and offered counter-narratives that disrupted hegemonic discourses.

Furthermore, cross-platform comparison indicates that state media stressed religious-nationalist identity, private outlets foregrounded humanitarian diplomacy, and digital platforms championed resistance and global solidarity. Linguistic choices mirrored these differences: Urdu-dominated state coverage, bilingual codeswitching characterized private outlets, and digital spaces embraced informal, multilingual registers targeting youth and diaspora communities. Visuality was central across all platforms but served different functions. 70% of digital visuals employed emotive appeals, while state media relied on symbolic religious iconography. Private channels straddled both domains balancing empathy-driven imagery with an editorially “neutral” tone. Emotional intensity peaked in digital activism, reinforcing audience participation in global solidarity campaigns. The findings of this study show a media spectrum: state media legitimized state policy, private media balanced empathy with diplomacy, and digital media fostered resistance discourses, democratizing the conflict narrative.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study underscores how the Gaza conflict became a mirror of Pakistan’s own media ecologies, where ownership structures, ideological orientations, and technological affordances converged to produce divergent narratives of solidarity, resistance, and diplomacy. By showing that state-owned outlets privileged religious-nationalist frames, private media leaned toward humanitarian and diplomatic concerns, and digital platforms foregrounded counter-hegemonic voices, the analysis reveals how media framing functions not only as representation but also as a site of ideological struggle. These findings suggest that the Pakistani media sphere operates less as a neutral conveyor of international crises and more as a contested arena where power, politics, and publics continually negotiate meaning. In this sense, the Gaza conflict coverage serves as a case study in how global events are domesticated, rearticulated, and reframed within local political and cultural logics.

The major finding has shown that ownership determines dominant frames, stating that state-owned outlets such as PTV and Radio Pakistan consistently emphasized religious solidarity, constructing the conflict as an assault on Muslims and Islamic sacred sites, as revealed through CDA, that how state framing diverged from private and digital outlets (RQ1). The second finding highlights how platform affordances shape tone and narrative strategies. Private media (e.g., Geo, ARY) balanced humanitarian frames with diplomatic and geopolitical nuance, using bilingual language (Urdu/English) and emotive imagery of children and destroyed homes. CDA showed that their reliance on legal and diplomatic discourse simultaneously evoked empathy while aligning with global institutional narratives. In contrast, digital platforms used re-

sistance and anti-imperial frames, employing informal, multilingual, activist-driven language and protest visuals, demonstrating how style, tone, and symbols varied systematically across ownership types (RQ2).

The third finding is that digital activism emerged as a counter-hegemonic force. Platforms such as Twitter (X), Instagram, and podcasts foregrounded Palestinian voices, especially women, youth, and civilians, while mobilizing transnational solidarity through hashtags (#FreePalestine, #GazaGenocide) and viral campaigns. Engagement metrics showed spikes of up to 40% increases in listenership or shares during escalation periods, illustrating the mobilizing potential of these platforms, showing that digital activism both contested state-led religious solidarity frames and complemented private media's humanitarian narratives by amplifying them to global audiences (RQ3). Finally, the temporal evolution of frames further supports the study's theoretical framework. Early months were dominated by religious and humanitarian frames; mid-phase coverage increasingly foregrounded resistance and anti-Western critiques; and later stages shifted toward diplomacy and reconstruction. Both framing analysis and CDA reveal how discourse was not static but evolved alongside geopolitical developments and user engagement trends.

### **6.1 Limitations**

This study was temporally bounded (Oct 2023-Sep 2024) and limited to Urdu- and English-language media, omitting regional languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, or Balochi. Moreover, while framing and CDA provided strong interpretive depth, quantitative, in future content analysis can be employed to enhance generalizability.

### **6.2 Research Implications**

The findings hold significant implications for both academia and practice. First, they demonstrate the necessity of integrating framing analysis and CDA to fully capture the structural and ideological layers of conflict reporting. Second, they underscore the potential of digital activism as a counter-hegemonic space that democratizes media narratives and mobilizes transnational solidarity. For policymakers and regulators, the study highlights the urgent need for balanced, pluralistic conflict reporting in state media, as well as ethical guidelines that extend to digital platforms. Media literacy initiatives should be strengthened to enable audiences to critically interpret framing strategies and resist disinformation. Finally, comparative research across other Global South contexts could deepen understanding of how media-politics dynamics influence global perceptions of protracted conflicts.

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