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Research paper



50 days of war on innocent civilian: Ma'an news agency coverage of Israeli and Palestinian conflict

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Abstract

Since the TV broadcasting was established in Arab countries until the 1990s, broadcasting during this specific time was based on a government control model, which derived from the view of broadcasting as an instrument of state advance that must be under the control from government. This kind of TVs, limits the broadcasting to highlight the government issue (1). In these kind of TVs, they focus with the leader's opinion more than the Palestinian problem. By the way, the theme in Arab media determined to highlight the leader's opinion who claims the right to speak on behalf of Palestinians. In September 1991, the first private TV in the Arab world was established when MBC went on the air from London. More private TVs followed after that like: Orbit in 1994 and ART in 1995, both based in Italy owned by Saudi businessmen, Future Television and LBC, both Lebanese based in Beirut, in 1995, and Al-Jazeera based in Qatar in 1996. In 2002 the number of the Arab TV stations was expanded to more than 150 TVS as government or privately owned, with capability of reaching the Arab people in any place in the world. This paper focuses on the media coverage of the conflict between two parties Palestine and Israel. The preview studies show that, in a conflict the media has an influential role and has responsibility for increasing violence or contributing to the resolution of conflict and mitigation of violence (2). This study examined 61 news coverage and framing of the Israel and Palestine conflict, known as the 50 days' war from 8 July – 26 August 2014 by Ma'an News Agency, which delivers news to Ma'an TV (Palestinian satellite television station). A quantitative content analysis was employed to examine the news published during the war using five generic frames developed by (3). Holsti Inter-coder reliability and validity test value is 0.988 or 98% agreement. The results showed that conflict and human-interest frames were significantly visible compared to other frames in Ma'an news coverage. Portrayal of images of civilian killing, children and women killed in their homes and suffrage news coverage, in this war. Responsibility frame stressed on hospitals bombing and embargo of medications which reduced chances for Palestinian of immediate medical help. The economic frame highlighted the economic and financial losses of Palestinians as consequences of 50 days' war. Most of them lost their income, businesses, agriculture land and homes and became refugees.

Keywords: *Media framing; content analysis; Israeli and Palestinian conflict; and Gaza war 2014.*

1. Introduction

What defines mass media involvement in crises, wars, and conflicts across the globe emanates most often than not from the perspectives through the way mass media covers, treats, and reports the issues. (4, 5). Mass media sometimes act as a mediator during conflicts thereby report crises in a way that a lasting solution is projected or redress is sought to ameliorate tensed conflicts until final resolution is achieved (6, 7). On the other hand, mass media create or aggravate conflicts by being partial while reporting the issues. Media roles before, during, and after conflicts therefore are determined by how the issues are framed to reflect the interest that the mass media are protecting. (8, 9). Mass media reports are pregnant of different focuses and meanings. The reports depict how media takes an active part during conflicts and are responsible for increased violence or whether media are independent of conflict, thereby report conflicts in ways contributing to conflict resolution (2, 10).

Many factors contribute to how mass media cover events or issues, most especially conflicts between two or more parties. The media coverage of conflicts or events will not only influence the parties involved in the conflict but also the bystanders, who are influenced by the direction of the reports and thus are forced to take sides in line with what the media make them believe about the conflict. (11, 12). Local conflicts are framed by local media to influence either one of the parties involved and at the same time members of the society who will act justly or otherwise by supporting one party or the other based on how mass media manipulate or manage the issue. Local conflicts attract international media attention only when such issues have degenerated to a level whereby fundamental human rights are compromised. International conflicts, particularly issues on wars between or among countries are most often won by the party that has the support of international media (6).

The conflict, which predated independence of many countries of the world combines geographical disputes with religious inclination and superiority.(13, 14). Media reports on the issue are almost on daily basis with casualties on increase by the day and oppressions compelling attention. (15)The media reports of the issue vary between local and international media as well as within international mass media depending on the ownership structure of the media. (16). This study will only focus on the coverage of one local media agency owning and operating Ma'an satellite TV channels. Regarding media framing of conflicts, Ma'an news agency uses different frames to build news around the issue based on the interest which it is trying to protect. Therefore, this study

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examines the news published during the war using five generic frames developed by (3).

