مجلة بحوث
الإعلام الرقمي

دورية علمية محكّمة تصدر عن كلية الإعلام وتكنولوجيا الاتصال - جامعة السويس

مجلة بحوث الإعلام الرقمي

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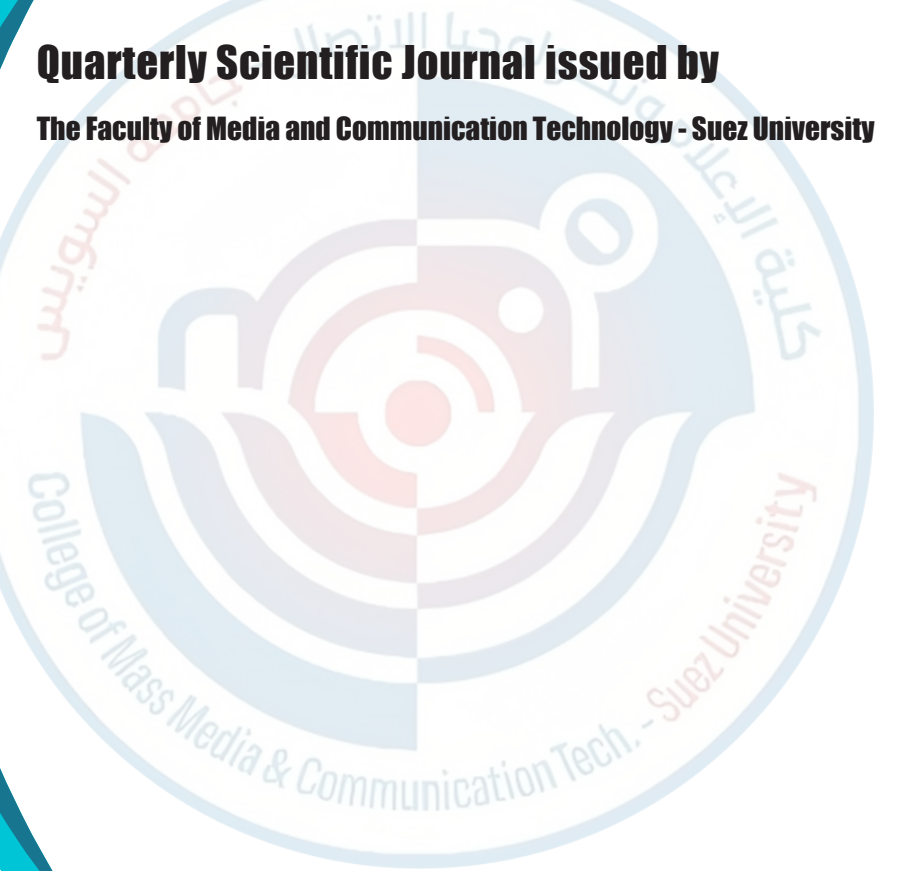
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وتكنولوجيا الاتصال

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السكرتير الإداري
أ. سارة خليل

أهداف المجلة:

- الإسهام في تطوير المعرفة ونشرها، وذلك بنشر البحوث العلمية الأصيلة، والمراجعات العلمية في مجالات البحوث والدراسات في مجالات تخصص الإعلام الرقمى المختلفة.

- نشر البحوث العلمية المبتكرة، التي يعدّها أعضاء هيئة التدريس والهيئة المعاونة بالجامعات المصرية والعربية، والباحثون في المجالات العلمية لتخصص الاعلام الرقمى.

- توفير فرصة التقويم العلمى للبحوث من خلال إخضاع البحوث للرأي العلمي الذى يأخذ على عاتقة تقويم الجوانب العلمية والمنهجية في البحث العلمي.

- معالجة القضايا المعاصرة في إطار البحث العلمى، وتوظيفها في خدمة المجتمع، وخدمة القضايا الجوهرية التي تأسست من أجلها المجلة، وعلى رأسها التحول الرقمى.

- رصد ومتابعة اتجاهات البحث العلمى، من خلال الوقوف على النتائج العلمية للبحوث التي تصدرها المؤسسات الأكاديمية ومراكز البحوث المتخصصة.

- اهتمامات المجلة:

- تعنى المجلة بنشر:

- البحوث العلمية الرصينة في مجالات تخصص الإعلام الرقمى.

- البحوث والدراسات النقدية التي تتصل بالإصدارات في مجالات التخصص التي تعنى بها المجلة.

- البحوث والدراسات العلمية المعنية بمعالجة المشكلات المعاصرة والقضايا المستجدة في المجتمع، وخصوصًا التحول الرقمى.

- البحوث والتقارير والترجمات العلمية، وعرض الكتب الجديدة في مجال الإعلام الرقمي ومراجعتها.

- التقارير عن المؤتمرات والندوات العلمية في تخصص الإعلام الرقمي في مصر والعالم العربي والعالم.

قواعد النشر:

- أن تكون البحوث متخصصة في مسألة من المسائل التي تهتم بها المجلة.
- أن تكون البحوث متّسمة بالعمق والأصالة، بحيث يضيف كل بحث جديداً إلى المعرفة.
- أن تكون البحوث موثقة من الناحية العلمية بالمراجع والمصادر والوثائق.
- تنشر البحوث في المجلة باللغات العربية والإنجليزية والفرنسية.
- أن يقر صاحب البحث بأن بحثه عمل أصيل له وليس مشتقاً من رسالتي الماجستير والدكتوراه العائدتين له.
- ألّا يكون البحث قد سبق نشره، ويقدم الباحث تعهداً بذلك.
- ألّا يكون البحث مقدماً للنشر في مجلة أخرى.
- لا يجوز نشر البحث في مكان آخر بعد إقرار نشره في مجلة كلية الإعلام جامعة السويس إلّا بعد الحصول على إذن كتابي بذلك من رئيس التحرير.
- موافقة المؤلف على نقل حقوق النشر كافة إلى المجلة، وإذا رغبت المجلة في إعادة نشر البحث فإن عليها أن تحصل على موافقة مكتوبة من صاحبه.
- أصول البحث التي تصل إلى المجلة لا تردّ سواء أنشرت أم لم تنشر.
- يُمنح الباحث نسخة واحدة من العدد المنشور فيه بحثه مع خمس مستلات منه.

متطلبات النص المقدم للنشر:

- يجب ألّا يزيد عدد صفحات البحث عن (٣٠ صفحة) بما فيها الأشكال والصور والجداول والمراجع)بمقاس A4 / أو حوالي ٩٠٠٠ كلمة).
- يذكر اسم المؤلف وعنوانه الحالي بعد عنوان البحث مباشرة مع ذكر عنوانه، ومرتبته العلمية، وبريده الإلكتروني.
- تقدم البحوث مكتوبة بخط Arabic Simplified حجم (١٤) للنصوص في المتن، وبالخط نفسه بحجم (١٢) للهوامش في نهاية البحث، وتكون الهوامش (٢٫٥ سم) من كل طرف.

- تُدرج الرسوم البيانية والأشكال التوضيحية في متن البحث، وتكون الرسوم والأشكال باللونين الأبيض والأسود وُترقم ترقيما متسلسلاً، وتكتب أسماؤها والملاحظات التوضيحية في أسفلها.
- تُدرج الجداول في متن البحث وتُرقم ترقيما متسلسلاً وُتكتب أسماؤها في أعلاها، أما الملاحظات التوضيحية فُتكتب أسفل الجدول.
- تُذكر الهوامش آخر البحث، وتُذكر بعدها مباشرة قائمة المصادر والمراجع مرتبة ترتيباً هجائياً.
- يجب أن يحتوى البحث على ملخص وافٍ بحدود (١٥٠-٢٠٠) كلمة باللغة المكتوب فيها البحث، وملخص وافٍ أيضًا بحدود (١٥٠-٢٠٠) كلمة باللغة الإنجليزية، وُيكتب الملخصان في صفحتين مستقلتين.
- يُذكر مرة واحدة في البحث المصطلح العلمى باللغة العربية وبجانبه المصطلح باللغة الإنجليزية أو الفرنسية عند وروده أول مرة، وُيكتفى بعد ذلك بكتابته باللغة العربية.

فهرس المحتويات

فهرس المحتويات

مقدمة العدد

"أما قبل"

مع إطلالة عام ميلادي جديد، يصدر عدد جديد من «مجلة بحوث الإعلام الرقمي»، المجلة العلمية المحكمة المتخصصة في مجال بحوث ودراسات الإعلام الرقمي، والصادرة عن كلية الإعلام وتكنولوجيا الاتصال بجامعة السويس، فقد وصلنا إلى العدد السادس، ويأتي هذا العدد مع استقبال الدفعة الثالثة من المتقدمين للدراسة في الدراسات العليا في الكلية، تحديدًا في برنامج الماجستير: «الإعلام الرقمي». وكما تنوعت وتعددت بحوث ودراسات الأعداد السابقة وعروض الكتب المختلفة فإنه أيضًا تنوع البحوث والدراسات التي سيقدمها العدد الحالي، العدد السادس، من بحوث ودراسات عربية وأجنبية، سواء من مصر أو الدول العربية، وكذلك هناك عروض لبعض الكتب العلمية.

وعليه، يتصدر البحوث والدراسات المنشورة في هذا العدد بحث قيم بعنوان: «تأثير مستوى التعقيد البصري في الإنفوجرافيك الثابت على اكتساب المعرفة من الأخبار الإلكترونية: دراسة شبه تجريبية»، من إعداد د. عيده كمال رشيد أبو زيدان؛ الحاصلة على درجة الدكتوراه من قسم الإعلام بكلية الآداب جامعة المنيا.

ثم نقرأ بحثًا قيمًا آخر تحت عنوان: «العوامل المؤثرة في تفاعل المستخدمين مع المواقع الإخبارية الأجنبية الناطقة بالعربية: دراسة تطبيقية على الوسائط المتعددة»، من إعداد أ. إيناس يس محمود، وتحت إشراف: أ. د. سعيد الغريب النجار؛ الأستاذ بقسم الصحافة كلية الإعلام جامعة القاهرة، ضمن متطلبات الحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في الإعلام من قسم الصحافة بكلية الإعلام جامعة القاهرة. وبالمثل، بحث ثان مقدم في إطار استكمال درجة الدكتوراه في الإعلام شعبة الإذاعة والتليفزيون، بعنوان: «تأثير الدراما المدبلجة في المنصات الرقمية على الصورة الذهنية للقوميات لدى الجمهور: دراسة ميدانية»، من إعداد أ. مصطفى محمود محمد سكران؛ المدرس المساعد بقسم الإذاعة والتليفزيون بالمعهد العالي للإعلام وفنون الاتصال بالسادس من أكتوبر، وتحت إشراف: أ. د. محمود حسن إسماعيل؛ الأستاذ بقسم الإعلام وثقافة الأطفال كلية الدراسات العليا للطفولة جامعة عين شمس، وإشراف مشارك: د. هبة الله محمد فتحي؛ مدرس الإذاعة والتليفزيون قسم الإعلام كلية الآداب جامعة المنيا.

