

## A Semantic Analysis of Pro-Palestine and Pro-Israel Hashtags on Selected News and Media Instagram Accounts

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### ABSTRACT

*The study aims to investigate the hashtags used by selected news and media Instagram accounts associated with pro-Palestine and pro-Israel viewpoints amid the ongoing 2023 conflict. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach due to the written format of the data. The study utilized the Flourish website's analysis software to identify prevalent hashtags within a specific timeframe from 1st to 7th November 2023. Through a semantic approach, these hashtags were examined to reveal their nuanced meanings and representations, particularly in relation to support for each side. The present study analyzed 1825 hashtags from 5 pro-Palestine accounts and 1255 hashtags from 5 pro-Israel accounts with distinct hashtag preferences for each group. In the first stage of analysis, after excluding several neutral hashtags, #Gazaunderattack emerged as the most prominent hashtag among pro-Palestine accounts, while pro-Israel accounts predominantly used #HamasisIsis. In the second stage, without excluding any hashtags, #Palestine was the dominant hashtag for pro-Palestine accounts, while pro-Israel accounts prominently used the #Israel hashtag. These hashtags carry distinct connotations depending on their context of usage. By employing a semantic analysis of Instagram hashtags, this study sheds light on the significant role of social media within the linguistic landscape, particularly in expressing and shaping support for conflicting perspectives*

**Keywords:** semantics, social media, Instagram hashtags, pro-Palestine, pro-Israel.

### INTISARI

Penelitian ini ditujukan untuk menyelidiki tagar yang digunakan oleh beberapa akun Instagram berita dan media terpilih terkait sudut pandang pro-Palestina dan pro-Israel di tengah konflik yang sedang berlangsung pada tahun 2023. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif karena format data tertulis. perangkat lunak analisis situs web Flourish digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi tagar yang lazim dalam jangka waktu terpilih yakni pada tanggal 1 hingga 7 November 2023. Melalui pendekatan semantik, tagar-tagar ini dikaji untuk mengungkap makna dan representasi yang bernuansa, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan dukungan untuk masing-masing pihak. Studi ini menganalisis 1825 tagar dari 5 akun pro-Palestina dan 1255 tagar dari 5 akun pro-Israel dengan preferensi tagar yang berbeda untuk setiap kelompok. Pada tahap analisis pertama, setelah mengecualikan beberapa tagar netral, #Gazaunderattack muncul sebagai tagar yang paling menonjol di antara akun-akun pro-Palestina, sementara akun-akun pro-Israel sebagian besar menggunakan #HamasisIsis. Pada tahap kedua, tanpa mengecualikan tagar apa pun, #Palestina merupakan tagar dominan untuk akun pro-Palestina, sementara akun pro-Israel secara mencolok menggunakan tagar #Israel. Tagar-tagar ini memiliki konotasi yang berbeda tergantung pada konteks penggunaannya. Dengan menggunakan analisis semantik tagar Instagram, studi ini menyoroti peran penting media sosial dalam lanskap linguistik, khususnya dalam mengekspresikan dan membentuk dukungan untuk perspektif yang saling bertentangan.

**Kata kunci:** semantik, media sosial, tagar Instagram, pro-Palestina, pro-Israel

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### INTRODUCTION

The Palestine-Israel conflict remains a perpetual topic globally, drawing extensive attention within the academic world for its enduring complexity. Originating from the colonization and settlement of Palestine by Israel in 1947, this conflict has forced many Palestinians to flee their homeland. However, the issue resurfaced prominently on October 7, 2023, due to the aggression by Hamas and sustained bombardment by Israel in Gaza, resulting in Palestinians losing their land and becoming refugees. This ongoing conflict, rooted in the Middle East, has spilled over onto social media platforms, notably Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, where a global discourse among supporters of both sides unfolds and demands attention.