The conflict on geographical boundary between Israel and Palestine started in 1948 and ravages till now. However, this study will focus on the conflict between Israel and Palestine from July 8 to August 26, 2014. The conflict within this period was considered the most violent in the history of the boundary dispute between them because it had bad impact on humanity and the economy and was reflected in media framing.

Content of the broadcast media on the conflict within the period specified cover news items on the issue and how they were structured by Ma'an news agency while reporting the issue. News items reported daily in the online version of Ma'an news agency during the last war between Israel and Palestine which started on 8 July and continued until 26 August, 2014 constitute the sampled content. Therefore, we have 61 news items from Ma'an news agency. A content analysis will be conducted of news published by this agency. This study will investigate five generic frames (conflict, responsibility, morality, economic consequences, and human interest) proposed by (3), as dependent variables. The news coverage will be the independent variable.

This study will examine the coverage of Ma'an news agency, which mean in Arabic together - (Arabic: وكالة معا الخبارية) - is a large wire service created in 2005 in Palestine. It has partnerships with twelve local Radio and eight televisions. Ma'an News Agency publishes news daily in three languages English, Arabic, and Hebrew, furthermore, Ma'an news agency considered as the largest wire services in Palestinian, it's website visitors exceed three million per month. Furthermore, it's publishes analysis, feature stories, and opinion articles. The agency's headquarters is in Bethlehem and it has an office in Gaza, Ma'an has established as well five new offices in main cities in Palestine. Thus, crews will be able to cover all events in Palestine and broadcast them to audiences everywhere. On Saturday at 8 p.m. (25 June 2011) Ma'an Network aired its first ever satellite TV news bulletin on Mix-Ma'an TV [Nilesat, frequency 10891, horizontal] along with all local Ma'an TV stations across the West Bank. The news bulletin focuses on Palestine providing in-depth coverage from all Palestinian cities in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and cities inside Israel.

1.1. Objective and research questions:

This study starts research into the nature of news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The main aim of this study is to examine how media coverage of the conflict between Israel and Palestine are structured in the online version of Ma'an news agency to convey accurate information about the conflict, and how this outlet affects the audience understanding, interpretations and decision making on the issue reported. In addition, this study seeks also to identify the frames used by Ma'an news agency while reporting issues related to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Through the analysis of its content this study aims at answering these questions:

1- What is the frequency of coverage of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict by Ma'an news agency Arabic online version?
2- How does Ma'an news agency frame the conflict between Israel and Palestine during the last war 2014?
3- Does Ma'an news agency news coverage for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict focus on human interest issue especially that related to women and children?

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

According to New York Times (2009), the contention on the ownership of land between Palestine and Israel takes the form of war between the Arab countries and Israel from 1948. After this specific war Palestine was divided into three areas. Jewish Israelis, whose ancestors began migrating to the area from the 1880s, they believed that, they have the right to own this land based on a promise from God. Furthermore, for the Jews, the migration was also based on their perceived necessity for a peaceful haven from widespread hostility toward the Jewish nation. On the other hand, the Palestinian people believing that they are the rightful inhabitants of the land because their ancestors have settled there for many decades. The evolution of the stages of sovereignty throughout the historic of Palestine to the present is shown in Figure 1. (17) explained that the stage of sovereignty went through different stages from 1946 until 2000. The first panel shows the land which has been owned in 1946 by Jewish residents. The second clarified the UN plan for partition of the land between both Palestine and Israel, the partition plan gave the Jews the right to own 55% of the land. The Palestinians supported by the Arab world refused this plan, but in this time, they did not have enough power to protect their land, quite the opposite of the Jews who were highly armed and supported by Europe. In 1948, the third panel shows that Israel was declared as a state on the white area.

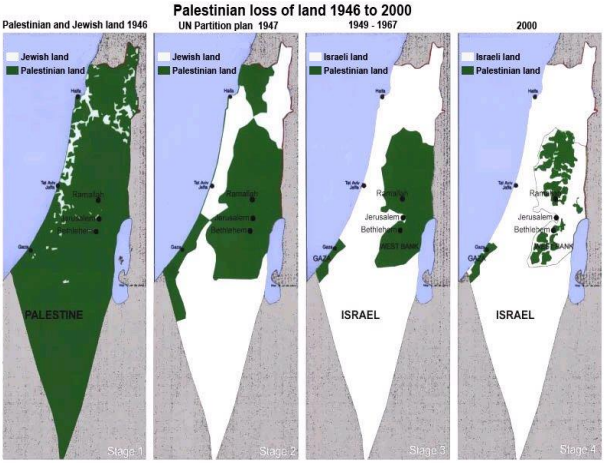


Fig. 1: Loss of Palestinian territory between 1946-2000.

