How the Portuguese News Media Presented Palestine and Palestinians Post-October 2023: Público and Diário de Notícias as a Case Study

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Acknowledgement

I would like to begin by expressing my deepest love and gratitude to my family, who have been my unwavering support throughout this journey. To my parents, my two brothers, my three sisters, and my friends, I am forever indebted to you for your endless love and encouragement. Even though I have been studying abroad in Portugal, far from home, your presence in my heart has been a constant source of strength and motivation.

I come from Palestine, a place where peace has been elusive and where, during the last 12 months, bombings, rockets, and unimaginable violence have torn through the lives of so many. Over 40,000 people have lost their lives, over 90,000 have been injured, and countless others remain missing or buried beneath the rubble. It has been an incredibly difficult time, knowing that as I worked on this thesis, so many have suffered. This acknowledgement is also for them—those we've lost and those who continue to endure in the face of adversity. You are in my thoughts, and your resilience has fuelled my determination to complete this work.

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This thesis is dedicated to all those who have walked with me on this path—both near and far.

Resumo

Este estudo examina a representação da Palestina e dos palestinianos nos meios de comunicação portugueses, com foco na cobertura fornecida por dois grandes jornais, *Público* e *Diário de Notícias*, nos meses que se seguiram aos acontecimentos de 7 de outubro de 2023. A pesquisa utiliza a análise temática de conteúdo e a teoria da *agenda-setting* como quadros teóricos principais para examinar o uso da linguagem, do tom e das técnicas de enquadramento nos artigos publicados por esses meios. O objetivo desta investigação é descobrir como esses jornais construíram a narrativa sobre a Palestina e os palestinianos durante esse período, com particular atenção à representação do conflito, das questões humanitárias e do enquadramento político. O estudo procura determinar se a cobertura reflete alguma sub-representação, viés potencial ou marginalização das vozes palestinianas e como essas representações podem influenciar as perceções públicas. Ao analisar essas narrativas, a investigação destaca as formas subtis pelas quais a linguagem pode humanizar ou despersonalizar os sujeitos da cobertura mediática. Esta tese também incorpora as perspetivas do público, através de um questionário que avalia como os leitores interpretam e respondem à cobertura mediática sobre a Palestina e os palestinianos. Ao associar a representação mediática à perceção pública, o estudo visa fornecer uma compreensão abrangente do papel poderoso que os meios de comunicação desempenham na formação do discurso e na influência das atitudes em relação ao conflito israelo-palestiniano. Os resultados destacam que o *Público* enfatizou crises humanitárias e a resiliência palestiniana, enquanto o *Diário de Notícias* retratou o conflito através de uma lente mais crítica, focando-se nas perspetivas israelitas e sub-representando a narrativa palestiniana. Por fim, a investigação sublinha a importância do jornalismo responsável, particularmente em contextos de conflito e crises humanitárias, onde uma cobertura equilibrada e precisa é crucial.

Palavras-chave: Conflito israelo-palestiniano, representação mediática, análise temática,

crises humanitárias, enquadramento político, teoria da agenda-setting, jornais ortugueses,

perceção pública

Abstract

This study examines the representation of Palestine and Palestinians in the Portuguese media, focusing on the coverage provided by two major newspapers, *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*, in the months following the events of October 7th, 2023. The research uses thematic content analysis and the agenda-setting theory as the primary frameworks to examine the use of language, tone, and framing techniques in the articles published by these outlets. The aim of this research is to uncover how these newspapers constructed the narrative regarding Palestine and Palestinians during this period, with particular attention to the portrayal of conflict, humanitarian issues, and political framing. The study seeks to determine whether the coverage reflects any under-representation, potential bias, or marginalisation of Palestinian voices and how such portrayals may influence public perceptions. By analysing these narratives, the research highlights the subtle ways in which language can either humanise or depersonalise the subjects of media coverage. This thesis also incorporates the perspectives of the audience by conducting a questionnaire that assesses how readers interpret and respond to the media's coverage of Palestine and Palestinians. By linking media representation with public perception, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the powerful role that media plays in shaping discourse and influencing attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The findings highlight that *Público* emphasised humanitarian crises and Palestinian resilience, while *Diário de Notícias* portrayed the conflict through a more critical lens, focusing on Israeli perspectives and under-representing the Palestinian narrative. Finally, the research highlights the importance of responsible journalism, particularly in contexts surrounding conflict and humanitarian crises, where balanced and accurate reporting is crucial.

Keywords: Israeli-Palestinian conflict, media representation, thematic analysis, humanitarian crises, political framing, agenda-setting theory, Portuguese newspapers, public perception

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter explains the background of the research. It provides the introduction with information to guide the reader through the research topic. This includes the problem statement and justification of the study; research objectives, questions, hypotheses, research delimitations, research design, research limitations, and research contribution to knowledge; as well as the outline of the thesis.