The ongoing evolution of social media as an internet-based communication tool has continually redefined its definition and developed its features (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Notably, in the current year, social media users also have been increasing for over half of the global population, accounting for approximately 4.5 billion users (Jose & Victor Paul, 2023). Among these platforms, Instagram stands out as one of the most popular, boasting over 2 billion active accounts worldwide.

In the context of the current Palestine-Israel conflict, Instagram has emerged as a strategic platform for disseminating information about the conflict. Its popularity stems from the ease of sharing visual content, including photos and videos, relevant to the ongoing situation. However, voicing out about the Palestine issue on social media was often curtailed and censored due to its sensitivity (Supriyanto et al., 2022).

This study aims to conduct a semantic analysis, within the linguistic framework, focusing on the hashtags utilized by various news and media Instagram accounts affiliated with both pro-Palestine and pro-Israel stances. Amidst the influx of Instagram posts featuring videos, photos, and captions, users advocating for Palestine and Israel express their views through a myriad of hashtags. Yet, this study seeks to address the limited use of hashtags by specific news and media Instagram accounts supporting each side of the conflict.

Previous studies on the Palestine-Israel conflict in 2021 in the realm of social media underscored Twitter users' predominantly use of hashtags to disseminate information about the conflict (Huda et al., 2022). Despite a hashtag is simply written with the label (#), it has a significant function in interpreting the power of social connection (La Rocca & Boccia Artieri, 2023), and raising people's awareness towards social issues (Ta'amneh & Al-Ghazo, 2021). A study conducted by Siapera (2014) revealed that #Palestine hashtag became instrumental in redistributing power from hard news and mainstream media.

Exploring hashtags on specific Instagram accounts has been previously examined using diverse analytical approaches, such as semantic network analysis (Kostygina et al., 2021), empirical analysis (Zhang, 2019), and topic modeling (Cahyo et al., 2021). In addressing gaps in prior research, this study aims to analyze hashtags from selected news and media Instagram accounts, aligned with both pro-Palestine and pro-Israel narratives. By employing a semantic theory approach encompassing textual and contextual meanings, this study seeks to contribute to linguistic and social media studies by addressing two primary research questions:

1. What are the most prevalent hashtags used by selected news and media Instagram accounts supporting pro-Palestine and pro-Israel perspectives?
2. How do these hashtags convey meanings and represent the specific support or stance of each side in their reporting?

The English term "semantics" finds its origin in the Greek word "sema" signifying a deeper meaning. It is a branch of linguistics that focuses on unraveling the meanings embedded within "morphemes, words, sentences, or discourse"(Chaer, 2013, p.2). Kreidler, (1998) also characterizes linguistic semantics as the examination of how languages organize and express

meanings. Many experts in the semantic fields have classified diverse classification of such as lexical, grammatical, referential, denotative, connotative, and idiomatic meanings (Chaer, 2013; Kreidler, 1998; Pateda, 2001).

Several previous studies have examined the contextual meanings within distinct song lyrics (Asrifan et al., 2021; Hasanah & Habibullah, 2020; Munthe et al., 2022). As defined by some linguistic experts, contextual meaning goes beyond the literal definitions and considers the surrounding context, including the situation, background knowledge, and the specific way a word or phrase is used within a particular context. An example of the study of contextual meaning was conducted by Munthe et al. (2022) analyzing Batak Toba song lyrics by Putri Silitonga. The finding showed eight types of contextual meaning, namely organ context, the context of formality, the context of a situation, the context of purpose, the context of mood, the context of time, object context, and language context. Another similar study analyzing distinct song lyrics of Lily resulted in distinct findings of contextual meaning, namely context of situation, context of purpose, mood context, context of time, and context of place (Asrifan et al., 2021).

In this particular study, the researchers intend to explore the meaning of hashtags examining different types of meaning. The hashtags were examined initially through the literal and contextual meanings as the previous studies have done. Additionally, the study also examined the connotative semantic approaches to delve into the sense value of the usage of hashtags by selected news and media Instagram accounts supporting Palestine and Israel.