ومن جامعة جدة بالمملكة العربية السعودية يأتي بحثان؛ البحث الأول بعنوان: «استخدام تطبيقات الهاتف المحمول في التسويق السياحي وعلاقته باتجاهات الشباب السعودي نحوها»، من إعداد د. حسن فراج حسن عبدالعال؛ المدرس بقسم الإعلام كلية الدراسات العليا جامعة عين شمس، والأستاذ المساعد بكلية العلوم الاجتماعية والإعلام قسم الاتصال وتقنية الإعلام جامعة جدة، وطلاب الفريق

البحثي بكلية العلوم الاجتماعية والإعلام قسم الاتصال وتقنية الإعلام (بكالوريوس الإعلام الرقمي) بجامعة جدة؛ كلّ من: أ. سلطان حكمي، وأ. عادل سعيد، وأ. عبدالله سالم، وأ. نايف شرف، وأ. عبدالعزيز خالد، وأ. يحي حسين. وأما البحث الثاني فهو تحت عنوان: «استخدام تقنيات الواقع الافتراضي في المواقع الإلكترونية وعلاقتها بإدراك الشباب الجامعي السعودي بالمحتوى الأثري»، وهو أيضًا من إعداد د. حسن فراج حسن عبدالعال؛ المدرس بقسم الإعلام كلية الدراسات العليا جامعة عين شمس، والأستاذ المساعد بكلية العلوم الاجتماعية والإعلام قسم الاتصال وتقنية الإعلام جامعة جدة، وطلاب الفريق البحثي بكلية العلوم الاجتماعية والإعلام قسم الاتصال وتقنية الإعلام (بكالوريوس الإعلام الرقمي) بجامعة جدة؛ كلّ من: أ. أحمد عبد الرحيم، وأ. أسامة العمري، وأ. يزن الزهراني، وأ. نواف حسن، وأ. فيصل عبدالعزيز، وأ. حسن عبدالقادر.

ومن خلال نافذة علمية إبداعية تعرض لنا أ. شيماء أشرف طايل؛ الطالبة ببرنامج ماجستير الإعلام الرقمي، كلية الإعلام وتكنولوجيا الاتصال جامعة السويس، في إطار مقرر «صحافة العصر الرقمي»، كتاب: «التقارب الرقمي في غرف الأخبار المعاصرة: الابتكار الإعلامي، وتكييف المحتوى، والتحول الرقمي، والصحافة الإلكترونية»، تحت إشراف الأستاذ الدكتور حسين ربيع؛ الأستاذ المساعد بقسم الصحافة والنشر الرقمي بكلية الإعلام وتكنولوجيا الاتصال جامعة السويس. كما تعرض لنا أ. وسام عبدالعال رشاد؛ الطالبة ببرنامج ماجستير الإعلام الرقمي، كلية الإعلام وتكنولوجيا الاتصال جامعة السويس، في إطار مقرر «صحافة العصر الرقمي» كتاب: «الممارسات الناشئة في عصر الصحافة الرقمية الآلية: النماذج واللغات ورواية القصص»، تحت إشراف الأستاذ الدكتور حسين ربيع؛ الأستاذ المساعد بقسم الصحافة والنشر الرقمي بكلية الإعلام وتكنولوجيا الاتصال جامعة السويس.

ويأتي في ختام المجلة بحث قيم باللغة الإنجليزية، تحت عنوان:» السمات الشعبوية التي تعكسها شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في سياق الصراع في غزة: دراسة استقصائية بعد مرور عام على هجمات السابع من أكتوبر»، للأستاذة الدكتورة إيمان زهرة؛ الأستاذة المساعدة بقسم العلاقات العامة والإعلان كلية الإعلام جامعة القاهرة.

"Populist Traits Reflected through Social Media in the Context of Gaza Conflict: A Survey Study to Commemorate One Year of Attacks".

وأخيرًا، فقد سعدنا أن نتقدم لكم بعدد من البحوث والدراسات والتقارير العلمية القيمة في هذا العدد، وعلى وعد أن نقدم لكم كذلك عددًا آخر من تلك البحوث والدراسات في العدد القادم من المجلة، في القريب العاجل إن شاء الله.

والله من وراء القصد،،،

مدير التحرير

أ.م.د. السيد عبدالرحمن علي

بحوث ودراسات أجنبية

Populist Traits Reflected through Social Media in the Context of Gaza Conflict: A Survey Study to Commemorate One Year of Attacks

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Abstract:

Populism is increasingly being studied in an array of disciplines, especially with the omnipresence of social media, which facilitates an ideal environment for populist leaders to persuade the masses and suffuse their messages amongst them. This paper undertakes populism as a strategy, focusing on the two most eminent populists' presidents Donald J. Trump and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, aiming to analyze their populist personality traits and their point of views via their online presence in context of the Al Aqsa Flood through elites' opinion (academics, researchers and media professionals). Building on Propaganda Theory and Social Identity Theory and employing an Arabic and English questionnaire as a data collection tool, findings emphasized that the majority of academics, researchers and media professionals viewed both Trump and Erdogan acting as populist leaders via social media during the recent Gaza conflict with more focus on Trump's populist strategies. These results highlight differences in how Trump and Erdogan are perceived in their populist traits, with Trump seen as more media-savvy and confrontational, while Erdogan is viewed as more emotionally engaged and responsive to public sentiment. Trump and Erdogan's traits are being affected by their approach to propaganda, mostly reflected on social media amidst the Gaza conflict. The current findings pose an urgent call upon political leaders to work on a steady yet unified approach to boost their social media presence regarding fateful issues.

Keywords: Populism, Propaganda, Social Media, Personality Traits, Gaza.

السمات الشعبوية التي تعكسها شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في سياق الصراع في غزة: دراسة استقصائية بعد مرور عام على هجمات السابع من أكتوبر

المستخلص:

تعد الشـعبوية من فروع العلم التي يتم دراسـتها بشـكل متزايد في مجموعة من التخصـصـات، وخاصـة مع انتشـار شبكات التواصـل الاجتماعي، مما يسـهل بيئة مثالية للقادة الشـعبويين لإقناع الجماهير ونشر رسائلهم بينهم. تتناول هذه الدراسة الاستراتيجية الشعبوية التي تتعامل مع النهج الدعائي بشـكل أسـاسـي، مع التركيز على الرئيسـين الشـعبويين الأكثر شـهرة دونالد ترامب ورجب طيب أردوغان، بهدف تحليل سمات شخصيتهما الشعبوية ووجهات نظر كلاهما التي تنعكس عبر شـبكات التواصـل الاجتماعي في سـياق طوفان الأقصـى من خلال آراء النخبة (الأكاديميين والباحثين والإعلاميين). بناء على نظرية الدعاية ونظرية الهوية الاجتماعية واسـتخدام اسـتبيان باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية كأداة لجمع البيانات، أكدت النتائج أن غالبية الأكاديميين والباحثين والإعلاميين ينظرون إلى كل من ترامب وأردوغان كقائدين شـعبويين عبر شـبكات التواصـل الاجتماعي خلال الصـراع الأخير في غزة، مع التركيز بشـكل أكبر على اسـتراتيجيات ترامب الشـعبوية. وتبرز هذه النتائج اختلافات في كيفية تقييم ترامب وأردوغان من حيث سـماتهما الشـعبوية، إذ ينظر إلى ترامب على أنه أكثر دراية بالإعلام وأكثر ميلاً للمواجهة، بينما ينظر إلى أردوغان على أنه أكثر تفاعلاً علي مسـتوي العاطفة وأكثر اسـتجابة لمشـاعر الجمهور. وتتأثر سـمات ترامب وأردوغان بنهجهما في الدعاية، والذي ينعكس بشـكل رئيسـي على اسـتخدامهما لشـبكات التواصـل الاجتماعي في خضـم الصـراع في غزة. وتشـكل النتائج الحالية دعوة للقادة السياسيين للعمل على نهج ثابت وموحد لتعزيز حضـورهم على شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي فيما يتعلق بالقضايا المصيرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشعبوية – الدعاية – شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي – السمات الشخصية – غزة.

Introduction:

Populism is now a defining feature of modern political discourse, shaping power and influence across societies. Fundamentally, populism feeds off the dichotomization of "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite. In this binary framework, populist leaders often present themselves as "heroes" protecting the will and well-being of the people, while their opponents are portrayed as "villains" threatening valued social norms and stability. This duality is a strong rhetorical tool that helps populist actors build captivating stories touching the emotions and identities of their audiences (Aslanidis, 2016).

The advent of social media brings an entirely different dynamic in terms of the dissemination and receipt of populist messages directly reaching the citizens without traditional gatekeepers. Social media platforms, which include Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok, among others, have increasingly become the new battleground on which populist messages are amplified through tools for emotional, repetitive, and simplistic messages. It is possible to construct "us versus them" by celebrating in-groups and villainizing out-groups (Hameleers, 2022). Populist figures, especially in a politically sensitive region like Gaza, where social, cultural, and political tensions intermingle, use social media to bolster polarization and cement their position as people's protectors.

The current research is informed by two foundational theories-namely, Social Identity Theory and Propaganda Theory-in examining the strategies used by the populist actors in the context of Gaza while constructing their heroic-versus-villainous narratives. Social Identity Theory explains how individuals derive their self-concepts from their affiliations with social groups, fostering loyalty to the in-group and antagonism towards the out-group (Bobba and Roncarolo 2016). This theory facilitates understanding of how populist leaders in the context of Gaza use symbolic language, shared narratives, and collective identity to mobilize their supporters. Meanwhile, Propaganda Theory sheds light on the use of manipulative messaging, emotional appeals, and polarized communication to influence public perception (Koppang, 2009). Through these theories, this study has analyzed the process by which populist leaders regarding Gaza have used social media as a platform for manipulating the tide of public opinion to consolidate power and polarize societies.

By integrating Social Identity Theory and Propaganda Theory, this research provides a wide framework through which one can analyze how populist traits namely Trump and Erdogan's traits regarding Gaza have been revealed, constructed and disseminated within the Gaza context. The current research will go into great detail on the populist traits reflected in the social media content with the intention of offering new insights that add to the broader understanding of populist leaders' strategies amidst the turmoil in Gaza.

Populism: Definition and Related Constructs

Definition

The 19th century peasant uprising by the Russian Narodniki (narod = people) had been called the first 'populist' movement but giving the idea its name is usually attributed to the supporters of the People's Party. Established in the United States in 1893, its aim was to return political power to the people, the common man, through direct legislation in referenda and popular initiatives. The People's Party's political program indicated that, ideologically, the origin of populism has a liberal and socialist undertone, different from the right-wing nationalistic rhetoric that is being associated with it currently (Bos & Brants, 2014; Schapkow & Jacob, 2022).

Nowadays, theorists have defined populism as being an ideology, a political strategy or a discourse. Regarding ideas, some see populism as an ideology that distinguishes between 'the people's, on the one hand, and the established political power structure, on the other. In this view, populism is an antiestablishment and anti-political vision, where the elite is said to ignore the anxieties of the people (Bos and Brants, 2014). Aslanidis (2016) raised concerns regarding the justification of assigning populism's genius to ideology. In place of ideology, and in light of developments in the quantitative application of populism definition, Aslanidis (2016) suggested that populism is better conceptualized as a discourse. Applying discourse analysis to populism can stimulate empirical work, opening avenues for collaboration with neighboring literatures within a broad interdisciplinary approach. Populism as a discourse is an "appeal to the people" characterized by a belligerent ethos and plain language that provide a sense of closeness

between leaders and their politically excluded publics (Block and Negrine, 2017).

Nevertheless, *populism is best defined as a political strategy*. Weyland (2001) stated that political strategies are characterized by the power capability that types of rulers use to sustain themselves politically. Under populism the ruler is an individual, a personalistic leader, not a group or organization and rests on the power capability of numbers. Populism emerges when personalistic leaders base their rule on massive yet mostly un-institutionalized support from large numbers of people. Because the central rationale of populism lies in the quest for political power, the flexibility and opportunism of populist leaders is evident. Thus, researchers cannot think of populism as a stand-alone ideology but a political strategy, which creates and nurtures radically conflicting identities for political gain (Stankov, 2021).

