

Analysis of Scientific Publications on the Gaza–Israeli Conflict

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ABSTRACT **Background:** The Gaza–Israeli conflict poses challenges for unbiased reporting due to its complexity and media bias. We explored recent scientific publications to understand scholarly discourse and potential biases surrounding this longstanding geopolitical issue. **Objectives:** To conduct a descriptive bibliometric analysis of PubMed articles regarding the recent Gaza–Israeli conflict. **Methods:** We reviewed 1628 publications using keywords and medical subject headings (MeSH) terms related to Gaza, Hamas, and Israel. We focused on articles written in English. A team of researchers assessed inclusion criteria, resolving disagreements through a third researcher. **Results:** Among 37 publications, *Lancet*, *BMJ*, and *Nature* were prominent journals. Authors from 12 countries contributed, with variety of publication types (46% correspondence, 32% news). Pro-Gaza perspectives dominated (43.2%), surpassing pro-Israel (21.6%) and neutral (35.1%) viewpoints. Pro-Gaza articles exhibited higher Altmetric scores, indicating increased social media impact. Pro-Israel publications were predominantly authored by Israelis. **Conclusions:** The prevalence of pro-Gaza perspectives underscores challenges in maintaining impartiality. Higher social media impact for pro-Gaza publications emphasizes the need for nuanced examination. Addressing bias is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of this complex conflict and promoting balanced reporting.

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The Gaza–Israeli conflict has been a longstanding and deeply complex geopolitical matter [1], marked not only by the intricacies of the conflict itself but also by the challenge of unbiased reporting. Media outlets on both

sides of the conflict often face difficulties in presenting a completely neutral narrative as political, cultural, and historical perspectives inevitably influence the framing of news stories. The sensitivity of the conflict further exacerbates the potential for biased reporting, with media sources sometimes unintentionally or intentionally favoring one side over the other.

On 7 October 2023, more than 1200 Israeli citizens were brutally hunted, tortured, and murdered in their homes, in open spaces, and in the streets by Hamas terrorists. In response, the State of Israel declared war against Hamas and launched a military attack in the Gaza Strip. Since then, with many casualties on both sides, the media has relentlessly covered and reported on the conflict and its impact worldwide. Coupled with this increase in media coverage, there is a burst of scientifically indexed publications regarding the developing regretful situation.

Bibliometrics, the study involving the quantitative analysis of bibliographic data [2] such as citations and publication patterns, may provide insights into the characteristics and trends of scientific literature within a specific field. Through bibliometric analyses, we can discern the degree of consensus or divergence within the academic community, contributing valuable insights to the broader understanding of media bias and its scholarly discourse.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We performed a descriptive bibliometric study of publications indexed in PubMed on the topic of the Iron Swords Gaza–Israeli war. We searched the PubMed database using the key words *Gaza* or *Hamas* or *Israel*. Search was limited to the period between 7 October 2023 and 17 November 2023. We further performed a medical subject headings (MeSH) search using the following terms: *humans*, *violence*, *Israel*, and *Gaza*. We

manually reviewed each title for inclusion. We included only publications in the English language. Publications were assessed by two researchers (GL, YB). For each publication, we assessed whether the publication was neutral, pro-Gaza biased, or pro-Israel biased. In cases of disagreement, a third researcher (RM) assessed the results. We further analyzed the country of origin of the authors as well as the journal name, type of publication, number of authors, and number of times the following words were mentioned in each publication: Israel, Hamas, or Palestine. We also recorded the Altmetric score each publication has received [3].

RESULTS

Of 1628 publications, 37 articles in eight journals were included and assessed. Eighteen (49%) were published in the *Lancet*, nine (24%) in the *BMJ*, five (13%) in *Nature*, and five (13%) in other academic journals. Articles were written by authors from 12 countries. The most common countries of origin were the United Kingdom (40.5%), Israel (24.3%), Canada (5.4%), Gaza (5.4%), and Jordan (5.4%). Seventeen articles (46%) were correspondence, 12 (32%) were news, and the remainder were other types. Overall, 16 of the articles (43.2%) were pro-Gaza, 13 (35.1%) were neutral, and 8 (21.6%) were pro-Israel. There was no significant difference in the median Altmetric score between the three groups (Kruskal-Wallis $P = 0.380$) with a median Altmetric score of 9 [interquartile range 2–101] for pro-Israel, 18 [5–190] for neutral, and 32 [12–79] for pro-Gaza. Of the 12 general news publications, 7 (58.3%) were pro-Gaza and 5 (41.7%) were neutral, with no pro-Israel publication. Of the eight pro-Israel articles, seven (87.5%) were authored by Israelis and one (12.5%) by an author from the United Kingdom. Of the 16 pro-Gaza publications, 8 (50%) were from the United Kingdom, 2 (12.5%) were from Gaza, and 2 from Jordan. There was a single publication from each of the following countries as well: Canada, Brazil, United States, and Colombia.

Our bibliometric analysis shows that most publications were pro-Gaza [4,5], double the proportion of pro-Israel

publications. Although not statistically significant, the absolute Altmetric score, a measure of social media impact, was higher in pro-Gaza publications and more than three times the Altmetric score of pro-Israel publications. Almost all pro-Israel publications were authored by Israeli authors.

DISCUSSION

We provided insights into recent scholarly discourse on the Gaza–Israeli conflict. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is a deeply contentious and emotionally charged issue. The media and academic journals covering this conflict often grapple with biases that stem from various sources. Academic journals may face challenges in maintaining complete impartiality as researchers may bring their own perspectives and biases into their work. The challenge is to strive for balanced reporting and research that reflects the complexity of the conflict.

CONCLUSIONS

Addressing bias in both media and academic publications is essential for promoting objectivity and ensuring that a broader range of perspectives is considered in the ongoing conversation surrounding this protracted conflict.

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The real index of civilization is when people are kinder than they need to be.

Louis de Bernieres (Born 1954), British novelist