Denotative meaning refers to the fundamental aspect of word meaning which everybody generally agrees about (Kreidler, 1998). It is essentially the objective meaning observed from the collective human perception using our sensory faculties. For instance, upon hearing the word “dog” most people instantly think of the concept of an animal.

On the other hand, connotative meaning refers to the subjective aspect of meaning, the “emotional associations” evoked by a word (Kreidler, 1998, p. 45). A word assumes connotative meaning when it carries a value be it negative or positive. Take the word “dog” for example, denoting an animal conceptually. However, its connotation can vary across cultures. In Indonesia, saying “anjing” holds a negative connotation, which is often used as a derogatory terms to insult or express anger toward others.

## **METHODS OF RESEARCH**

The study utilized a qualitative descriptive approach due to the data is in the form of text and will be examined through the interpretative approach (Heigham & Croker, 2009). The analysis employs the Flourish website's analysis software to identify recurrent words within users' hashtags. Data collection involved gathering hashtags from 10 distinct news and media Instagram accounts, with 5 accounts affiliated with the pro-Palestine and 5 affiliated with the pro-Israel perspective. Hashtags from these accounts were analyzed within the specific timeframe from 1st to 7th November 2023.

The rationale for the selected news and media accounts during this limited time frame was to ensure specificity in the research and to mitigate subjective hashtags often found in personal accounts. Additionally, these accounts were chosen for their regular reporting on the ongoing events between Palestine and Israel. The steps involved in gathering and analyzing the data encompassed several stages:

1. Selection of Instagram accounts affiliated with pro-Palestine and pro-Israel perspectives based on clear support through the use of relevant hashtags.

2. Collection of hashtag data from posts on each of the 10 Instagram accounts within the specified timeframe.
3. Selection of some neutral hashtags to be included and excluded in the data analysis processes, such as #Palestine, #Israel, #Gaza, #Hammas, #War, #Jerusalem, and #IDF
4. Utilization of the Flourish Studio website for data analysis, involving two inputs: the first input comprised the data from each account, excluding selected neutral hashtags, while the second input involved gathering all data from pro-Palestine and pro-Israel accounts, with and without the exclusion of certain neutral hashtags.
5. Presentation of the data analysis results and subsequent interpretation of the significance behind the most used hashtags by both the pro-Palestine and pro-Israel factions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Results and Discussion section is structured in four parts, aiming to analyze the hashtags used on selected pro-Palestine and pro-Israel Instagram accounts during the period of 1st-7th November 2023. Initially, it presents the most frequent hashtags used by each side and examines the textual and contextual meanings embedded within these hashtags. The section then moves to an overall analysis of hashtags, excluding some neutral ones to focus on the core hashtags' significance. Lastly, the discussion concludes with an encompassing interpretation that includes both neutral and specific hashtags. This conclusion also provides a comparative understanding of the connotative meaning of neutral hashtags of both pro-Palestine and pro-Israel sides.

### 1. Pro-Palestine Hashtags

**Table 1. The Most Frequent Hashtags by Pro-Palestine Instagram Accounts**

No.	Instagram Account	Category	Follower	Prominent Hashtags	N	%	Total
1.	@presstvchannel	News and Media	168K	#Gazagenocide	37	12%	311
2.	@criticalanalysisuk	News and Media	20,7K	#Ceasefirenow	11	5%	233
3.	@ajplus	News and Media	1,2M	#Gazaunderattack	8	4%	183
4.	@middleeastmonitor	News and Media	259K	#StandwithPalestine	33	8%	435
5.	@yenisafakenglish	News and Media	35,2K	#FreePalestine	29	4%	663
Total						100%	1825

Table 1 showcases the predominant hashtags utilized by various pro-Palestine-affiliated Instagram accounts within the news and media category. The data were obtained by using Flourish Studio's analysis tool, excluding certain neutral hashtags. Notably, five diverse accounts from different countries demonstrate distinct hashtag preferences.