Media & Social Media Populism

A large body of literature has claimed that the media play an important role in the global rise of populism. Amidst the mediatization of politics, media populism is argued to be a highly salient phenomenon across the globe (Hameleers et al., 2017), therefore Populism has been widely investigated in interdisciplinary studies in relation to various mainstream media and recently in relation to social media.

One of the four major approaches related to studying populism as suggested by Stankov (2021) was *the political performance approach,* which defines populism *as a political communication style*. Populists employ certain performance strategies. This communication style is independent of the ideology – the focus is on how the message is delivered rather than on its underlying content.

Like all political actors, populist political actors use, engage with, and are covered by the media. Populists use multiple channels of political communication to transmit their messages and connect with their publics. Populism and populist actors feed off media controversy: Their media tactics may include: playing "the underdog," using "abrasive speech," earning media spaces by a "bullying" style against the establishment, and staging "newsworthy" political events (Block and Negrine 2017). Multiple studies claim that the success of populism in the past two decades has to do

with the media, who pay more and more attention to populists (Bos and Brants 2014).

Populist messages utilize highly emotional, slogan-based, tabloid style language, exaggerations, verbal radicalism, straightforwardness, and are characterized by hostility to the established order and identification with the common people, whose language they employ to avoid the elitist complex language of representative politics. Moreover, Bos and Brants (2014) emphasized the difficulty to distinguish *between political populism intended for the media and populism by the media* i.e. whether the media echo populism intended by politicians or a media interpretation of it. Researchers refer to the latter as 'media populism.

In recent years the relationship between populism and social media has been explored as an innovative interdisciplinary research field. Given the suitability of social media for populists one might expect there to be a fair number of studies examining how they use social media. Jacobs & Spierings (2019) asserted that populists' convictions push them to use social media. Levy & Razin (2022) suggest that the rise in populism in the world has often been connected with the rise of social media.

The assumption asserts that citizens' opinions can be manipulated and that such manipulation is possible in part because they are unaware of the correlation between the sources of information, thanks to social media.

Budd and Small (2022) depicted the relationship between populism and social media, as political communication scholars applied this approach to study the relationship between populism and digital media.

Digital technologies, especially social media, allow populist leaders and parties to circumvent traditional media channels to engage directly with supporters. The ability to bypass traditional media gatekeepers is considered important for the spread of populist discourse, which tends to transgress the boundaries of normative political behavior. Social media is also assumed to facilitate two-way communication between populist leaders and supporters. This bidirectionality is considered to be important for populist leaders. Digital technologies have been understood as helping populists succeed at the ballot box by constructing networks of virality. The viral nature of social media has been theorized as allowing populists to reach a secondary audience of interest-bound and like-minded peer networks by circulating

messages that users like, comment on, promote, and share within their own personal networks.

As an example, Donald Trump, unquestionably the most spectacular and effective X politician yet seen, was one aspiring political leader who quickly understood how to harness the web's populist potential. Trump demonstrated that the World Wide Web is a demagogue's dream, offering real-time communication, ideal for emotional messaging and perfect for the weaponization of rage. Trump's use of social media to speak directly with ordinary voters, bypassing even his own advisers and officials, short-circuited mainstream politics (Kenny, 2022).

Populist Traits and Affiliated Public Relations Characteristics

Populist style has deep roots associated with identity and culture, a specific style of rhetoric, and savvy use of various communication channels (that mainly involves the media but not exclusively the media) through which populists connect with the political feelings, aspirations, and needs of those who feel excluded by conventional center-ground politics (Block and Negrine, 2017).

Populist leaders have features in common that clearly contribute to their popularity and political appeal. In most cases they are charismatic figures and possess a great deal of media savvy. Furthermore, populist leaders do not represent the people. Rather, they consider themselves and succeed in being considered an integral part of the people. This adds to their intense media visibility. Populist leaders constantly demonstrate their closeness to common people and stimulate popular identification with their leadership.

They seek frequent interactive contacts with the masses, act in ways that embody and live out the dreams of the common man and instill in their followers a sense of mission to transform the status quo and transcend the confines of the established institutional framework. Thus, populist leaders draw on the potency of charisma to maintain their support (Huber and Schimpf, 2016).

Personal Charisma and media savvy thus has played a significant part in the origins and subsequent construction of populist movements. Populist leaders are all strong personalities that perfectly fit the news media's demand for spectacular and emotional treatment for social reality. In

general, the public relations and communication strategies of populist leaders include (Mazzoleni, 2008):

• Playing the role of the underdog.
• Use of professional expertise.
• Rallies
• Free Media Publicity
• Staging Events
• Tactical Attacks on the media

Famous Populist Leaders depicted in communication Literature

Although there are several political leaders who are populists however, Erdogan and Trump are the most prominent examples of populist leaders depicted in the communication literature. This is proved and tested in a plethora of studies.

For instance, Nai et al., (2019) compared Trump's personality with 103 other candidates which included 21 other populists, who ran in elections worldwide from June 2016 to October 2017. The data was gathered through experts in electoral politics, political communication, electoral behavior, or similar disciplines. Ratings covered key elections in nine Countries. Moreover, 60 national and international scholars provided ratings for Donald Trump's personality. Trump's maximal profile personality traits and four communication elements demonstrates that he is an outlier even among other populists. Also, scholars from different domains agree that the common communication style and adopted narratives by populist leaders encompass agitation, extravagant acts, exaggeration, and provocations, as well as strategically depending on commonsense arguments, stereotyping, and fearmongering. Anti-plural populists resort to conflict, uncooperative, and aggressive behaviors and actions in their international relations that consequently un-stabilize liberal international order, this is exemplified in Trump's decisions from 2017 to 2021 during his time in office, such as revoking the nuclear deal with Iran putting relations with U.S allies in the Middle East at stake and adopting economic nationalism (Thiers & Wehner, 2022).

Furthermore, another reason that Donald Trump is regarded as a populist leader, is because of his political style projects, as he presents himself as an

entrepreneur, an outsider fighting for the public against the corrupt establishment. He tends to exaggerate shortcomings in society as crisis, using media to instill the idea that through his leadership crisis were brought under control. The Poynter Institute in 2019 clarified that Trump's statements as a president are 50% false, 35% half true or mostly false, 10% mostly true and only 5% are true. Also, Trump's use of demeaning language and bad manners, whether referring to some politicians as 'nasty', calling his opponents rats, corrupt and treasonable, or labelling the elites in Washington "the swamp" aids in highlighting him as an authentic anti-establishment leader. Minorites can be framed as the culprit and a threat to the majority, blamed for political and societal shortcomings. This is used by Trump as he frames immigration through the U.S-Mexico border and Middle Eastern Muslims as to cater to his supporters fears and emotions (Kristiansen, 2020).

Herkman (2022) asserted that Trump's populist campaigns appealed to voters in those blue-collar states when he promised to "make America great again" by emphasizing national industry and business, increasing both border and immigration control, invoking national security and reducing state spending on social security, thus generating media publicity with his populist messages on X. Trump became a global media phenomenon, sparking an unprecedented debate on populism.

In a similar vein, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is also a recognized populist. For instance, Çay & Kalkamanova's (2023) computer-based content analysis of Erdoğan's election campaign speeches between 2004 and 2018 to identify his rhetorical style, revealed that people-centrist narratives entail majority of his rhetoric (96.6% in 2004 to at least 86.5% in 2014). It is evident that Erdogan uses heavy populist narratives, and each element of populistic rhetoric is intensified in accordance of the political events at hand. Populism in Turkey qualifies as an archetype case study of populism. This is epitomized by the term of "Erdoğanization" or Turkification', which is used by citizens from different countries to criticize their governments. Erdoğan's populism is evident in his use of anti-elite narratives, antagonizing Westernized elites, and positioning himself as the voice of the common public (Taş, 2020). Additionally, Elçi (2019) further emphasizes that Erdogan is a radical populist, and that is validated through

a quantitative content analysis of parliamentary group speeches of politicians between the period of 2011 and 2019.

Background on the Israel-Palestine Conflict and October 7th

The presence of the Israeli military in the West Bank and the blockade around Gaza have made miserable conditions for most Palestinians. The blockade, which was imposed by Israel in reaction to the regime of Hamas in Gaza, brought with it an incapacitating economic situation that aggravated the suffering of the civilian population. Unemployment rates are high in Gaza, over two million people inhabit this small piece of land, which is also resource-scarce, and basic needs like clean water and electricity are very hard to come by (Pappé, 2022).

Israeli settlements continue to be built on the West Bank, often in violation of international law, a constant source of conflict, and steadily reduced the amount of land available for any eventual sovereign Palestine (Tessler, 2009). The Israeli government regards these settlements as essential to security and an expression of Jewish rights to the land, while for Palestinians they are illegal encroachments on their land. The dominating feature of the Israeli national consciousness in one way or another is the idea of security concern, with Israel experiencing recurrent attacks by militant groups. Israeli policy and public opinion have been determined, over and over again, through the fear of terror coming from forces like Hamas and the Islamic Jihad movement. While these actions are framed as self-defense, the result has been civilian casualties and significant suffering on both sides, according to Aronson (2024). Any attempts to decide on the fate of the city were vigorously opposed (Vandanam, 2010). Even when the leaders of both sides have appeared willing to negotiate, a mix of political intransigence, internal divisions, and external pressure has prevented any lasting agreement from being reached. The greater part of Israeli society is divided on ways to handle the conflict, torn between voices calling for hardline policies and those calling for negotiations and compromise. It is likely that the Israeli-Palestine conflict will extend well into the future until such time as there is a complete and fair agreement between the parties (Caplan, 2019; Atique, 2024).

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, a huge military invasion and a grave intensification of the Israeli–Palestinian

conflict. Operation Al-Aqsa Flood not only revolutionized military strategies in the area but also escalated humanitarian concerns and provoked a wide range of international political debates (Berti, 2023; Cohen & Rahman, 2023). The October 2023 attack was both a reaction to long-standing grievances and a strategic decision by Hamas to alter the strategic equation in the region. Previously, such escalations have been interpreted as reactions to perceived provocations, particularly in contested areas such as Jerusalem (BBC News, 2023). The name Al-Aqsa Flood captures the religious and nationalist motivations behind the operation and weaves it into the broader struggle for the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Palestinian identity.

Operation Al-Aqsa Flood transformed asymmetrical warfare, overturning conventional military strategies. The simultaneous, high-volume assaults employed by Hamas disoriented Israeli military readiness and exposed its security apparatus to vulnerabilities (The Guardian, 2023). As Berti (2023) articulates, the operation demonstrated evolving tactics of non-state actors in a world where asymmetric warfare more and more confronts traditional defense postures. Cohen and Rahman (2023) also suggest that the tactical shocks of the operation necessitate rethinking classic security arrangements and intelligence protocols in the region.

In addition to its military consequences, the operation also released a devastating humanitarian crisis, particularly in Gaza. The escalation exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities, including food, medical, and shelter deficiencies. Mass displacement and civilian casualties have been escalated, with Al Jazeera (2023) reporting that efforts to deliver humanitarian aid have been significantly hindered. The International Crisis Group (2023) highlights the need for international humanitarian responses to be coordinated, with an emphasis on the long-term consequences for affected populations.