Furthermore, under the Oslo Accords, the panel 4 shows in 1967, Israel occupied the areas A and B in Gaza and West Bank, as a result of that, less than half of the Gaza and West Bank became under limited area of Palestinian control. The leaders of the state of Israel acquired much of Area C as Israeli territory, followed by forcing Palestinians to live in cantons or ghettos largely confined to Areas A and B without earnest sovereignty, and called this a two-state solution (17).

The conflict started from 1948 up till now, however, it decreases subsequently. The frequency of the attacks between Israel and Palestine increased from 2008 until 2014. Indeed, the 2014 Gaza War was the third major war between them in less than six years. This war is considered as the most violent in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, after 50 days of conflict in Gaza, among the population of 1.8 million, it found that 2143 Palestinians were dead (including 577 children, 263 women and 102 elderly), and 11230 were injured, 10800 buildings had been destroyed and 8000 partially destroyed, 40000 homes had been damaged, and more than 350000 people had been displaced from their homes (18).

2.1. Research design and Theoretical framework

2.2. Media Framing theory

In defining media framing, according to (19) defines as a process that effects the audience to act, think and feel a particular way by raising the value of specific ideas and dropping others, elevate conformity in community thought. Entman clarifies that in noncoercive political systems, the most important way to push agenda is framing, and take one direction way to affect the public by telling them what to think about. For example, the government of Israel uses this method to push its agenda against the Palestinian people.

According to (20), the media in Israel try to ignore the Palestinian issue all the time, in contrast, it considered as the voice of the Jewish majority in Israel.

From another point of view, some scholars mention two major methods for news frame setting. First of all, it is considered as the way the news frames influence public knowledge. Second is how the news frames influence beliefs, behavior's and cognitive levels when current issues are presented in the media outlets. Some others considered that news frames can influence the understanding on the value of the topic (21).

The element of news framing was reviewed by (19) who point out that, the frame will choose an issue that is considered true and will be featured in the form of communication text. Therefore, framing theory proposes that the mass media do more than make saliency. It chooses which part from the story to focus on and which other it has to remove (21).

Previous studies on the media role in the Israel and Palestine conflict show that the media outlets more often did not present their reports impartially (22). For example, (23), in a framing study compared Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict during the 2008/2009 Gaza conflict and one year later, during a period of calm. Findings propose that both networks used framing theory to highlight Palestinian scenes over Israeli. Moreover, they frame Palestinians as victims in this conflict. Both networks showed images of Palestinian sadness, gave more time to Palestinian voices to describe their suffering, regularly described Palestinian casualties, and personalized Palestinian deaths. Their study finds that content analysis results show some stark differences, and some similarities, in the ways Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya reported on and framed the Israel-Palestine crisis during the two periods under study. On the other hand, according to (24), the United States has strongly supported Israel against Palestine.

(25), during a specific time period from 1995 to 2003, measured the impact of media framing on public attitudes and expectations of Israelis toward the Oslo peace process. This study suggests three main contributions: first of all, the study analysis the impact of media coverage on Israeli public opinion and its reflection on their outlook on the peace process over a long period time. Second, experiential evidence proposes that the role of framing the news varies between different aspects of public opinion. As a result, the scholar found the effects of news framing to be stronger on the overall outlook than on present macro situation. In fact, the Central of Media in Political and Social Phenomena confirms that, the information which reported by the media mode estimate was a main source of effect on future expectations of Israeli public opinion. Last, the author agrees with the previous studies which display that the response from the public to the positive framing is less than negative framing. This means that the Government will have limited ability to motivate the public to move forward with the peace process. In the final analysis, the news coverage of both conflict and peace process in most cases highlighted the negative issues while neglecting the positive sides; this shows the negative impact of the news media on public opinion in the failure of peace. The previous studies show that, media framing theory is very important to know how the Media outlets framing the news which related directly with the Israeli and Palestinian conflict, and which frames they are used. In this study, the researcher examined news coverage and framing of the Israel and Palestine conflict, known as the 50 days' war from 8 July – 26 August 2014 by Ma'an News Agency, which delivers news to Ma'an TV (Palestinian satellite television station). In addition, we investigated five generic frames created by Semetko and Valkenburg (conflict, responsibility, morality, economic consequences, and human interest). Those frames are the most common frames as identified by (3) as:

- Conflict frame: The conflict frame asserts conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of holding audience interest. According to (26) the conflict frame was the most common frame in U.S. news.(3).
- Human Interest: The human-interest frame takes a human face or an emotional side to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem. (26) described this as the "human impact" frame, and, next to conflict, found it to be a common frame in the news. Framing news under the terms of human interest is a best way to achieve this. This frame put the news in a personalized, emotionalized or dramatized form, to capture audience attention. (3).
- Morality frame: In the Morality frame the event, or issue is determined as a status of moral imposition or religious precept. The objectivity as a professional rule of editing news leads the editor to refer to morality frames indirectly, by using quotation or searching about others to ask questions (26).
- Economic consequences frame: (26) pointed out that this frame determines the events, or the issue in terms of the consequences or how it will affect the economic situation of the "individual, group, or institution". In addition, (3) identify the economic frame as a popular frame in the news. All the time the broad impact of an event is a significant value of news, followed by considerable economic consequences.
- Attribution of responsibility frame: (3), defined the attribution of responsibility frame as a problem that happened and the parties such as government or individuals or group, has the responsibility for its cause or solution.

(3) designed a method to measure the above frames by asking twenty questions about the news stories that yield results related to the expected frames. For example:

1- Conflict frame: Does the article reflect disagreement between (parties/individuals/groups)?

2-Human Interest frame: Does the story confirm how groups and individuals are influenced by the problem/issue?

3- Attribution of responsibility: Does the article mention that some level of the government is responsible for the problem/ issue/ problem?

4- Morality: Does the article include any moral message?

2.3. Research Framework Design

The study is investigating five generic frames (conflict, responsibility, morality, economic consequences, and human interest) as proposed by (3), as dependent variables (Figure 2). The news coverage will be the independent variable.

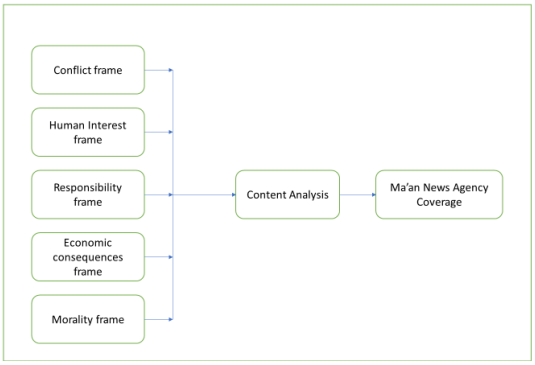


Fig. 2: Research Framework Design

3. Methodology and Materials

Quantitative content analysis method was used for the data collected. Since the entire study entails comparing news coverage and structure among Ma'an News Agency output, effort was made to generate relevant data that will provide information on the news framing pattern from the media. which considered the most common way in the previous studies to analyze such data. (27-29).

Data collection involved news stories focusing on the Israel-Palestine conflict, published on the online version of Ma'an News Agency. The news stories were published during the 50-day war between Israelis and Palestinians from July 8 until August 26, 201.

A total of 61 news stories were collected from the online version of Ma'an News Agency (Al-Ma'an TV -Palestinian satellite television station is available online). Examination of the news published during the war was based on five generic frames developed by (3) (conflict, responsibility, morality, economic consequences, and human interest). The coding book and coding sheet were designed as instruments for the research. The coding book has six sections, which are Section A: Basic Information, Section B: Conflict frame, Section C: Human interest frame, Section D: Economic frame, Section E: Attribution of responsibility frame, and Section F: Morality frame. Coding and Coding Book News were translated into English before coders examined them using the coding sheet variables. At the same time, coding sheet and coding book instructions were also translated into Arabic and were given to the Arabic coders in order to test for research instrument reliability. Non-Arabic coders were given the English set of coding sheet and coding instruction. Then, the inter-coder reliability test was carried out to gauge reliability and validity of the research instrument using the Holsti formula. The Holsti test score showed high agreement between coders and this reflecting a highly reliable research instrument with the Holsti CR score 0.98 or 98 per cent agreement among coders. The following formula was used to obtain the inter-coder reliability measure:

$$CR = \frac{2M}{N^1+N^2}$$

where:
CR= Holsti's CR level of agreement
M= observed agreement
N1= agreement of coder 1
N2 = agreement of coder 2

$$CR = \frac{2(420)}{850}$$

CR = 0.98 or 98%

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Conflict Frame

A total of 61 news items were recorded by Al-Maan Online News Agency during the 50 days of Israelis attack on the Palestinians. The news level gradually increased during the last week of the war. The last week achieved higher news coverage of the conflict between Israel and Palestine because of the increasing violence in last days of war and because the negotiation for peace started again between parties.