The first pro-Palestine Instagram account, @presstvchannel, controlled by the Iranian state, prominently features the hashtag #Gazagenocide. This hashtag revolves around the region of Gaza, situated on the eastern Mediterranean coast and bordered by Egypt to the west and Israel to the east. With a population exceeding 1.7 million, Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas globally. Within the hashtag #Gazagenocide, the term "genocide" refers to "the deliberate and systematic killing or persecution of people from a particular group identified as having a shared ethnicity, nationality, etc..."(Oxford English Dictionary, n.d). Contextually, this hashtag implies the occurrence of genocidal acts within Gaza in 2023. The Geneva Convention has defined the term genocide carefully as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national,

ethnic, racial, or religious group (Toris, 1982). This interpretation aligns with the content shared on Instagram between November 1st and 7th, depicting casualties, fatalities, and injuries among Gaza's inhabitants due to the bombardment by Israel.

On the @criticalanalysisuk Instagram account, a pro-Palestine news and media platform based in the United Kingdom, the most frequently used hashtag is #Ceasefirenow, comprising two words, “Ceasefire” and “now”. This hashtag signifies an agreement, typically between conflicting entities, to halt hostilities, allowing room for discussions aimed at attaining peace. The term “now” specifically denotes the present moment, devoid of past or future connotations.

In this context, #Ceasefirenow advocates for an immediate cessation of hostilities between Hamas and Israel. This call for a ceasefire is evident in numerous photo and video posts depicting the bombardment conducted by the Israeli military, resulting in the suffering of Palestinian civilians. The #Ceasefirenow hashtag emphasizes the urgency of halting the conflict to avert widespread destruction and loss of life in Gaza.

The next hashtag #Gazaunderattack is frequently used by @ajplus, a prominent news media account based in the United States with over one million followers. It signifies “Gaza”, a city within Palestine, being subjected to an assault or offensive attack, and the term “under” in this hashtag implies the direct impact of the attack on Gaza. As reported by Al Jazeera, Israeli forces attacked many public facilities in Gaza such as schools, hospitals, and even mosques (“Israel Ramps Up Attacks”, 2023). This indicates an attempt to cause harm or injury to the civilians in Gaza during wartime, involving the use explosive bombs to destroy buildings. Therefore, @ajplus account employs the hashtag #Gazaunderattack to highlight reports of Israeli military actions targeting Gaza. It also emphasizes the Israeli army’s attacks on Gaza, resulting in civilian casualties due to bombings and weapon deployment.

On the other hand, @middleeastmonitor account frequently employs the hashtag #StandwithPalestine, symbolizing support for Palestine. One of the meaning of the phrasal verb “stand with” is “to side or align oneself with”(Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.), and the word “Palestine” denotes a state located in the Southern Levant region of West Asia. Established on 15 November 1988 and governed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It lays claim to the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip, all of which have been Israeli-occupied territories since the 1967 Six-Day War. In the context of #StandwithPalestine hashtag, the @middleeastmonitor account takes side with Palestinians amidst the ongoing occupation by Israel. Additionally, through Instagram posts, the account also advocates an unwavering support for Palestinians facing the harsh and distressing realities of living under Israeli occupation. .

The last news and media Instagram account @yenisafakenglish, rooted in Turkey, prominently features the hashtag #FreePalestine to advocate for supporting the freedom of Palestine. The word “free” functions as a verb, meaning “to make free; to set at liberty; to release from bondage or confinement”(Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.), and the word “Palestine” as previously mentioned refers to a state located in West Asia. Contextually, #FreePalestine hashtag utilized by the @yenisafakenglish account symbolizes Palestinian’s aspiration for an independent state where they can reside without constraints. Presently, Palestinians have been forcibly confined and restricted in their lands under Israeli occupation. Therefore, #FreePalestine serves as a rallying cry, advocating for Palestine's liberation from Israeli control, and striving to fulfill the Palestinian people's desire for autonomy and self-governance.