The framing of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood in global media has played a crucial role in shaping public opinion. Smith (2023) examines how different political groups and media outlets have framed the event, with some labeling it as an act of terror and others as an act of resistance. BBC News (2023) and The Guardian (2023) have covered the event extensively, documenting the short-term and long-term effects. The controversial media debate reflects the broader ideological lines of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The international response to the operation has been highly polarized. Whereas many Western governments condemned the actions of Hamas and expressed concern over regional stability (The New York Times, 2023), other regional actors pointed to the broader context of occupation policies and Palestinian complaints (Turner & Weiss, 2023). According to The Guardian (2023), the raid has redefined diplomatic action and reinforced calls for resuming negotiations. These differing responses reflect the complex interplay of strategic, ideological, and humanitarian variables in global debates about the war.

From a political perspective, Operation Al-Aqsa Flood has set arguments on the issues of both short-term security policy and extended conflict resolution policy. The operation, analysts observe, has defied existing deterrence models and demands innovative diplomatic options beyond any military response (The Guardian, 2023). As observed by Al Jazeera (2023), unless and until the drivers of conflict political concerns and humanitarian factors—are addressed, the cycle of violence will never end, having severe implications on regional stability.

Literature review

The current literature review depicts the most related constructs to the current study. Although a massive body of literature and thousands of political communication studies all over the world scrutinized populism, the study's literature review presents the ideology and rhetoric of populism, characteristics of populists, middle eastern populism, social media and populist narratives, and populist campaigns. A thematic overview follows per sub-topic.

<u>Populism as an ideology or a rhetoric</u>

Literature revealed that the term "Populism" emerged in the nineteenth-century (Kaltwasser et al. 2017). Nevertheless, populism does not have a unified definition as scholars have varying views about categorizing and defining populism to date.

However, populism is viewed according to several research as a thin-centered ideology that needs to be paired with other ideologies such as neo-liberalism or socialism, as it lacks theoretical foundation, and it does not provide practical guidelines or action plans to be regarded as an ideology. One widely used definition of populism is "it is a thin-centered ideology that

considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous but adversary groups, 'the pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the (general will) of the people" (Akkerman et al., 2014).

Contrarily, on the other side of the spectrum, research also classified populism as a rhetoric that utilizes various form of appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) to persuade the masses. It can be adopted by adherents of different political ideologies. Populists use their persuasive communication to appeal to the public, make promises of obliterating corruption and working with the goal of complying with the will of the masses, mostly these promises are left unfulfilled once the politician is in power (Norris, 2020).

Characterizing Populists

Populists, whether a person, political party, or a social movement has one common denominator, that is: all populists adopt political style, traits, rhetoric, and behaviors (Aslanidis 2016; Gagnon et al., 2018).

These factors are analyzed by various scholars, such as Nai and Martínez (2019) who put forth the idea that a populist's personality is encapsulated in the following three notions: firstly, the drunken dinner guest, this notion points out that populist's resort to aggressive and offensive communication styles. Secondly, Agent provocateur notion where attention seeking in indented through unethical rhetoric. Thirdly, charismatic leaders build on the fact that emotional, bold, and enthusiastic communication style helps populist leaders to effectively persuade the public. Charismatic leadership is a vital part of populist leadership as it enables influence in a multidimensional manner (Donath, 2022).

Populists use plain jargon free, sentimental, scapegoat, or a 'tabloid style' language to remove any barriers between them and the people and they prefer the use of social media such as Facebook and X because these platforms allow them to foster a direct dynamic relationship with the people as they present themselves as outsiders and distinct from the elites. Additionally, they plant polarization and employ aggressive speech to push their anti-elite narrative. (Rooduijn 2013 & Stanyer et al., 2016).

Moreover, once these leaders are in power, they misuse their power for personal gains and practice mass clientelism. They also discredit others by

employing moral arguments, yet they are able to influence the masses and maintain power (Olivas, 2020).

Middle Eastern populism

When tracing the rise of populism in the Middel East, Dorraj (2017) states that populism suffused in the Middle East during the cold war with the rise of national liberation movements. Leaders of the region employed corporatism strategies during their governance to achieve social reform.

Fewer studies analyze populism in North Africa and the Middle East as it is paired with other factors such as nationalism, religion, and authoritarian regimes that make it difficult to dissect through these layers and focus on populism alone (Wajner et al., 2023). Nonetheless, populism has been tangible in the region, but it has become more prominent post the Arab spring. Studies asserted that the emergence of populism in the Middle East is attributed to elite lead modernization, local problems rooted in globalization, religion, ethno-national as well as border disputes. Populism in semi- democratic countries is notably exemplified by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Benjamin Netanyahu. Such leaders rely on ethic and religious lenses to foster homogeneity, as it is especially true in the case of the Palestine-Israel conflict. According to an analysis done by Olivas & Burton (2024) of Netanyahu's and Mahmoud Abbas's speeches at the UNGA opening sessions (from 2010 and 2019), Netanyahu's had a more prominent populist discourse. While both employed populists' rhetoric Abbas relatively used anti-populist language

With the discrete political landscape of the MENA region, which is reflected in its varying political regimes and geopolitical complexities, populism faces unique challenge from the west or other regions. Additionally internal unrest and external western influences are key factors that shape the political scene. Hence, populism also deals with human security, human rights and development issues (Hadžić, 2024).

The Role of social media in Inconvenient Populist Narratives

Social media has fundamentally changed the dynamics of how political narratives are created and spread, providing a primary conduit for populist communication. Literature by Ernst et al. (2017); Zahra, (2018a); and Zahra, (2018b) show how social media platforms, especially X, enabled populist leaders to bypass traditional media and reach their audience directly.

A platform like X creates a distinctive communicative environment through immediacy, brevity, and algorithmic amplification, that feeds into the proliferation of populist rhetoric. Thematic elements, such as an emphasis on the people, anti-elitism, the exclusion of out-group members, and calls for sovereignty, are tangible in the audio-visual content on social media (Lorenzetti, 2020). In fact, a mix of classic populist discourse with provided tools of social media (hashtag, mentions, and other multimedia elements) may be considered to represent an instrumental use of the same in political discourses. Adriani (2019) underlines the contradictory role played by social media between promoting global conversations and the strengthening of nationalism and populism. Literature shows that emotionally driven content, spreading like wildfire on social media platforms, can be a strong driver for populist and nationalist movements. High-emotional-value narratives with framing tend to dominate public discourse in the case of Gaza. Disintermediation via social media removes many of the traditional barriers to access, leaving an open field in which politicians and activists can shape the public perception and opinion directly. Two-step flow theory in communication describes the procedure that polarized people in special demographic groups and pass on stories that mold political views down to social networks. The study conducted by Alonso-Muñoz and Casero-Ripollés (2020) explored framing used by populist communication on X with regards to Eurosceptic discourse in the 2019 electoral campaigns of the European Parliament. The findings indicated that populists mostly rely on exclusionary frames, with a problem mostly described as a question of lost sovereignty, considering an "us versus them" approach.

Furthermore, "Populism 2.0" provides evidence of how digital platforms in democracies create the ability for populist leaders to bypass traditional media, thus producing online echo chambers that amplify their messages (Rohgalf, 2017). A study by Mangerotti et al. (2021) discussed X usage during the 2018 presidential campaign of Jair Bolsonaro, focusing attention on how populist rhetoric was functioning with regards to audience mobilization. The main themes that Bolsonaro's campaign revolved around were those of blaming elites, creating anxieties within society, and representing the people's struggle. The analysis revealed that populist tweets

exhibit significantly higher engagement rates than non-populist tweets, indicating that messages filled with emotions and divisions are more able to grab the attention of an audience. Ernst et al. (2022) analyzed the fragmentation of populist discourse on social media in six Western democracies. This body of work demonstrates that populist messages are subject to fragmentation: the different facets of populist ideology are only visible when different aspects are taken into consideration across Facebook and X. This fragmentation, as well as the fact that Diaspora uses different communicative strategies across platforms, makes populist messages more accessible yet more difficult to resist.

   The combination of these findings displays the way in which social media enables and shapes populist discourse by affording unmediated engagement, amplifying sensational content, and allowing the distribution of fragmented yet consequential patterns of communication. In each respect, this serves to detail specifically the means by which social media co-constructs heroes and villains shape public conversation.

Populist Campaign Strategies and Communication

   The new strategic instruments and rhetorical practices adopted in populist campaigns have consistently outperformed their political competitors through hijacking several social media for message dissemination in reaching out to their constituents. From these, some major themes emerge that are related to emotional resonance, ideological polarization, and personal branding of politicians. Populist actors build and harness all these platforms to deploy the tools they use in crafting a persuasive argument in politics, especially at election times.

   Bobba and Roncarolo (2018) compare the different Facebook behaviors of the top Italian political leaders in the 2018 Italian general elections. Findings underlined that populist leaders have proved to be much more prolific than their non-populist colleagues - both in the quantity of posts published and in the related engagement gained.

   González-Aguilar, Segado-Boj, and Makhortykh (2023) have shed light on populist parties on TikTok, giving particular attention to humor, entertainment, and naming of enemies. In fact, this research finds that humorous content secures a much higher number of engagements, while hate speech, has a minor influence on the engagement rates. This might be

evidence of strategic use in populist campaigns through personalization and entertainment in order to adapt messages to the nature of the platform. Moreover, although populists do not heavily rely on mainstream media as they do on social media platforms yet, traditional media coverage aids in promoting populist narratives regardless of that being intentional or unintentional (Wettstein et al., 2018). In an extension of this point of view Bobba et al. (2024) provides empirical evidence on how certain styles journalism amplifies populist messages, through the use of sensational, divisionary, and emotive narratives and messaging.

The literature review provided guidelines to the current study in light of Gaza context. The same tools are adopted via social media: populist leaders' resort to emotional appeal with the aim of mesmerizing their audience and reaffirming their discourses.

Each study in its own way, contributes with insight into the variety of methods populist leaders apply for political goals: emotionally charged language on X, a dose of humor and entertainment on TikTok, using distinctive features to amuse audience while shaping political discourses. These are important tactics in context of Gaza for creating heroes versus villains within populist rhetoric, thus influencing public perception with the aim to mobilize support.

Theoretical Framework

This research bases its arguments on foundational grounds utilizing Social Identity Theory and Propaganda Theory in order to analyze how populist leaders' traits were reflected through social media within the context of the latest turmoil. The theoretical frameworks further encompass the manner by which populists create their personas as "heroes" and other opponents as "villains." Using these frameworks, the study tries to gather elite opinions and investigate the populist traits and specific characteristics of widely renowned populist leaders Trump and Erdogan as reflected on social media, from the perspectives of academics and professional communicators before the Truce was agreed upon.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory was introduced in the 1970s and 1980s by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in order to conceptualize the association between

individuals and their social group affiliations. Individuals, according to Tajfel and Turner (1986), derive a big part of their self-concept from their identification with certain social groups. It not only modifies their self-esteem but also intergroup behaviors. This theory explains how group categorization creates in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, providing a psychological basis for collective action. Social Identity Theory has developed into its role in political mobilization, making it a useful resource to analyze how populist movements use "us versus them" narratives to build in-group solidarity and develop a shared identity.