1.1. Background

Social scientists have been studying the effect of news media on how information is perceived, knowing that news media holds a significant influence over setting a nation's agenda and capturing the public's attention around key issues (Newman, 2009). The news media not only provides information but also guides readers on the importance of specific topics through indicators such as headline placement and story prominence (McCombs, 2002). Those repeated cues shape the public's attention, and, as a result, play a crucial role in the formation of public opinion.

Additionally, in his essay, Walter Lippmann explains the effect of news media to the point of shaping individuals' mental images of the larger world of public affairs as a way of strongly influencing the priorities of the public (Greenberg, 2012), explaining why some issues receive emphasis while others receive limited coverage, which is denoted as the "agenda-setting theory" (McCombs, 2002).

Considering the substantial influence held by the news media in shaping public perceptions and setting agendas, it is crucial to examine specific cases that highlight the media's impact. One such case that warrants investigation is how the Western news media have portrayed Palestine and Palestinians over time. To delve deeper into this subject, the study aims to focus on the Portuguese news media as a case study. By closely analysing the coverage patterns, narratives, and framing techniques employed by the two Portuguese newspapers, *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*, the study seeks to gain valuable insights into how this critical issue has been presented within the unique cultural and linguistic context of Portugal. This is achieved by implementing the agenda-setting theory as a guiding framework.

In detail, the study is expected to provide valuable insights into how the Portuguese news media have presented Palestine and Palestinians during the last 3 months of 2023. By

examining the content of selected news media outlets, this study sheds light on the language, tone, and framing used in their coverage of Palestine-related issues. This is perceived as a chance to explore the field of news within the Portuguese environment and to identify whether it follows the same direction as other Western news media, where there is much misinformation.

One possible outcome of this analysis, and the hypothesis of this research, is that the Portuguese news media, particularly *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*, may demonstrate identifiable biases or framing techniques in their portrayal of Palestine and Palestinians during the last three months of 2023. By conducting a thematic analysis, the research aims to uncover whether dominant narratives—especially those focused on conflict and humanitarian issues—have shaped the media's portrayal of this region and its people. Additionally, this study seeks to determine whether the coverage reinforces or challenges existing stereotypes and misconceptions. In doing so, the research examines how political context, media ownership, and international events may influence the framing of Palestine in the Portuguese media. Ultimately, the objective is to possess the findings that will offer deeper insights into how Palestine and Palestinians are represented and illuminate the broader impact of media coverage on public perceptions and attitudes.

1.2. Research Problem

Often, individuals consume news without being fully aware of the language and tone employed by the media to address specific subjects. Hence, readers and viewers usually overlook the need to critically analyse the content beyond the headlines and surface-level text (Crystal & Davy, 2016). Despite the significant influence of news media on shaping public opinion, there is a notable gap in understanding how the Western news media, particularly the Portuguese news media, have presented Palestine and Palestinians during the last quarter of 2023.

Existing research on this specific topic, the portrayal of Palestine and Palestinians in the Western news media, is limited or non-existent, leaving a crucial gap in knowledge regarding the patterns, biases, and representations employed by the news media. the study aims to fill this gap by examining the coverage of Palestine and Palestinians in the Portuguese news media, shedding light on the potential misrepresentations, under-representations, and biases that may exist.

Additionally, it is crucial to shed light on any possible discrepancies between the media's portrayal and the complex realities of the Palestinian situation, providing a better understanding of the subject matter as well as the importance of a more critical engagement with news content and its impact on public perception.

1.3. Research Significance and Justification

This study addresses a gap in the literature on the representation of Palestine and Palestinians in the Western news media, particularly in the Portuguese context. While there is a growing body of literature on this topic, most studies have focused on broader Western media, with no prior studies specifically examining the Portuguese news media's portrayal of Palestine and Palestinians. Conducting this research aims to contribute to the scholarly understanding of how the Portuguese media have presented Palestine and Palestinians during the last 3 months of 2023.

Furthermore, the findings of this research can provide a basis for future academic studies by offering a detailed case study of media representation of Palestine in the Portuguese context, which has been largely unexplored. By identifying patterns of bias, framing techniques, and narrative strategies, this study opens up avenues for further research into media portrayals of conflict in other Western nations or in different time periods. Additionally, it provides a framework for comparative analysis, enabling scholars to explore how different media systems across Europe or the West handle sensitive geopolitical topics like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Moreover, it is of great importance for the general public, as it promotes media literacy and encourages critical consumption of news. This, in turn, allows individuals to form more informed opinions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To examine this, primary data will be collected using a questionnaire survey. The questionnaires that will address university students aged between 18 and 34 years old in Lisbon will be self-administered, mailed to the respondents, or given to them in person via shared links or QR codes.

1.4. Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study revolve around understanding the portrayal of Palestinians in the Portuguese news media post-October 7th, 2023, and recognising the importance of addressing Palestine and Palestinians objectively in the news media. It also aims

to examine the patterns of representation employed by the Portuguese media in their coverage of Palestine and Palestinians in general terms, specifically analysing the language, tone, and framing techniques used. By doing so, this study seeks to shed light on the strategies employed by media to shape the narrative. Additionally, this study tests the potential impact of the Portuguese news media's coverage on public perception and understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, recognising the role media play in influencing public opinion and how this can be explained by the agenda-setting theory. Lastly, this research aims to provide recommendations for promoting more balanced and accurate coverage of Palestine and Palestinians in the Portuguese news media, aiming to foster a comprehensive and unbiased understanding of this important topic.