## 2. Pro-Israel Hashtags

**Table 2. The Most Frequent Hashtags by Pro-Israel Instagram Accounts**

No.	Instagram Account	Category	Follower	Prominent Hashtags	N	%	Total
1.	@standwithus	Media	1,3M	#HamasisIsis	26	12%	225
2.	@iltv_israel	News and Media	73,7K	#Terrorism	27	10%	276
3.	@Israelcc	Media	29,9K	#Israelunderattack	39	15%	259
4.	jns_org	News and Media	8,052K	#Hamasmassacre	13	3%	374
5.	@jewishlifeflow	Media	43.4k	#StandwithIsrael	3	2%	121
Total						100%	1255

As the opposite of Table 1, Table 2 shows the most popular hashtags applied by each of the news and media pro-Israel Instagram accounts. There are 5 distinct Instagram accounts with distinct categories and popular hashtag usage.

The first account @standwithus, a popular pro-Israel media platform based in Los Angeles and Israel followed by over one million followers, frequently employs #HamasisIsis hashtags in its posts to oppose Hamas and express support for Israel. The word “Hamas” within the #HamasisIsis hashtag, represents the Islamic Resistance Movement, which aims to liberate Palestine through armed struggle against Israel (Hroub, 2017). While ISIS or known as “Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham” refers to a terrorist militant group with “salafi-jihadist theology” that has seized control over Iraq and Syria as their territorial power (Saltman & Winter, 2014).

Within the context of #HamasisIsis hashtag, the account justifies Hamas as an ISIS organization, implying a comparison between the actions of the Hamas group and those conducted by the terrorist organization ISIS. This comparison is justified through Instagram posts portraying Hamas members wielding guns and reportedly engaging in activities perceived as hostile, such as the alleged torture of Israeli citizens. Consequently, this equates Hamas’ actions with those commonly associated with the Isis terrorist organization.

The next hashtag #Terrorism is frequently utilized by @iltv\_israel, a news and media Instagram account based in Tel Aviv, Israel. According to OHCHR, the term “Terrorism” refers to “the intimidation or coercion” of people or governments by threatening or perpetrating violence, causing death, severe injury or the detaining of hostages (“OHCHR and Terrorism”, 2024). In the context of #HamasisIsis hashtag usage, it categorizes Hamas’s actions as terrorist attacks. Additionally, the account often showcases images of hostages taken by Hamas, portraying Hamas as an adversary militant group to be combated.

Another frequent hashtag #Israelunderattack is employed by @Israelcc or Israel on Campus Coalition, a pro-Israel media Instagram account. The word “Israel” literally refers to a state in the Middle East bordered by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Contextually, #Israelunderattack hashtag indicates that Israeli territory was targeted and attacked by Hamas. As the report said that Hamas fired a large number of rockets from Gaza across Southern Israel region (Williams, 2023). This aligns with the hashtags and numerous photos and videos depicting buildings destroyed by Hamas rockets, highlighting the impact of the attacks.

Moving on, the pro-Israel media account @jns\_org or Jewish News Syndicated, based in Israel, frequently uses the hashtag #Hamasmassacre. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, the term “massacre” refers to “the act or an instance of killing a number of usually helpless or unresisting human beings under circumstances of atrocity or cruelty” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.), and the #Hamasmassacre therefore suggests that Hamas, an Islamic militant group, has committed acts of mass killing, causing the deaths of thousands of Israeli citizens. It emphasizes the cruelty and crimes conducted by Hamas supported by the Instagram posts showcasing Israeli hostages and casualties.