Key Tactics in Social Identity Theory

In-Group Favoritism and Out-Group Antagonism: Political leaders using Social Identity Theory tend to emphasize the virtues, morality, and superiority of the in-group while depicting the out-group as a threat to the group's values or survival. This is to make in-group members more loyal and united (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Social Comparison for Positive Distinctiveness: To increase self-esteem and group pride, leaders use social comparisons to depict the in-group as morally, culturally, or politically superior to the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Symbolic Identification: Leaders employ language, symbols, narratives, and cultural markers that are highly meaningful to the in-group, thus strengthening shared values and loyalty. This identification increases cohesion and drives collective action (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Application in Research

Social Identity Theory frames this research, analyzing how populist figures use social media to shape the collective identity of their in-group in Gaza. The survey reflects elite's opinions on posts on social media and will identify how in-group and out-group rhetoric, symbols, and narratives have been constructed through those networks. Moreover, the theory pinpoints people's alignments with the in-group identity and their attitudes towards the out-group to discuss the psychological consequence of those strategies.

Propaganda Theory

Propaganda Theory examines strategic and manipulative message effects on public opinion and action. The theory was developed in the early 20th

century, and the most significant contributors to the theory were scholars such as Harold Lasswell and Edward Bernays. Lasswell's seminal work in 1927 focused on how propaganda techniques could shape attitudes and mobilize public opinion, especially during wartime. Later, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman developed this model in their renowned book "Manufacturing Consent", in which they introduced the "propaganda model" in 1988. Their work concentrated on how governments and corporations control media stories. In the present digital era, Propaganda Theory is even more valid because it is possible to send messages directly, emotionally, and repetitively through social networking sites.

Key Tactics in Propaganda Theory

Emotional Appeal: Leaders use emotionally charged content—such as fear, anger, or patriotism to engage audiences and evoke strong reactions. This tactic is particularly effective in creating lasting impressions and shaping public opinion (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Repetition and Simplification: Reiterating key messages in simplified forms ensures that the audience internalizes and retains the intended narratives. This tactic leverages the human tendency to process repeated information more favorably (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Polarization through "Us versus Them" Rhetoric: The framing of issues by populist leaders is usually in binary terms, whereby they present themselves as the "heroes" or saviors of the people and their opponents as the "villains" or threats. This sharp division fosters loyalty among supporters and antagonism towards perceived adversaries (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Application in Research

This research uses Propaganda Theory to explain how populist leaders Trump and Erdogan manipulate the public's perception through the use of social media. More specifically, emotionally appealing language, pattern repetition in the messaging process, and polarizing rhetoric are detected in the content of social media posts. Survey is utilized to measure the change that propaganda messages foster on the opinions of elites towards allies and adversaries.

The current research seeks to investigate an in-depth analysis of the social media strategies that populist figures used pertaining to the Gaza attacks by

integrating Social Identity Theory and Propaganda Theory. On one hand, Social Identity Theory explains the formation and mobilization of group identity; on the other, Propaganda Theory details the mechanisms of emotional manipulation and polarization. These two theories combined highlight the complex interplay of psychological and communicative tactics which underpin the construction of heroes and villains in populist narratives.

Methodology
Problem Statement

The current study aims to investigate the populist traits and specific characteristics of widely renowned populist leaders Trump and Erdogan as reflected on social media from the perspectives of academics and media professionals commemorating one year of attacks on Gaza post Al AQSA flood. This research follows the approach that views populism as a political strategy. Dealing with populism as a strategy relates to political leaders and renders simplicity to the approach of depicting populist characteristics (Scanlan, 2022). Consequently, this study will analyze the sample's opinions regarding populist traits of Donald Trump and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and each leader's stance on the Palestine-Israel conflict targeting to highlight the renowned leaders' rhetoric on the issue.

Objectives

The current research aims to:

- Detect how populist leaders Trump and Erdogan employ language, symbols, narratives, and cultural markers that are highly meaningful in the context of the Gaza conflict commemorating one year of attacks.
- Detect how populist leaders **Trump and Erdoğan** use emotionally charged propaganda content with fear, anger, or patriotism—to engage audiences and evoke strong reactions in the context of the Gaza conflict commemorating one year of attacks.
- Detect the differences between the elite sample demographics (academics versus media professionals) regarding opinions of populist leaders Trump and Erdoğan's traits as reflected through social media.

Hypotheses

Hypotheses examined in this research are derived from social identity theory (H1) and propaganda theory (H2) and demographics (H3)

H_1:**There is a relationship between the opinion of the elite towards symbolic and simplistic rhetoric in populist leadership reflected through social media, and populist traits of Trump and Erdogan in the context of Gaza conflict.**

Logic of H1 derived from the social identity theory: Trump and Erdoğan employ language, symbols, narratives, and cultural markers that are highly meaningful to the in-group, thus strengthening shared values and loyalty. This identification increases cohesion and drives collective action.

H2: There is a relationship between the opinion of the elite regarding propaganda use of populist leaders reflected through social media, and populist traits of Trump and Erdogan in the context of Gaza conflict.

Logic of H2 derived from the propaganda theory: Trump and Erdoğan use emotionally charged content with fear, anger, or patriotism—to engage audiences and evoke strong reactions**.**

H3: There is a relationship between sample demographics and elite opinion regarding populist traits of Trump and Erdogan reflected through social media in the context of Gaza conflict.

Research Method and Tool

The current study utilized the survey research method via a questionnaire to examine the elite's opinions of President Trump and Erdogan's populist traits reflected through their social media presence (whether through their personal accounts or any other presence) in the context of Gaza Conflict after one year of attacks.

Multiple tools were used in studying the populist traits' phenomena, either content analysis to depict on the populist strategies and personality traits reflected through social media; or questionnaires tackling attitudes and opinions of voters, social media users or general public in different contexts.

The current research tends to rely on the questionnaire due to the difficulty to analyze Erdogan's personal accounts and general social media presence due to the language barrier.

Steps pertaining to questionnaire design were as follows:
• The researcher resided to populist research that applied the questionnaire to measure attitude and opinions of different samples (Spruyt et al., 2016;

Akkerman et al., 2014; Schultz el al., 2020; Norris, 2020; Thiers& Wehner, 2022).

- Upon designing the questionnaire and seeking assistance of arbitrators, they suggested translating the questionnaire into Arabic to ensure increasing the response rate and using elites as the designated sample.
- Two versions in Arabic and English were disseminated - after putting them on one google form – onto different social media platforms and specialized survey platforms as survey circle.
- The questionnaire was uploaded onto the sites from November 2024 until January 2025.
- *The reliability test results were as follows:*

Table (1): Reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha

Indicator	Cronbach's Alpha	Interclass Correlation
Trump and Erdogan's Stance on Gaza	0.897	0.604
Perceived Stances of Trump and Erdogan on the Gaza Conflict	0.936	0.636

The internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) reflects the reliability of the scale, as it indicates the percentage of total variance shared among all the sentences that make up this scale, which is assumed to measure the intended construct. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient suggests that the reliability of the questions is good for the constructed index, as the value exceeds 0.5. Additionally, the average correlation value between the questions indicates the validity of the questionnaire.

Sample Size and Sampling procedures

The current research relied on an available sample of 105 respondents. According to statisticians, arbitrators and past research, the researcher chose to rely on a sample of elites to fully understand the concepts examined. The sample incorporated academics and researchers from different specializations and media professionals, Egyptians and Arabs.

Demographics Analysis of the sample is as follows:

This section provides an overview of the participants' background, including their age, nationality, and occupation. The data is analyzed using frequency distributions and percentage analysis to identify key demographic trends among the participants.

➢ **Age Group**

Table (2): Frequency distribution of participants according to their age group (n=105)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18 to 35	39	37.1%
36 to 45	39	37.1%
46 to 55	15	14.3%
≥ 58	12	11.4%
Total	105	100.0%

The following figure illustrates that the majority of participants fall within the 18 to 45 age range with equal representation from 18 to 35 and from 36 to 45 age groups, 14.3% of the participants are between 46 and 55 years, while the smallest proportion of 11.4% is found in the oldest age category. This distribution suggests that the sample is relatively young, with fewer participants aged 46 and above.
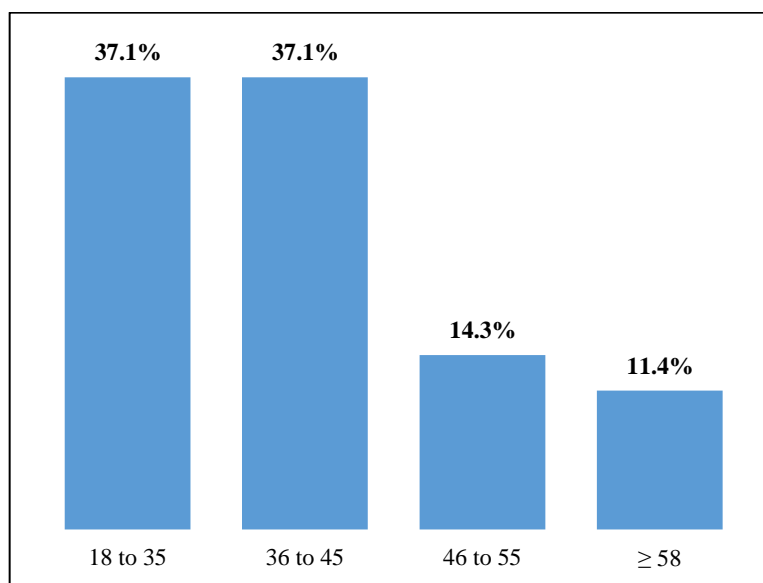

Figure (1): Distribution of participants according to their age group

➢ **Nationality**

Table (3): Frequency distribution of participants according to their nationality (n=105)

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
Arab	3	2.9
Egyptian	102	97.1
Total	105	100.0%

The following figure indicates that the vast majority of participants with 97.1% are Egyptians, while only a small fraction with 2.9% are from other Arab nationalities. This suggests that the sample is predominantly composed of Egyptians, with minimal representation from non-Egyptian Arab participants.
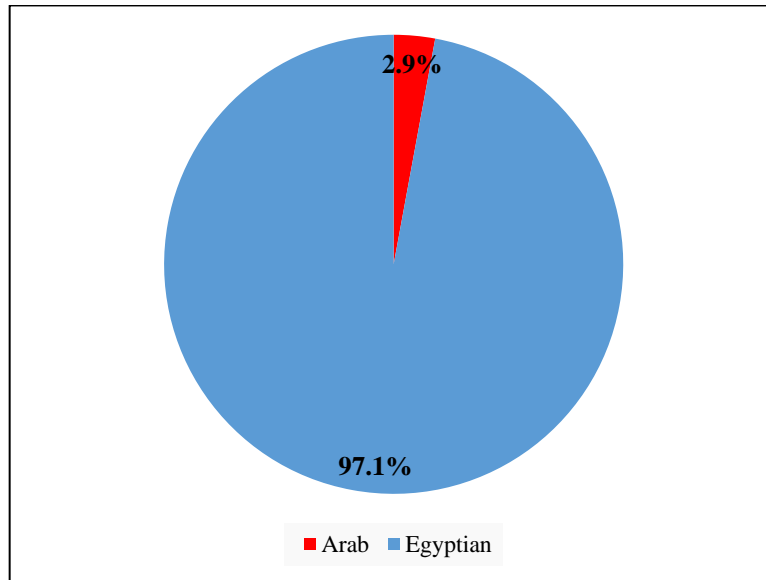

Figure (2): Distribution of participants according to their nationality

➢ Occupation

Table (4): Frequency distribution of participants according to their occupation (n=105)

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Academic/Researcher	75	71.4%
Media Professional	9	8.6%
Both	21	20.0%
Total	105	100.0%