1.5. Research Questions

Based on the above research problem and objectives, the research will aim to answer the following questions:

1. How do *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* portray Palestine and Palestinians, focusing on their language, tone, framing techniques, and coverage patterns during the last three months of 2023?

2. How does agenda-setting theory explain the impact of *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* coverage on public perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

1.6. Limitation of the Study

This study is limited by the accessibility and availability of archival materials, which may restrict the range of data collected. Given the reliance on hard copies of Portuguese newspapers, any gaps or restrictions in accessing these sources could impact the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

Another limitation lies in the accessibility of archival materials. The study relies heavily on the availability of resources, and any constraints in accessing relevant newspapers or other media archives may limit the depth of the data collected. This could affect the comprehensiveness of the analysis, as some critical content might remain beyond reach.

The scope of this research is also limited to examining the representation of Palestine and Palestinians in Portuguese newspapers, specifically in the period following October 7th, 2023. While this provides a focused lens, it does not extend to compare media portrayals from other regions or countries, which could offer a broader understanding of Western media representations.

Finally, while conducting this research involves analysing articles originally written in Portuguese, *Público* provides an English version of their printed copies on their website, which will assist in minimising potential language barriers. However, for *Diário de Notícias*, there is a need to translate the articles by the researcher himself, which may introduce challenges in fully capturing nuances or culturally specific meanings. This could affect the interpretation of certain subtleties in the media content and may limit the depth of analysis for those articles.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in Agenda Setting Theory, which was first developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. This theory posits that while the media may not tell the public what to think, it plays a crucial role in determining what they think about by selecting which topics and issues to emphasize. By prioritising certain stories, the media has the power to shape public opinion by influencing the perceived importance of issues. In other words, the media sets the public agenda by controlling which issues are highlighted and which are downplayed or ignored.

In the context of Palestine and Palestinians, the Western news media have often been criticised for their "biased and unbalanced" (Arikat, 2011) portrayal, focusing disproportionately on conflict and violence while neglecting the deeper historical and political context. This selective emphasis shapes how audiences perceive the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reinforcing certain narratives while marginalising others. By focusing on specific aspects of the conflict—such as terrorism or security concerns—the media can frame the issue in a way that aligns with particular political agendas, potentially leading to a distorted public understanding.

This study applies Agenda Setting Theory to examine how the Portuguese news media have presented Palestine and Palestinians during the last three months of 2023. By using content analysis as a methodological approach, the analysis of the news articles and media

content from *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* aims to identify the topics emphasised, the language used, and the framing techniques employed. Agenda Setting Theory provides a lens through which to understand how the prominence of certain narratives—such as those related to conflict, humanitarian crises, or diplomatic efforts—can shape audience perceptions of the issue.

Furthermore, the study explores the socio-political context in which these representations occur, considering the specific cultural and political dynamics in Portugal. By doing so, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how media representation not only reflects but actively influences public discourse and opinion on Palestine and Palestinians. The ultimate goal is to assess how the media agenda has influenced the portrayal of Palestine and Palestinians in the Portuguese news media and how this, in turn, may shape public perceptions in Portugal.

1.8. Delimitation of the Study

- Geographical: This research paper covers the portrayal of Palestine and Palestinians in the Portuguese news media. Focusing solely on Portugal ensures a more intensive analysis within a specific cultural and linguistic context.

- Temporal: The study focuses on a specific period of time, which is the last quarter of 2023. Data collection will be limited to this period. Any events or changes that occur outside of this period will not be considered in the study.

- Sample selection: The analysis in this research paper is limited to printed versions of newspapers. Other media outlets are, therefore, excluded. The analysis will be limited to two Portuguese newspapers, *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*.

- Approach and instrument: To achieve the desired results, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was employed. The methodology focuses on systematic thematic content analysis through manual reading of soft copies of the printed version of newspapers. Additionally, a questionnaire was administered to university students aged 18-34 to assess the influence of two Portuguese newspapers on public perception. This method aims to provide sufficient information on reliability while also achieving a certain level of validity. The primary goals are to achieve the research objectives, answer the study questions, and collect data for the results, discussion, and suggestions.

By establishing these delimitations, the study aims to provide a focused and comprehensive analysis of the representation of Palestine and Palestinians in Portuguese newspapers during the last three months of 2023 and its influence on public perception and understanding.

1.9. Structure of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters to create a good flow of information. The outline of the thesis is as follows:

1. **Introduction**: This chapter explains the background of the research. It provides the introduction with information to guide the reader through the research topic. This includes the problem statement and justification of the study; research objectives, questions, hypotheses, research delimitations, research design, research limitations, and research contribution to knowledge; as well as the outline of the thesis that will be included in this chapter.