Lastly, the pro-Israel media account @jewishlifeflow, based in the United States, emphasizes the hashtag #StandwithIsrael. In this hashtag, the phrase “stand with” conveys meaning of taking aside, while “Israel” as previously mentioned refers to a state in the Middle East. Since Israeli citizens were attacked by Hamas during October 7, most of @jewishlifeflow's Instagram posts focus on advocating for Israel’s right to self-defense against Hamas attacks. Therefore, similar to #StandwithPalestine, the use of #StandwithIsrael hashtag signifies support for Israel amidst the challenging circumstances.

### 3. Pro-Palestine and Pro-Israel Hashtags with Excluding Selected Neutral Hashtags

**Table 3. Overall Hashtags Analysis with Excluding Selected Neutral Hashtags**

No.	Pro-Palestine Hashtags	N	%	Pro-Israel Hashtags	N	%
1.	#Gazaunderattack	68	4%	#HamasisIsis	60	5%
2.	#FreePalestine	51	3%	#Israelunderattack	55	4%
3.	#Gazagenocide	20	1%	#StandwithIsrael	25	2%
	Overall Hashtags	1825	100%	Overall hashtags	1255	100%

Table 3 presents an analysis of hashtags collected from five news and media Instagram accounts on both the pro-Palestine and pro-Israel sides with excluding selected neutral hashtags. Notably, the prominent hashtags for the pro-Palestine accounts include #Gazaunderattack (68), #FreePalestine (51), and #Gazagenocide (20). On the other hand, the significant hashtags for the pro-Israel accounts are #HamasisIsis (60), #Israelunderattack (55), and #StandwithIsrael (25).



**Figure 1. Pro-Palestine Hashtags Analysis with Excluding Selected Neutral Hashtags**



**Figure 2. Pro-Israel Hashtags Analysis with Excluding Selected Neutral Hashtags**

Both pro-Palestine and pro-Israel accounts commonly use hashtags like #Gazaunderattack and #Israelunderattack as described in Figure 1 and 2. Both sides claim attacks on their territories, but the difference lies in specificity. Pro-Palestine hashtags often specify Gaza, while pro-Israel ones encompass the broader territory of Israel without pinpointing specific areas. Additionally, pro-Palestine hashtags like #Gazagenocide imply that Gaza residents are victims of genocidal actions by Israel, portraying Gaza as a place of suffering due to attacks. The fact of genocide by the Israeli state towards Palestinians has been reported by many previous studies in previous conflicts (Gontijo et al., 2021; Nijim, 2023).

Another similarity lies in hashtags like #FreePalestine for pro-Palestine accounts and #StandwithIsrael for pro-Israel. Both express support, but with distinct nuances. #FreePalestine conveys that Palestine is not yet free from Israel, advocating for the country’s independence. The hashtags show a relation with the fact about the Israeli occupation of Palestine for more than 70 years since 1948. On the other hand, #StandwithIsrael means taking aside with Israel and supports Israel’s fight against acts of terror. Notably, the popular pro-Israel hashtag #HamasisIsis implies

that Hamas is responsible for casualties in Israel, justifying Israel’s resistance to Hamas, akin to fighting ISIS.

#### 4. Overall Hashtags Analysis without Excluding Selected Neutral Hashtags

**Table 4. The Overall Hashtags Analysis without Excluding Selected Neutral Hashtags**

No.	Pro-Palestine	N	%	Pro-Israel	N	%
1.	#Palestine	196	11%	#Israel	87	7%
2.	#Gaza	186	10%	#Gaza	53	4%
3.	#Israel	166	9%	#Hamas	53	4%
	Overall	1825	100%	overall	1255	100%

When the neutral hashtags are not excluded, a divergence arises in the most prominent hashtags between pro-Palestine and pro-Israel. In the pro-Palestine accounts, the most recurrent hashtags are #Palestine totaling 196, followed by #Gaza at 186 and #Israel with 166 instances. However, within the pro-Israel hashtags, the most frequent is #Israel with 87 hashtags, alongside #Gaza and #Hamas, appearing 53 times.