The following figure reveals that the majority are academics or researchers, a smaller proportion with 8.6% consists of media professionals, while 20% of participants are engaged in both academic/research and media-related roles. This distribution suggests that the sample is primarily composed of individuals involved in academia, with a smaller yet notable presence of media professionals.
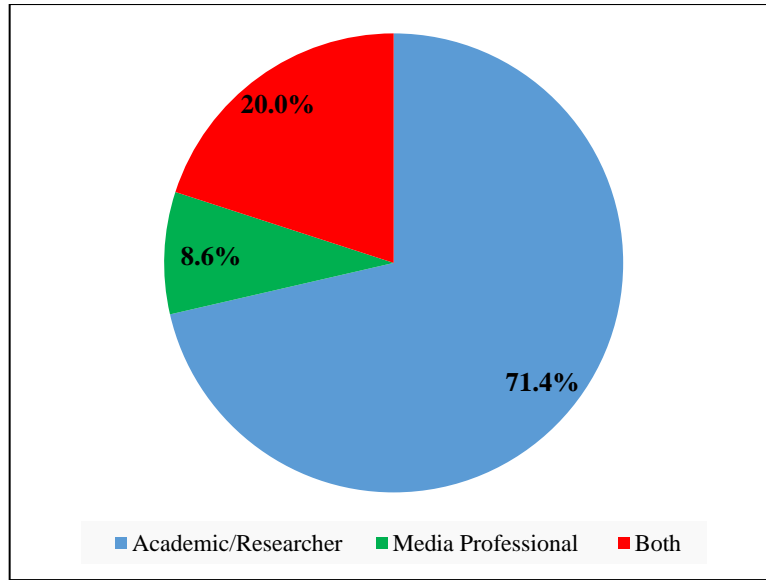
Figure (3): Distribution of participants according to their occupation

Survey Analysis

This part encompasses the findings that participants largely recognize Trump and Erdoğan as populist figures, with varying opinions on their use of emotional appeals, propaganda, and military rhetoric.

➢ Awareness of Gaza Escalations Post-October 7, 2023

Table (5): Frequency distribution of participants according to their awareness of Gaza escalations after 7th of October 2023 (n=105)

Awareness of Gaza Escalations Post-October 7, 2023	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	102	97.1%
No	3	2.9%
Total	105	100.0%

The following figure indicates that an overwhelming majority of participants with 97.1% are aware of the escalations in Gaza following October 7, 2023, while only a small fraction with 2.9% reported a lack of awareness.
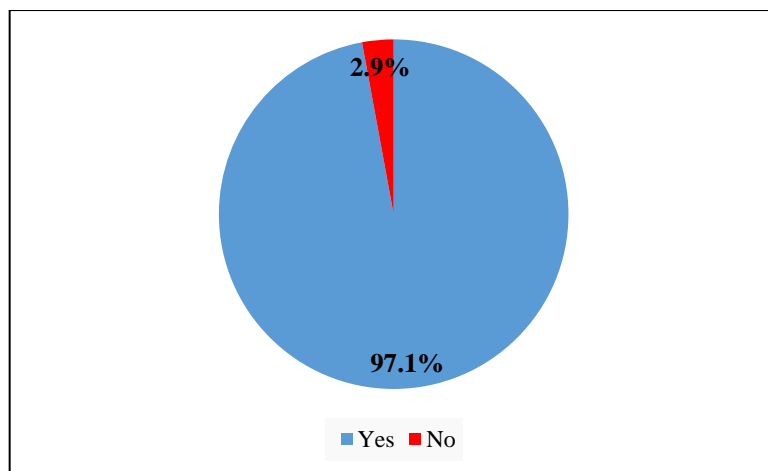
Figure (4): Distribution of participants according to their awareness of Gaza escalations after 7ᵗʰ of October 2023

➢ **Understanding of the Concept of Populism**

Table (6): Frequency distribution of participants according to their understanding of the concept of populism (n=105)

Understanding of the Concept of Populism	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	63	60.0%
No	21	20.0%
Maybe	21	20.0%
Total	105	100.0%

The following figure shows that 60.0% of participants are familiar with the concept of populism, while 20% lack understanding, and another 20.0% are uncertain.
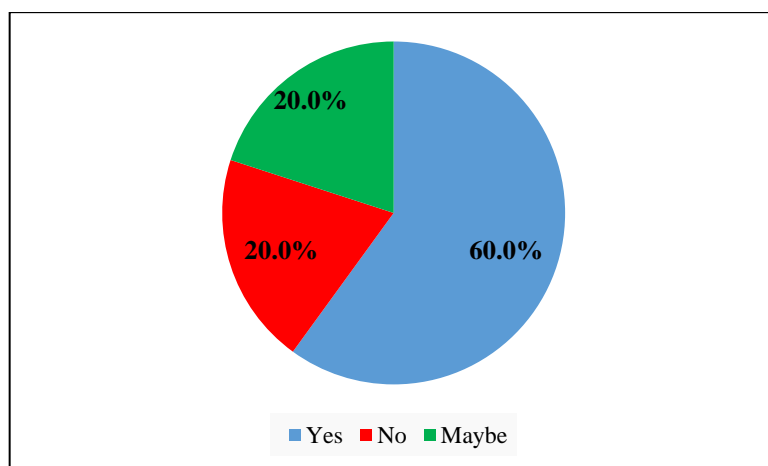

Figure (5): Distribution of participants according to their understanding of the concept of populism

➢ Perceptions of Trump as a Populist Leader

Table (7): Frequency distribution of participants according to their perceptions of Trump as a populist leader (n=105)

Perceptions of Trump as a Populist Leader	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	69	65.7%
No	15	14.3%
Neutral	21	20.0%
Total	105	100.0%

The following figure reveals that a majority of participants with 65.7% perceive Trump as a populist leader, while 14.3% disagree with this characterization. Additionally, 20.0% hold a neutral stance, indicating some level of uncertainty or mixed opinions.
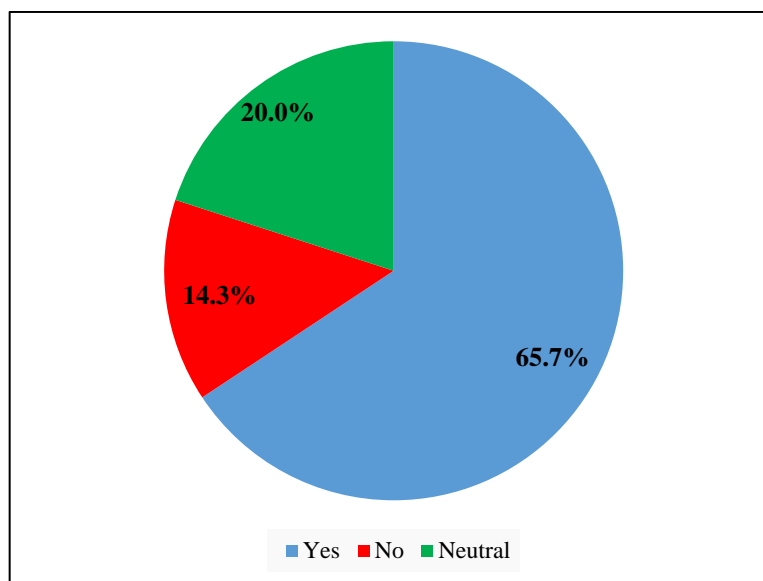

Figure (6): Distribution of participants according to their perceptions of Trump as a populist leader

➢ Perceptions of Erdogan as a Populist Leader

Table (8): Frequency distribution of participants according to their perceptions of Erdogan as a populist leader (n=105)

Perceptions of Erdogan as a Populist Leader	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	57	54.3%
No	24	22.9%
Neutral	24	22.9%
Total	105	100.0%

The following figure indicates that 54.3% of participants perceive Erdogan as a populist leader, while 22.9% disagree, and an equal proportion of 22.9% hold a neutral stance.
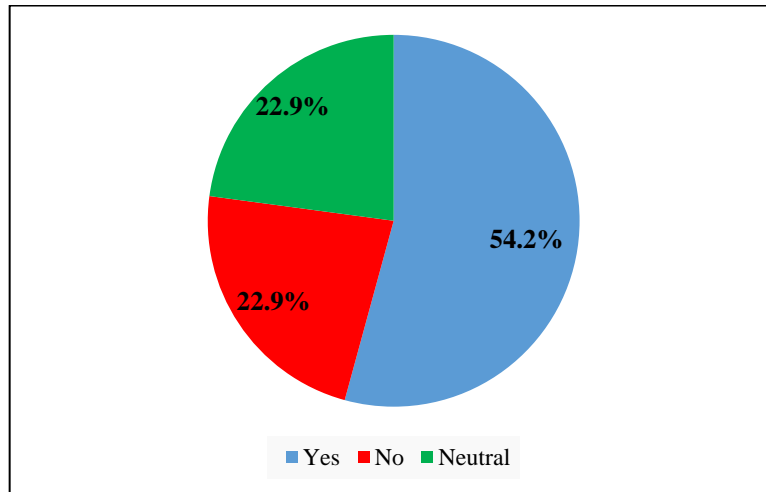

Figure (7): Distribution of participants according to their perceptions of Erdogan as a populist leader

➢ **Opinion towards Populist Leaders and Military Spending**

Table (9): Frequency distribution of participants according to their opinion towards populist leaders and their military spending (n=105)

Opinion towards Populist Leaders and Military Spending	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	51	48.6%
No	15	14.3%
Don't Know	39	37.1%
Total	105	100.0%

The frequency distribution shows that 48.6% of participants believe that populist leaders advocate for increased military spending, while 14.3% disagree. A significant portion of 37.1% is uncertain, indicating a lack of strong consensus on this issue.
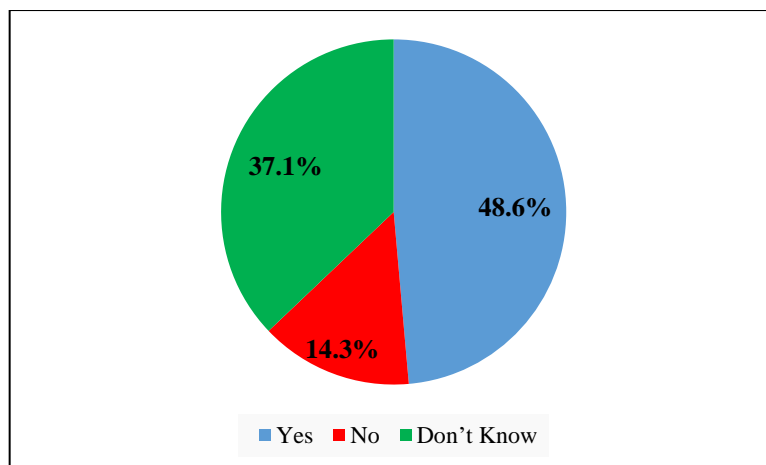
Figure (8): Distribution of participants according to their opinion towards populist leaders and their military spending

> ## Opinion towards Emotional and Simplistic Rhetoric in Populist Leadership

Table (10): Frequency distribution of participants according to their opinion towards emotional and simplistic rhetoric in populist leadership (n=105)

Opinion towards Emotional and Simplistic Rhetoric in Populist Leadership	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	78	74.3%
No	9	8.6%
Don't Know	18	17.1%
Total	105	100.0%