2. **Literature Review**: This chapter provides an extensive review of the literature relevant to the study's research problem. The first section walks the reader through the definitions of key concepts related to media discourse, including media representation and discourse, language and tone, representation of conflict and violence, media bias and stereotyping, and ethical considerations in media coverage. The second section dives into the role of media ownership in shaping discourse and its relationship to agenda-setting theory to show how media prioritise topics. It additionally explores how these two factors affect audience reception and interpretation in the third section. Moreover, the last section of the literature review describes the gap that the researcher found regarding the topic of this research.

3. **Research Methodology**: This chapter describes the research design, and the methods used. The methodology involves a thematic analysis approach, where data is systematically analysed through manual reading of soft copies of the printed version of the selected Portuguese newspapers. The sampling technique involves selecting a representative sample of soft copies from *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*. A

questionnaire was also administered to university students aged 18-34 to gather audience perceptions.

4. **Data Analysis and Interpretation**: This chapter presents the data analysis, discusses the results, and links the findings with previous studies in order to develop discussions and arguments. The thematic analysis is used to identify patterns and themes in the collected data, providing a deeper understanding of the media's representation of Palestine and Palestinians.

5. **Summary and Conclusion**: This section summarises the study's main findings, draws conclusions based on the results, and makes recommendations for future research. The conclusion also provides a final statement on the significance of the study's results.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Media discourse, including representation, language, conflict, bias, and ethics, are considered critical domains within media studies and quite pivotal in shaping the public's opinions and reception. Media discourse refers to the language and representation strategies used in various media outlets. This helps in constructing meaning in a community as well as shaping the public's opinion. Understanding media discourse and its strategies is of great importance to examine the portrayal of issues of conflict and violence. Moreover, agenda-setting theory and media ownership are important in media discourse and, as a result, in influencing the audience's interpretation and reception. Agenda-setting theory concludes that the media has the power to tell people what to think about through prioritising topics as well as their selection of topics and presentations. This literature review provides an overview of the existing research on the relationship between media discourse, agenda-setting theory, and audience reception.

2.2. Mass Communication

Mass communication, which studies delivering information to a large audience, is an integral part of communication studies and has developed through the years. Mass communication is done through mass media, which refers to the diverse ways in which messages are communicated to the audience (Mutz, D. C., & Goldman, S. K., 2010). This includes numerous forms such as digital media, print media, advertising, broadcast media, and film and cinema. One of the earliest studies on mass communication is a collection of experiments to test the impact of mass communication through mass media, grouped in a book written by the psychologists Hovland, Lumsdaine, and D. Sheffield in 1949. As a way of examining the influence of mass communication during wartime as well as its aftermath period, a sample of audiovisual presentations, such as war-related films, was chosen for their experiments, and questionnaires were distributed to a sample of people, particularly men. The results showed that there was a change in the audience's opinions and attitudes towards a specific idea presented in the given films, either negatively or positively. This was attributed to people's ability to learn, which differs due to their intellectual ability, background knowledge, motivation, and active participation in learning.

Moreover, the "sleeper effect" was presented, in which motivation was altered consequently, as in propaganda. It suggests the "gain over a lapse of time" (Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1949), making the effect of that gain quite noticeable. It is argued, in their book, that the audience tends to be sceptical about a certain message introduced in mass media; however, their opinions tend to change over time to confirm that same message.

Recently, with the development of digital media, mass communication has even broadened its fields and effects. In their research, Bennett and Lyengar (2008) discussed the rise of political communication, which shifted due to digital development. They also discussed how this has resulted in fragmentation of the audience's perception due to the various digital platforms they are exposed to, resulting in shifting the information received and delivered by the audience. They also suggested the effect of mass communication in the contemporary digital world, which tends to reinforce the audience's beliefs rather than change them.

2.2.1 The Hypodermic Needle Theory

On the contrary to the "sleeper effect" theory, which argues that the effect and persuasion of a certain message presented through various forms of communication increase over time, the hypodermic needle theory, which is also known as "the magic bullet theory" or 'the stimulus-response theory', has been put forward. This theory was originally proposed by Harold Laswell, the political scientist and communication theorist, suggesting that the impact of information introduced is quite immediate and direct (Kenechukwu, 2015), while taking into consideration the passiveness of the audience. This theory has been implemented as the main theoretical framework in a respective number of studies, proving this theory to be effective.

In their study, Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018) examined the spread of false information, especially political ones, on social media platforms, especially on Twitter, during the years 2006 and 2017. They also examined how false information is retweeted 70% more and tends to reach the audience more rapidly than true news. This indicates the influence of fake news on the public and their beliefs, showing the direct and immediate effect on people's perceptions, which was reinforced by digital media.

To further emphasise this notion, Okon & Ekpang II (2021) examined the validity of this theory on a sample of 1,262 respondents during the election period. It showed the direct effect of fake information used by both parties on the audience by affecting the audience's

opinion and thus their voting choices. This effect was achieved using media propaganda, especially fake information, resulting in an immediate change in people's learning and decisions.