Table 1: Al-Maan News frequency per week during war

2014			
Period	Week no.	Frequency	Percentage %
From 08/07 to 13/07	Week 1	4	6.5%
From 14/07 to 20/07	Week 2	10	16.4%
From 21/07 to 27/07	Week 3	5	8.2%
From 28/07 to 03/08	Week 4	4	6.6%
From 04/08 to 10/08	Week 5	2	3.3%
From 11/08 to 17/08	Week 6	12	19.7%
From 18/08 to 26/08	Week 7	24	39.3%
Total		61	100%

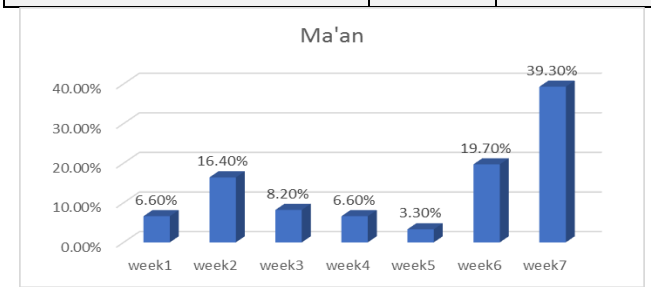


Fig. 3: Ma'an Total News Coverage during Palestinian – Israeli Conflict 2014

Al- Ma'an news agency framed the conflict between Israel and Palestine during the last war in 2014 by reflecting 63 per cent of the news coverage on disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries scenarios. The news also gave insight into whether one party-individual group-country reproached another as much as 83 per cent. And almost 60 per cent of the articles refer to sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue between Israelis and the Palestinians. Al-Maan focused less than 10 per cent on which side was the winner of loser during the war, where it carried the message winning or losing is not important. Table 2, shows news articles distribution according to the conflict frame. The results show that Ma'an News Agency used conflict frames more than others frames.

Table 2: Conflict frame and disagreement

Variables	**Yes**	**Percentage**	**No**	**Percentage**
Does the article reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries?	39	63.9 %	22	36.1 %
Does the article refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?	35	57.4 %	26	42.6 %
Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another?	51	83.6 %	10	16.4 %
Does the article refer to winners and losers?	6	9.8%	**55**	**90.2 %**

Almost 40 per cent of the news focused on bombing of civilian areas as seen in Table 3. The results show that the frequency of news included information about bombing of Palestinian civilian area (39.3%) more than the news which included information about Israeli areas (27.9%).

Table 3: Conflict frame: bombing of civilian area

Variables	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Does the news article include information about bombing of civilian areas? (Palestinian civilian area)	24	39.3 %	37	60.7 %
Does the news article include information about bombing of civilian areas? (Israeli civilian area)	17	27.9 %	44	72.1 %

The news frequencies also included leaders' opinion (Table 4). The results show that the news on Israeli leaders' opinion counted as much as 83.6 per cent while the coverage on the Palestinian leaders' opinion was only at 63.9 per cent shown in Table 4.

Table 4: News coverage of leaders' opinion as conflict frame

Variables	**Yes**	**Percentage**	**No**	**Percentage**
Does the news article reflected Leaders opinion about the conflict? (Palestinian leader opinion)	39	63.9 %	22	36.1 %
Does the news article reflected Leaders opinion about the conflict? (Israeli leader opinion)	51	83.6 %	10	16.4 %
Does the news article reflected Leaders opinion about the conflict? (another leader opinion)	35	57.4 %	26	42.6 %

4.2. Human Interest frame

The following Table 5 shows that more than 50% of news reflects human interest issues, while 62.3% of news employed adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion. As for visual information, more than 60% of the articles contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion. Almost 46 per cent the news article provides a human example or "human face" on the issue such as women and children crying in pain. The news coverage stressed more than 57 per cent in their coverage to give emphasize on how individuals and groups were affected by the issue/problem. Al-Maan preferred less

focus on the private or personal life of the actors in their news to build human interest frame.