The following distribution indicates that a majority of participants with 74.3% believe that populist leaders use emotional and simplistic rhetoric to convey their messages. A small proportion of 8.6% disagree with this view, while 17.1% are uncertain.
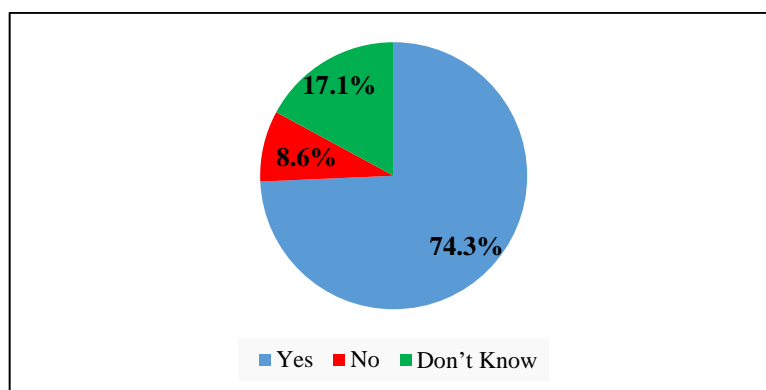

Figure (9): Distribution of participants according to their opinion towards emotional and simplistic rhetoric in populist leadership

➢ **Opinion towards Populist Leaders and their Rejection of Diplomacy**

Table (11): Frequency distribution of participants according to their opinion towards populist leaders and their rejection of diplomacy (n=105)

Opinion towards Populist Leaders and Rejection of Diplomacy	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	66	62.9%
No	6	5.7%
Don't Know	33	31.4%
Total	105	100.0%

The following distribution shows that 62.9% of participants believe that populist leaders often reject diplomacy in favor of more aggressive tactics. A small percentage with 5.7% disagree, while 31.4% are uncertain.
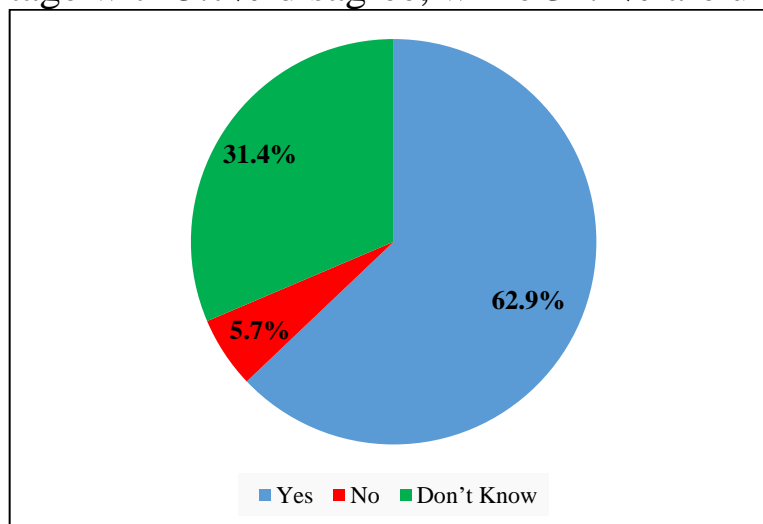

Figure (10): Distribution of participants according to their opinion towards populist leaders and their rejection of diplomacy

➢ **Opinion towards Populist Leaders and the Use of Propaganda in Conflicts**

Table (12): Frequency distribution of participants according to their opinion towards populist leaders and the use of propaganda in conflicts (n=105)

Opinion towards Populist Leaders and the Use of Propaganda in Conflicts	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	90	85.7%
Don't Know	15	14.3%
Total	105	100.0%

The frequency distribution indicates that a strong majority of participants with 85.7% believe that populist leaders use propaganda to influence public opinion during conflicts. The remaining 14.3% are uncertain, with no participants outright rejecting this notion.
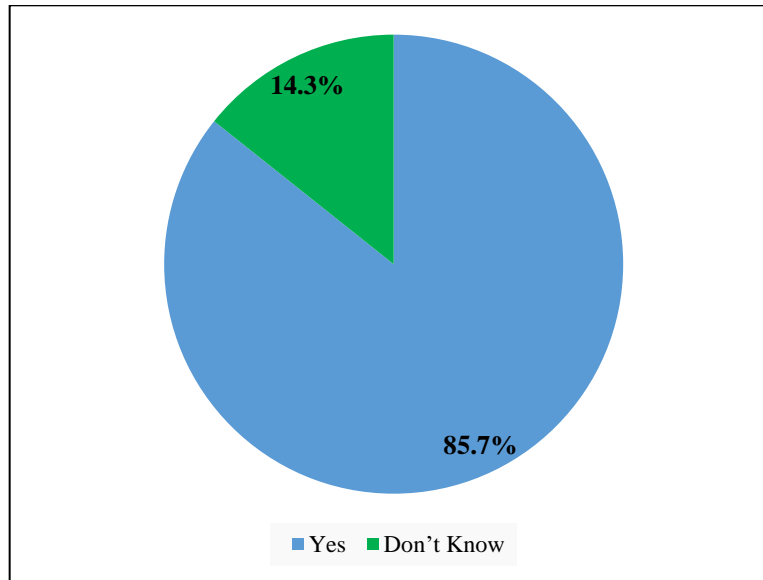

Figure (11): Distribution of participants according to their opinion towards populist leaders and the use of propaganda in conflicts

➤ Trump and Erdogan's Stance on Gaza: A Year After the Conflict

Table (13): Frequency distribution of participants according to their perceptions of Trump and Erdogan's stance on Gaza (n=105)

Statement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Donald Trump's rhetoric advocates that Israel should take decisive military action in Gaza	9	18	78	2.66	0.639
	8.6%	17.1%	74.3%		
Recep Tayyip Erdogan views Hamas as freedom fighters rather than terrorists	12	27	66	2.51	0.702
	11.4%	25.7%	62.9%		
Trump has consistently supported Israel's military actions in Gaza	6	15	84	2.74	0.561
	5.7%	14.3%	80.0%		
Erdogan's rhetoric on Gaza has become increasingly hostile towards Israel	15	42	48	2.31	0.718
	14.3%	40.0%	45.7%		
Trump's rhetoric advocates a strong military response being necessary to resolve the Gaza conflict	18	33	54	2.34	0.765
	17.1%	31.4%	51.4%		
Erdogan has called for international intervention to stop Israel's actions in Gaza	15	27	63	2.46	0.741
	14.3%	25.7%	60.0%		

Trump's rhetoric threatened severe consequences if Hamas does not release hostages	3	24	78	2.71	0.519
	2.9%	22.9%	74.3%		
Erdogan's stance on Gaza has strained Turkey's relations with Israel behaving as a true populist	15	39	51	2.34	0.725
	14.3%	37.1%	48.6%		
Trump's rhetoric is built on ensuring that the Gaza conflict should be resolved quickly and decisively	27	21	57	2.29	0.860
	25.7%	20.0%	54.3%		
Erdogan has accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza	12	27	66	2.51	0.702
	11.4%	25.7%	62.9%		
Trump has criticized international organizations for their handling of the Gaza conflict	15	24	66	2.49	0.742
	14.3%	22.9%	62.9%		
Erdogan's support for Hamas has been consistent throughout his political career	18	54	33	2.14	0.692
	17.1%	51.4%	31.4%		
Trump's rhetoric suggests that Israel's actions in Gaza are justified	12	9	84	2.69	0.676
	11.4%	8.6%	80.0%		
Erdogan has called for a ceasefire in Gaza to protect Palestinian civilians.	15	30	60	2.43	0.739
	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%		
Trump's narratives stated that the Gaza conflict would not have escalated if he were president	9	21	75	2.63	0.646
	8.6%	20.0%	71.4%		
Erdogan's stance on Gaza has been influenced by domestic political considerations	15	36	54	2.37	0.731
	14.3%	34.3%	51.4%		
Trump believes that military action is the only way to deal with Hamas	18	24	63	2.43	0.778
	17.1%	22.9%	60.0%		
Erdogan has compared Israel's actions in Gaza to those of Nazi Germany	12	51	42	2.29	0.667
	11.4%	48.6%	40.0%		
Trump has expressed unwavering support for Israel's government during the Gaza conflict	9	15	81	2.69	0.631
	8.6%	14.3%	77.1%		
Erdogan's rhetoric on Gaza has been criticized by international leaders	15	51	39	2.23	0.690
	14.3%	48.6%	37.1%		

The frequency distribution reflects varying perceptions of Trump and Erdogan's stance on the Gaza conflict. The majority of participants with 74.3% agree that Trump's rhetoric advocates for Israel taking decisive military action, and 80.0% believe he has consistently supported Israel's military actions. Additionally, 71.4% agree that Trump claims the conflict would not have escalated if he were president.

On the other hand, 62.9% of participants agree that Erdogan views Hamas as freedom fighters rather than terrorists, and 60.0% believe he has called

for international intervention to stop Israel's actions. Furthermore, 62.9% agree that Erdogan has accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza, while 40.0% acknowledge his comparison of Israel's actions to those of Nazi Germany.

Overall, the results suggest that respondents perceive Trump's rhetoric as strongly pro-Israel, advocating for military action, while Erdogan is viewed as increasingly critical of Israel, portraying himself as a defender of Palestinian rights. However, responses to some statements indicate uncertainty, with a notable percentage of participants selecting neutral options, highlighting the complexity of the leaders' positions in the conflict.

➢ Perceived Personality Traits of Trump and Erdogan on the Gaza Conflict

Table (14): Frequency distribution of participants according to their perceived personality traits of Trump and Erdogan as reflected on social media regarding the Gaza conflict (n=105)

Statement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Donald Trump is perceived as impulsive in his decision-making regarding the Gaza conflict	15	21	69	2.51	0.742
	14.3%	20.0%	65.7%		
Recep Tayyip Erdogan is seen as highly emotional in his responses to the Gaza conflict	21	45	39	2.17	0.747
	20.0%	42.9%	37.1%		
Trump is viewed as prioritizing personal relationships over policy in the Middle East	18	24	63	2.43	0.778
	17.1%	22.9%	60.0%		
Erdogan's rhetoric on Gaza has been characterized as confrontational	9	39	57	2.46	0.657
	8.6%	37.1%	54.3%		
Erdogan's stance on Gaza is seen as driven by a desire to appear strong	18	21	66	2.46	0.780
	17.1%	20.0%	62.9%		
Trump is viewed as using the Gaza conflict to advance his personal interests	9	12	84	2.71	0.622
	8.6%	11.4%	80.0%		
Erdogan's personality traits have been influenced by his long tenure in office	9	39	57	2.46	0.657
	8.6%	37.1%	54.3%		
Trump is seen as unpredictable in his approach to the Gaza conflict	12	24	69	2.54	0.701
	11.4%	22.9%	65.7%		
Erdogan's leadership style is perceived as authoritarian in the context of the Gaza conflict	18	48	39	2.20	0.719
	17.1%	45.7%	37.1%		

Trump is viewed as prioritizing a strong image over diplomatic solutions in Gaza	9	15	81	2.69	0.631
	8.6%	14.3%	77.1%		
Erdogan's responses to the Gaza conflict are seen as influenced by traumatic events	18	36	51	2.31	0.758
	17.1%	34.3%	48.6%		
Trump is perceived as using the Gaza conflict to exact retribution against perceived enemies	12	24	69	2.54	0.701
	11.4%	22.9%	65.7%		
Erdogan's personality traits are seen as consistent despite the Gaza conflict	18	39	48	2.29	0.750
	17.1%	37.1%	45.7%		
Trump is viewed as having a low task orientation in handling the Gaza conflict	24	27	54	2.29	0.825
	22.9%	25.7%	51.4%		
Erdogan's leadership during the Gaza conflict is seen as highly focused on relationships	15	39	51	2.34	0.725
	14.3%	37.1%	48.6%		
Trump is perceived as using the Gaza conflict to bolster his political image	12	15	78	2.63	0.690
	11.4%	14.3%	74.3%		
Erdogan's stance on Gaza is seen as a reflection of his long-standing beliefs	15	27	63	2.46	0.741
	14.3%	25.7%	60.0%		
Trump is viewed as having a high focus on personal impulses in the Gaza conflict	12	27	66	2.51	0.702
	11.4%	25.7%	62.9%		
Erdogan's leadership traits are seen as resilient despite the challenges of the Gaza conflict	21	39	45	2.23	0.770
	20.0%	37.1%	42.9%		

The frequency distribution highlights participants' perceptions of Trump and Erdogan's personality traits and motivations regarding the Gaza conflict. A majority of 65.7% perceive Trump as impulsive in his decision-making, unpredictable with 65.7%, and using the conflict to advance his personal interests with 80.0%. Additionally, 77.1% believe he prioritizes a strong image over diplomatic solutions, reinforcing the perception of a leader focused on assertiveness rather than diplomacy.