The hypodermic needle theory is crucial to this study because it aligns with the idea that media representations can have an immediate and powerful influence on how the public perceives Palestine and Palestinians. The theory helps explain how media outlets can shape public opinion, particularly when media content frames issues in a specific way. In the context of the Portuguese media's portrayal of Palestine in the last three months of 2023, this theory supports the notion that the media's language and framing techniques could have a direct and substantial impact on audience perceptions and attitudes. This immediate influence becomes especially relevant when examining the power of narratives and misinformation in shaping public discourse.

2.2.2 Agenda-setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory, first introduced by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, is a prominent concept in media studies that examines the influence of mass media on shaping the salience and importance of issues in the public's mind. McCombs and Shaw's research (1972) investigated the effects of media outlets during an election campaign in the US in 1968, forming the basis of the agenda-setting theory. Through their study, they demonstrated a correlation between the topics heavily covered by media outlets and the public's perception of what is important in the political landscape. Additionally, they suggested that the media not only have the power to tell people what to think about but also how to react. By selecting and presenting news stories, the media can determine which topics receive attention and become significant in public discourse, while other issues may be marginalised or overlooked.

Similarly, Dearing and Rogers (1996) examined the agenda-setting theory more comprehensively by considering contexts beyond politics, such as health and environmental issues, the characteristics of the audience, and media content. In their book, they also investigated developments in media outlets, acknowledging the need to analyse media influence on society and providing valuable insights into the relationship between media and public opinion.

Moreover, researchers like Wanta and Ghanem (2007) expanded the scope of agenda-setting theory to include new communication technologies and online mass media, highlighting the relevance of this theory to the contemporary world. They suggested that several factors must be considered when studying the media's influence on audiences, such as how an issue is framed, its context, individual differences, and the medium used. Additionally, they emphasised "time lags," which refer to the delay between the communication of an issue and the audience's response to it, whether positive or negative (2007).

The agenda-setting theory is highly relevant to this study as it helps explain how the Portuguese media may prioritise and shape the public's perception of Palestine and Palestinians during the last three months of 2023. By analysing the content of *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*, this research will assess how media outlets highlight certain aspects of the conflict while potentially marginalising others, thus influencing public opinion on the issue. This theory supports the idea that media coverage not only informs but also guides the public in determining which topics are most important, making it a crucial framework for examining how narratives about Palestine are constructed and received within the Portuguese media landscape.

CDA is important to this study because it provides a powerful framework for uncovering how language is used in media discourse to reinforce certain narratives and power structures. By applying CDA, this research can reveal how the Portuguese news media construct the portrayal of Palestine and Palestinians during the last three months of 2023 and how these portrayals reflect broader socio-political power dynamics. CDA allows for a deeper understanding of how language choices influence public perceptions, shaping not only the media's framing of the conflict but also the public's reception of it. This is crucial in understanding how media texts can both reflect and perpetuate dominant ideologies.

2.3. Media Linguistics and Discourse

Media discourse refers to connected written or spoken communication that is usually longer than a sentence regarding a specific topic to an audience that is not present. It is also a "public, manufactured, on-record, form of interaction" (O'Keeffe, 2011). Media discourse has developed in parallel to media linguistics, which explores the complexity of language within media, intending to delve into the function of language in media despite the context in which it is used (Brusenskaya & Kulikova, 2018). There has been a change in the limitations of media linguistics and media discourse in traditional and journalistic mass media due to digital

communication media (Luginbühl, 2015). As a result of this change, research has shown the alternation in concepts like "medium and mediality" that used to refer to communication forms like newspapers or TV and their characteristics; however, they now refer to mass media and social media platforms of all kinds that constitute different communication forms all in one place (Luginbühl, 2015).

Due to its significance, CDA (critical discourse analysis) has been developed to examine the language used as a way of revealing power dynamics and social constructs, which is what several studies have shown. One of the classics in this field is a book written by Norman Fairclough (1989), which explains, through CDA, the connection between language and power. Fairclough analysed the different ways in which power can be exercised and maintained through language within a society by using particular linguistic expressions and discourses since he argues "language is a social practice determined by social structures" (Fairclough, 1989). Additionally, the book touches on the different techniques a language can be employed by those of power and authority to achieve goals; whether it is to moulding opinions, formulate ideologies, legitimise policies, or influence perceptions (1991). This, as a result, helps in constructing ideologies that are the basis for shaping power dynamics between individuals, groups, and institutions. Likewise, in their study, Anisa et al., (2024), examined the way language is used in companies and its effect on their reputation. They also suggested that in corporate communication, language is "a tool of power to maintain hierarchies" (2024).

2.3.1. Political Discourse

The importance of political discourse, a vital subfield of discourse analysis, comes from the way it delves into how language shapes and is shaped by political contexts. It contains speeches, debates, policy documents, or media interviews. This field highlights the strategies that political actors employ to construct identities, frame issues, and manipulate public opinion.