The #Palestine hashtags in pro-Palestine accounts do not explicitly show clear support because they appear rather neutral. However, examining these hashtags in context, intertwined with other previous hashtags like #FreePalestine, #Palestinewillbefree, #Standwithpalestine, and #SupportPalestine, which distinctly convey a hopeful aspiration for independence and support. Hence, despite appearing neutral, these #Palestine hashtags embody a positive sentiment.



**Figure 3. Pro-Palestine Hashtags Analysis without Excluding Selected Neutral Hashtags**



**Figure 4. Pro-Israel Hashtags Analysis without Excluding Selected Neutral Hashtags**

On the contrary, pro-Israel accounts as illustrated in Figure 4 commonly utilize #Israel hashtags, initially showing a supportive stance similar to the #Palestine hashtag such as #StandwithIsrael hashtag. However, some notable hashtags such as #Israelunderattack, portray a distressing image of Israel as a target of terror by Hamas. Hence #Israel hashtags in this context convey a support for the Israelis in dealing with horrible attacks and terrors by Hamas. As reported by Reuters on October 7, Hamas launched thousands of rockets and sent gunmen across security borders, resulting in hundreds of Israeli deaths, injuries, and hostages (Williams, 2023). Therefore, the victims of these atrocities must receive care and healing, and such violence against humanity must be stopped (Reis & Wald, 2024).

Meanwhile, the prevailing #Israel hashtag found in pro-Palestine Instagram accounts is depicted as an apartheid state, accused of engaging in genocide and war crimes, as reflected in several minor hashtags such as #Israelapartheid and #Israelwarcrime mentioned by some pro-Palestine accounts above. This aligns with prior studies showcasing the ongoing violence and the denial of fundamental rights to Palestinians under the Israeli apartheid regime (Gontijo et al., 2021). Amnesty International's 2022 report also highlights the discriminatory treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli state, identifying them as non-Jewish Arabs, subjecting them to distinct



categorization and treatment, and setting them apart from other non-Jewish groups (International, 2022).

Lastly, the prominence of the #Gaza hashtag is notable in both pro-Palestine and pro-Israel Instagram accounts. Within pro-Palestine, #Gaza emerges as a site under attack and distress, often accompanied by terms such as “genocide” and “attack”. This shows the connotation meaning of a grim picture of the Gaza city. This aligns with the prevailing discourse surrounding the Palestine and Israel conflict in 2021, wherein social media users primarily emphasized portraying the Palestinian territory as the victim of Israeli aggression (Huda et al., 2022).

Conversely, in pro-Israel hashtags, the #Gaza hashtag is frequently associated with Hamas, portraying it as a place under the control and assault of the Hamas terrorist group, such as #FreeGazafromHamas. Additionally, pro-Israel hashtags often depict #Hamas as a terrorist entity responsible for attacks on Israeli territories. This narrative contradicts the portrayal in pro-Palestine hashtags. This shows a contrast in the use of #Gaza hashtag between both sides. Pro-Palestine assumes Israel is responsible for the attacks on Gaza, while pro-Israel contends that Hamas, hiding in Gaza, is accountable for the destruction in the region.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, this study provides a comparative semantic analysis of hashtag usage between pro-Palestine and pro-Israel accounts on Instagram's news and media platforms. Both sides employ distinct hashtags to demonstrate their support. However, the prevalence of common neutral hashtags warrants further exploration, especially in connection with hashtags like #Palestine, #Israel, #Gaza, #Hamas. The simultaneous use of these neutral hashtags by both factions suggests potential neutrality or shared recognition. Delving deeper into semantics through detailed analysis could unveil the underlying meanings embedded within these hashtags.

The present study deals with the limitation of the time duration of the hashtags and the limitation of the Instagram account being analyzed. Therefore, future research endeavors might consider extending this analysis over a longer duration and diversifying the range of accounts studied beyond Instagram to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, researchers could explore combining semantic analysis with other theories to offer richer insights into the dynamics of hashtag usage within this context.

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