Regarding Erdogan, 62.9% believe his stance on Gaza is driven by a desire to appear strong, while 54.3% characterize his rhetoric as confrontational. A notable portion of 60.0% sees his stance as a reflection of his long-standing beliefs. However, opinions on his leadership style are more divided, with 45.7% perceiving it as authoritarian, while 42.9% consider his leadership traits resilient despite the conflict's challenges.

Overall, the findings suggest that Trump is largely viewed as image-driven and impulsive, while Erdogan is seen as maintaining a strategic yet confrontational approach. The presence of neutral responses across

multiple statements indicates that some participants remain uncertain or hold mixed views on the leaders' motivations and behaviors.

➢ Comparative Populism Actions of Trump and Erdogan regarding Gaza Conflict

Table (15): Frequency distribution of participants according to comparative populism actions of Trump and Erdogan regarding Gaza conflict (n=105)

Statement	Trump	Erdogan	Both	None	Mean	Standard Deviation
Following the will of their country's people	27	42	18	18	1.57	0.979
	25.7%	40.0%	17.1%	17.1%		
The people, and not politicians, should make the most important policy decisions towards Gaza.	9	45	15	36	1.37	1.114
	8.6%	42.9%	14.3%	34.3%		
What people call "compromise" in politics is really just selling out on one's principles	33	27	21	24	1.43	1.065
	31.4%	25.7%	20.0%	22.9%		
By not doing anything towards Gaza, the leader thinks he betrayed his people	15	51	12	27	1.46	1.010
	14.3%	48.6%	11.4%	25.7%		
Talk too much and take too little action	39	30	21	15	1.54	0.980
	37.1%	28.6%	20.0%	14.3%		
Blame others	51	15	24	15	1.46	1.010
	48.6%	14.3%	22.9%	14.3%		
Identify with the pain of the people	9	69	6	21	1.57	0.884
	8.6%	65.7%	5.7%	20.0%		
Trigger society's fears	66	9	18	12	1.31	0.901
	62.9%	8.6%	17.1%	11.4%		
Charismatic when communicating about Gaza conflict	24	45	6	30	1.26	0.950
	22.9%	42.9%	5.7%	28.6%		
Intuitive about Gaza's situation	15	45	6	39	1.17	1.014
	14.3%	42.9%	5.7%	37.1%		
Can fix everything	24	24	9	48	0.94	1.027
	22.9%	22.9%	8.6%	45.7%		
Self-confident	45	27	15	18	1.37	0.942
	42.9%	25.7%	14.3%	17.1%		
Expert in using mass and social media	57	24	3	21	1.09	0.742
	54.3%	22.9%	2.9%	20.0%		

The frequency distribution compares participants' perceptions of Trump and Erdogan's populism actions regarding Gaza conflict. The results indicate that Erdoğan is more widely seen as identifying with the pain of the

people with 65.7% and following the will of his country's people with 40.0%, while Trump is strongly associated with triggering societal fears with 62.9% and blaming others with 48.6%.

Trump is also viewed as more self-confident with 42.9% and an expert in using mass and social media with 54.3%. Meanwhile, Erdogan is perceived as being more intuitive about Gaza's situation with 42.9% and as believing that politicians should not be the ones making key decisions regarding Gaza with 42.9%.

A notable percentage of participants assigned certain actions to neither leader, such as the belief that they can fix everything with 45.7% and being charismatic when communicating about the Gaza conflict with 28.6%. These results highlight differences in how Trump and Erdogan are perceived in their leadership approaches, with Trump seen as more media-savvy and confrontational, while Erdogan is viewed as more emotionally engaged and responsive to public sentiment.

Testing Hypotheses

Indicator construction is a statistical technique aimed at combining a set of related questions (or factors) into a single index. These indices are created using the equal-weighting method, meaning that each index is calculated by summing the scores of the related questions and then dividing this sum by the number of associated questions. The constructed indices are used to test the previously stated hypotheses.

H_1: **There is a relationship between the opinion of the elite towards symbolic and simplistic rhetoric in populist leadership reflected through social media, and populist traits of Trump and Erdogan in the context of Gaza conflict.**

Table (16): Pearson's correlation coefficients

	Opinion toward symbolic and Simplistic Rhetoric in Populist Leadership	Trump and Erdogan Traits in the Gaza Conflict
Opinion toward Symbolic and Simplistic Rhetoric in Populist Leadership	1	0.274
Populist Traits of Trump and Erdogan in the Gaza Conflict	0.274	1

Table (16) conveys that the statistical significance of H1 derived from the social identity theory is not detected, implying a less direct relationship; thus, HI is rejected.

Trump and Erdoğan's employment of language, symbols, narratives, and cultural markers that are highly meaningful and strengthening shared values and loyalty don't affect the opinion of the elite regarding populist traits in the context of Gaza conflict as reflected in social media posts.

H2: There is a relationship between the opinion of the elite regarding propaganda use of populist leaders reflected through social media, and populist traits of Trump and Erdogan in the context of Gaza conflict.

Table (17): Pearson's correlation coefficients

	Opinion toward Populist Leaders and the Use of Propaganda in Conflicts	Populist traits of Trump and Erdogan in the Gaza Conflict
Opinion toward Populist Leaders and the Use of Propaganda in Conflicts	1	0.411*
Populist traits of Trump and Erdogan in the Gaza Conflict	0.411*	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table (17) conveys that the statistical significance of H2 derived from the propaganda theory is detected, implying a direct relationship; thus, H2 is accepted.

There is a moderate positive relationship between the opinion of the elite regarding propaganda use of populist leaders reflected through social media, and populist traits of Trump and Erdogan in the context of Gaza conflict.

This result implies that Trump and Erdoğan's use of emotionally charged content with fear, anger, or patriotism—to engage audiences and evoke strong reactions affect the opinion of the elite regarding their populist traits in the context of Gaza conflict as reflected in their social media posts.

H3: There is a relationship between sample demographics, and elite opinion regarding populist traits of Trump and Erdogan reflected through social media in the context of Gaza conflict.

Table (18): Comparison of construct means among age groups

Construct	18 to 35		36 to 45		≥ 46		Sig.
	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	
Trump and Erdogan's Stance on Gaza	2.400	0.466	2.550	0.377	2.428	0.382	0.002
Populist traits of Trump and Erdogan on the Gaza Conflict	2.389	0.561	2.555	0.297	2.322	0.624	0.021

Table (18) reflects the comparison of construct means among age groups and reveals statistically significant differences in perceptions of Trump and Erdogan's stance on Gaza, and elite opinion regarding populist traits of Trump and Erdogan reflected through social media in the context of Gaza conflict. Participants aged 36 to 45 have the highest mean scores for both constructs (2.550 and 2.555, respectively), suggesting that this age group perceives the leaders' stance, rhetoric and personality traits more strongly. In contrast, respondents aged 18 to 35 and 46 or more show slightly lower mean scores, indicating a comparatively less pronounced perception of these leaders' traits.

The significant differences suggest that age influences how respondents interpret Trump and Erdogan's roles in the Gaza conflict, with middle-aged participants exhibiting stronger perceptions compared to younger and older groups.

Table (19): Comparison of construct means among occupations

Construct	Academic/Researcher		Media Professionals		Sig.
	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	
Trump and Erdogan's Stance on Gaza	2.556	0.321	2.230	2.353	0.030
Populist traits of Trump and Erdogan on the Gaza Conflict	2.465	0.487	0.518	0.526	0.041

Table (19) reflects the comparison of construct means among occupations and indicates statistically significant differences in perceptions of Trump and Erdoğan's stance on Gaza and elite opinion regarding populist traits of Trump and Erdogan reflected through social media in the context of Gaza conflict.

Academics and researchers exhibit higher mean scores (2.556 and 2.465, respectively) compared to media professionals (2.353 and 0.518, respectively). This suggests that academics and researchers perceive Trump and Erdogan's positions on Gaza more strongly media professionals.

The significant differences imply that professional background influences perspectives on political leadership and conflict narratives, with academics potentially having a more analytical or critical approach in evaluating populist traits and foreign policy stances.

Discussion

Past research focused on how social media fundamentally changed the dynamics of how political narratives are created and spread, providing a primary conduit for populist communication and how social media platforms, especially X, enabled populist leaders to bypass traditional media and reach their audience directly (Ernst et al. 2017; Zahra, 2018a; Zahra, 2018b). These assumptions turned into consolidated facts post Al Aqsa flood, dated October 7th 2023. The current research aims to investigate the populist traits and specific characteristics of widely renowned populist leaders Trump and Erdogan as reflected on social media from the perspectives of academics and media professionals commemorating one year of attacks on Gaza. Depending on the social identity theory and propaganda theory, the study examined the effect of symbolic rhetoric and extensive use of emotions on Trump and Erdogan populist traits being a directly related theme to both public relations studies and political communication studies.

Survey analysis has revealed multiple findings reiterating the populism strategy followed by Trump and Erdogan which became even more evident during the recent Gaza conflict. Majority of academics, researchers and media professionals viewed both Trump and Erdogan acting as populist leaders via social media during the recent Gaza conflict with more focus on Trump's populist strategies.

Results asserted that mostly 85% of respondents believe that populist leaders Trump and Erdogan use emotional and simplistic rhetoric; and extensively use propaganda tactics to convey their social media messages

concerning Gaza. Respondents perceive Trump's rhetoric as strongly pro-Israel, advocating for military action, while Erdogan is viewed as increasingly critical of Israel, portraying himself as a defender of Palestinian rights. These results highlight differences in how Trump and Erdogan are perceived in their leadership traits, with Trump seen as more media-savvy and confrontational, while Erdogan is viewed as more emotionally engaged and responsive to public sentiment.

The findings suggest that Trump is largely viewed as image-driven and impulsive, while Erdogan is seen as maintaining a strategic confrontational approach. Those results highlight that personal charisma and media savvy played a significant part in the origins and subsequent construction of populist traits. Trump and Erdogan showed strong personalities that perfectly fit the social media's demand for spectacular and emotional treatment of social reality (Mazzoleni, 2008).

Trump and Erdogan's traits are being affected by their approach to propaganda, mostly reflected on social media amidst the Gaza conflict. The current findings pose an urgent call upon political leaders to work on a steady, yet unified approach to boost their social media presence regarding fateful issues.

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