In addition, Teun van Dijk's works have been important in contributing to achieving a better understanding of how power and dominance are manifested via language. Van Dijk asserts, "discourse is the primary means of social communication and ideological reproduction" (van Dijk, 1997, p. 15). His multidisciplinary CDA approach, which incorporates linguistics, psychology, and sociology, demonstrates the ideologies behind political writings. Van Dijk demonstrates how elites use rhetoric to set public agendas, frequently marginalising dissident voices and maintaining existing power inequalities (van Dijk, 1997).

The digital era has transformed political discourse, with social media platforms playing an increasingly important role in political communication. These platforms provide new chances for direct public participation by circumventing traditional media gatekeepers. However, they also present concerns, such as the spread of disinformation and the emergence of echo chambers. Disinformation refers to the intentional spread of false or misleading information, often with the goal of shaping public opinion, manipulating political outcomes, or undermining trust in legitimate sources of information. Social media facilitates the rapid dissemination of disinformation due to its speed and reach, allowing unverified or misleading content to spread widely before it can be fact-checked or corrected. Echo chambers, on the other hand, refer to situations in which individuals are exposed primarily to information that aligns with their existing beliefs and values, often due to algorithmic filtering or self-selection. This reinforces their pre-existing views and limits exposure to differing perspectives, leading to increased polarisation. Cass Sunstein warns, "echo chambers can lead to increased polarisation and the spread of false information" (Sunstein, 2001, p. 45).

In conclusion, the complex interplay between language, power, and ideology is made clear by examining political speech using frameworks like CDA. Analysing the ways in which political actors frame reality through language can reveal the workings of power structures. Research must continue in order to fully comprehend the implications of the changing media landscape for democracy and public discourse.

2.3.2 *Media Representation*

Media representation plays a crucial role in contemporary society, determining how individuals, communities, and cultures are perceived by the public. This influence moulds people's thoughts and perceptions. Media can significantly impact societal norms and values by presenting specific matters and emphasising specific ideas and narratives.

Another facet of media representation is its vital role in forming public opinion. It is argued that the media determines the importance of public issues (McCombs, 2002). The mass media significantly influences people's perceptions of the outside world, both in terms of what subjects are depicted and how they are portrayed. There is, in fact, evidence that changes in the salience of issues on the media agenda impact public opinion. McCombs exemplifies this while studying the effect of mass media on constructing public opinions since he asserts how a leader's prominence in the news influences "voters' preference for the candidates" as well as voting decisions on election day (2002). Thus, at a deeper level, McCombs argues, the media's

emphasis on emotional attributes intertwined with cognitive images of leaders combines attribute agenda-setting with the formation and alteration of public opinions (2002), which underscores the agenda-setting theory.

Additionally, media representation can play a vital role in social progress. One such case that proves the contribution of media representation is what Lowenstein-Barkai (2021) proved in his paper, in which the influence of mass media on the portrayal of leaders was analysed during periods of peace agreements compared to violent pre-agreement periods, focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The findings showed that the media representation of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, significantly changed due to the positive changes in media representation. Arafat's image was less negative, which eventually contributed to peace processes and improved the social climate surrounding him, resulting in the signing of the Oslo Accords. Thus, these findings underscore the importance of considering media coverage when it comes to social progress and understanding, as well as supporting peace processes (Lowenstein-Barkai, 2021).

It is, therefore, essential to engage in the analysis of media discourse to comprehend the influence of representation in mass media, in order to explore how media texts construct meaning, guide public opinion, and influence social interactions.

2.3.3. Language and Tone

In order to understand the point of view of the author, tone and language are important aspects to take into consideration. Language refers to the various transcripts of any media form. It also refers to the choice of vocabulary that the author uses, the structure of the sentence, and the punctuation marks used. On the other hand, tone refers to the way words are used so as to indicate the attitude of the author. Insights of different fields, such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, are considered when studying language and tone and their analysis.

Several studies have shown the way a language is used during specific times for a definite purpose. For example, Konstankevych et al. (2022) found that language can be manipulated for several reasons. This, they argued, was done using certain words to "construct various images" as well as the "misrepresentation of facts" and "surrealism" (2022) conveyed in Russian propaganda during the war on Ukraine. The mere reason for this was to achieve their political goals of manipulating the consciousness of a person (Konstankevych et al., 2022).

Similarly, to examine language and tone a bit further, a different study examines the use of simpler linguistic features like punctuation marks and their effect on the audience. In their study, Jung et al. (2022) detected the influence a headline had on the public due to the use of question marks, exclamation marks, ellipses, and quotation marks. They suggested that punctuation marks can function as a tool for expressing particular emotions and emphasising parts of the headline more than others. For instance, question marks stimulate curiosity, while exclamation marks convey urgency. As for quotation marks, they highlight specific statements, making them stand out (Jung et al., 2022).

2.3.4. representation of conflict and violence

When it comes to media linguistics and discourse analysis, the representation of conflict and violence in media speech is an important field of study. This area of study looks at how media narratives create, portray, and frequently maintain particular viewpoints on conflicts and violent incidents. As a result, these representations affect the public's perception and have the power to affect social and political outcomes.