Table 5: Human Interest frame

Variables	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Does the article provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?	28	45.9 %	33	54.1 %
Does the article employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?	38	62.3 %	22	36.1 %
Does the article emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?	35	57.4 %	26	42.6 %
Does the article go into the private or personal lives of the actors?	21	34.4 %	40	65.6 %
Does the article contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?	37	60.7 %	24	39.3 %

4.3. Attribution of responsibility frame

The attribution of responsibility frame results are shown in Table 6. The table depicts the frequency of news suggesting that some level of Israeli government was responsible for the issue/ problem. A total of more than 34 per cent blamed the Israeli government for the issue/problem. Coverage on the Palestinian government amounted to 9.8 per cent of the attribution of responsibility frame where the Palestinian government was seen as not responsible for the issue/problem.

Table 6: Attribution of responsibility frame

Variables	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Does the article suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem? for Palestinian	6	9.8 %	54	88.5 %
Does the article suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem? for Israeli	21	34.4 %	40	65.6 %

4.4. Economic frame

The results shown in Table 7 suggest that the main issue in the economic frame was mentioned as financial losses or gains of future for the Palestinian (32.8%). However, during the war, the focus on economic issues was less compared to other frames especially

Table 7: Economic frame

Variables	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future? for Palestinian	20	32.8 %	41	67.2 %
There is a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future? for Israeli	9	14.8 %	52	85.2 %
There is a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved? for Palestinian	6	9.8 %	55	90.2 %
There is a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved? for Israeli	3	4.9 %	58	95.1 %
There is a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action? for Palestinian	9	14.8 %	51	83.6 %
There is a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action? for Israeli	2	3.3 %	59	96.7 %

However, Al-Maan, throughout the 50 days of war gave coverage more on financial losses for Palestinians, less for Israelis. Almost 10 per cent of the economic frame news mentioned the cost/degree of expense involving the Palestinians. Almost 15 per cent of the economic frame also covered the reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action for the Palestinians. Lower focus in every category of the economic frame was given to the Israelis.

4.5. Morality frame

The morality frame as shown in Table 8, reflected the frequencies of news which contains general moral message is (41%). Al-Ma,an News Agency used less morality frames in their news compared to conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility and economic frames. However, it did give some focus on moral message, by making reference to morality, God and other religious tenets. Al-Maan also offered specific prescriptions about how to behave at 23 per cent out all total frame focus.

Table 8: Morality frame

Variables	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Does the article contain any moral message?	25	41 %	36	59%
Does the article make reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets?	12	19.7%	49	80.3%
Does the article offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?	14	23%	47	77%

5. Conclusion

The Israeli and Palestinian conflict has been an important issue in the world for decades. Mass media plays an important role all the time in conflict. In fact, their role has two different and divergent forms. Moreover, the media takes an active part in a conflict and has responsibility for increasing violence or contributing to conflict resolution and violence alleviation (2). From the detailed content analysis of conflict issue coverage, it can be concluded that news coverage related with this specific conflict between Israel and Palestine in 2014 increased in the last week from 18/08 to 26/08/2014. Therefore, Ma'an News Agency used conflict frames more than others frames in their news coverage of the 50-day war between Israelis and Palestinians. However, the human-interest frame contributed significantly as the voice for the Palestinians. The result is in tandem with the opinion of (6) that mass media sometimes act as a mediator during conflicts and thereby report crises in a way that a lasting solution is projected or redress is sought to ameliorate tensed conflicts until final resolution is achieved.

The Palestinian and Israeli conflict has long been presented as a just quest for Jewish nationhood hindered by an unfortunate, intractable Palestinian problem; media coverage stresses how the problem affects the Israeli people. This is in tandem with previous researches found by (30) and (31) in which, Israelis are presented as a nation with whose catastrophic history of persecution, in the same time Palestinians are ignored "Israel has dedicated an enormous amount of resources to perverting our identity and the character of our struggle," writes Mustafa Barghouti. Previous studies compared with this study illustrate this; the USA media show their bias toward Israel, while the Palestinian media coverage show their bias toward the Palestinian side in this conflict especially in time of war.

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