Selective reporting, framing, and the application of particular linguistic techniques are frequently used in media coverage of conflict and violence in order to promote certain points of view. Galtung and Ruge's groundbreaking study (1965) found that news values that favour immediacy and sensationalism have a significant impact on the selection of news articles, which can lead to biased depictions of conflict. They argue that "events that are dramatic, involve elite nations or people, and have a clear visual impact are more likely to be reported" (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 65). This selection process might distort public perception of conflicts by emphasising some characteristics while ignoring others.

Entman (1993) presented framing theory, which is very applicable in this scenario. According to Entman, "framing essentially involves selection and salience; to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (Entman, 1993, page 52). In the portrayal of conflict and violence, media frames can stress certain causes, assign blame, and provide solutions; therefore, altering the audience's view of events.

The media's representation of violence is also significantly influenced by language choices that may either sensationalise or sanitise the realities of war. Martin and Rose (2003) address how language may be used to elicit emotional reactions, stating that "evaluative

language, including affect, judgement, and appreciation, plays a significant role in how events are perceived and interpreted by audiences" (Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 22).

The digital era has exacerbated these difficulties, since social media platforms allow for the quick spread of violent pictures and films, sometimes without the context offered by conventional journalism. This might result in fragmented and decontextualised depictions of conflict. As Lynch (2008) points out, "the rise of user-generated content and citizen journalism complicates the landscape of media representation, as it introduces a multitude of perspectives but also the risk of spreading misinformation" (Lynch, 2008, p. 45).

Furthermore, the representation of conflict and violence is not just about what is presented, but also what is left out. Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (1988) demonstrates how media systems function within ideological frameworks, which may marginalise opposing viewpoints and promote prevailing narratives. According to them, "the selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, and emphasis of stories all serve to mobilise support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity" (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, p. 298). This might lead to a restricted representation of conflicts that serve certain political or economic goals.

To sum up, media representations of conflict and violence are a complicated process in which it is driven by a variety of elements such as the value of the news, linguistic choices, framing, and of course larger ideological backgrounds. Now, the result of analysing such representations gives significant insights into how media can frame social realities and shape public perceptions. As media landscapes shift, it is becoming increasingly vital to critically assess how conflicts and violent events are depicted to develop a more educated and nuanced view of global concerns.

2.3.5. Media Bias and Stereotypes

The examination of media bias and stereotypes assumes significant importance within the realm of media representation analysis. Media bias refers to the systematic favouritism or prejudice in media representations and coverage. This bias can be political, where news outlets may favour one political party or viewpoint, or ideological, where broader worldviews or belief systems shape how stories are framed. Sensationalism, on the other hand, involves the exaggeration or focus on shock value, often prioritising attention-grabbing headlines or stories over substantive reporting (Sloan & Mackay, 2007). Sensationalism can distort the public's

perception by emphasising drama, conflict, or emotional aspects, rather than presenting balanced information.

Media bias manifests through various forms, such as selective reporting, framing, and the use of loaded language. These tactics significantly influence public perception by shaping attitudes and reinforcing pre-existing stereotypes (Lester, 2011). For example, political reporting often focuses on certain issues or candidates while omitting others, creating narratives that align with the media's preferred political agenda. This is especially evident in election periods, as certain outlets may prioritise particular candidates or issues, leading to skewed public perception.

Political reporting is believed to be influenced by media bias, which is what Entman (2007) proved in his study regarding the impact of media framing on public opinion. The author attributed this influence to the media's focus on certain aspects of political issues while overlooking others. This, as a result, leads to constructing narratives and influencing public perspectives as a way of favouring particular political agendas. Entman (2007) explained how, during election periods, political reporting can reflect media bias. This is due to the strategies that media outlets use to emphasise certain issues and focus on specific candidates. Thus, selective reporting can influence the public on what is important and what is not.

Similarly, D'Alessio and Allen (2000) conducted a meta-analysis study of media bias during election periods. Their analysis showed that outright bias, which is explicit bias, is less common than subtle or implicit bias, which are both significant in shaping the presidential elections and the electoral discourse. Subtle bias, they argue, which refers to the tone of media coverage and the amount that's given to certain candidates, influences the voter's opinion and, thereby, their decision.

Additionally, a study carried out by Watts, Shah, and Fan (1999) examined public perceptions of media bias during presidential elections in the years 1988, 1992, and 1996. Their study found that the increase in public opinion regarding liberal media bias was not due to bias in the actual news coverage of candidates. Instead, it was attributed to the increase in media coverage about media bias itself. The concept of liberal media bias, as argued by the authors, was emphasised by conservatives to reinforce this perception.

Moreover, research done by Groeling (2013) explored how partisan media in the United States, such as Fox News and MSNBC, appeal to their viewers by offering news that goes

along with their political ideologies and beliefs. This, consequently, reinforces people's existing political biases and would deepen the division among the public. Selective reporting and framing deepen the polarisation since each party has a different perception due to their source of news.

In conclusion, media bias and stereotyping in media, particularly in political reporting, is a widespread matter that has a significant impact on defining the political discourse. In addition, due to the nature of media bias and its effects on society, it is important to promote fairness, accuracy, and inclusivity in media representations. Media consumers are, therefore, required to be vigilant in recognising biased narratives (Sloan & Mackay, 2007).

2.3.6. Ethical Considerations in Media Coverage

In order to ensure that the information disseminated to the public is accurate, fair, and responsible, ethical considerations must be taken. Additionally, to maintain the integrity of journalism and to promote public trust, ethical standards governing media practice should be taken as crucial, in particular when we are talking about reporting conflicts and covering sensitive social matters.

Firstly, accuracy is one of the core principles of ethical media coverage, as verification of the information is obligatory before the publishing process. This shall ensure that their reports are based on facts rather than speculation or non-trusted sources. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) argue, "the primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing" (p. 12). This underscores the importance of accuracy, as misinformation can mislead the public and distort democratic processes.

Secondly, there are two critical components of ethical media coverage; fairness and impartiality, especially when reporting on controversial issues. Thus, reporters and journalists have to seek to present non-biased viewpoints. The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics (2014) emphasises the need for journalists to "diligently seek subjects of news coverage to allow them to respond to criticism or allegations of wrongdoing." This principle ensures that all sides of a story are represented, helping to prevent bias and partiality in reporting.

In the context of conflict and violence, Lynch and McGoldrick (2007) advocate for peace journalism, which encourages reporters to consider the consequences of their reporting and to focus on solutions rather than sensationalism. They note, "peace journalism seeks to

create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict" (2007, p. 5). This approach emphasises the ethical duty of journalists to prevent worsening conflicts through their reporting. Ethical concerns become even more significant when the media covers these events, as they can greatly influence public perception and affect the people involved.

The development of digital media and user-generated material has raised new ethical concerns. The rate at which information flows online might result in the fast circulation of incorrect information. Ward (2011) points out, "the digital age requires a new ethics of journalism that addresses the unique challenges of digital media, including the need for speed, the blurring of professional and amateur content, and the maintenance of credibility" (p. 22). Thus, keeping traditional ethical standards and adapting to new media landscapes are a must for journalists to take to navigate these challenges. As media environments change, continuing debate and education about ethical norms will be critical in tackling new difficulties while maintaining the media's confidence and credibility.

2.4. Media Ownership

Understanding media ownership and its dynamics reveals intentions beyond the specific representations of different groups and issues in the world. Hence, it is important to uncover the interests and biases that shape media content. Noam, an American economist, and professor at Columbia Business School, asserts in his book *Media Ownership and Concentration in America* (2009) that examining media ownership structures provides insights into the underlying mechanisms that influence media representation, contributing to informed discussions about the democratic functioning of media systems. As Noam (2009) notes, "he who controls the media controls the minds of the public" (p. 10). Thus, media ownership remains a vital topic in media studies, impacting broader societal discourse.

Furthermore, economic, and political factors significantly influence media ownership structures across different contexts. Hitchens (1994) notes that "the regulation of media ownership in Europe has aimed to prevent undue concentration and promote pluralism" (p. 585), which means that several agendas control what to be shared with the public. Such factors lead to concentrated ownership, where a few large corporations can set the media agenda and influence public opinion.

Additionally, Schlosberg (2016) highlights the impact of concentrated media ownership, stating that it "shapes media content by prioritising certain issues and perspectives over others, thus influencing the public agenda and framing public discourse" (p. 123). He further explains that "media conglomerates can obscure critical information by focusing on sensationalism and entertainment, undermining the public's ability to make informed decisions" (2016, p. 78). This control over media narratives can reinforce specific ideologies and interests, often reflecting the biases of the owners.

Finally, Pickard (2018) underscores the importance of media diversity, noting that "ownership structures profoundly affect the range of voices and perspectives that are available in the public sphere" (p. 211). He emphasises that "without regulatory interventions, media systems tend toward monopolistic practices that can stifle democratic discourse" (2018, p. 213). This concludes that media ownership must be taken into consideration when it comes to taking news for granted as a matter of fact regarding issues around the world.

2.5. Audience Reception and Interpretation

To understand the influence of audience reception and interpretation in the study of media linguistics and discourse analysis, it is necessary to examine how audiences perceive, interpret, and react to media messages. Understanding these processes is critical since the impact of media is dictated not just by the information provided, but also by how the audience perceives and comprehends it.

The encoding/decoding model of Stuart Hall (1980) is foundational in this area, proposing that media messages are encoded with meaning by producers and decoded by audiences in various ways. Hall argues, "there is no necessary correspondence between encoding and decoding" (1980, p. 131), indicating that the intended message of the media producer is not always interpreted as intended by the audience. Audiences can accept, negotiate, or oppose the meanings presented in media texts based on their own social contexts and experiences.

On the other hand, the reception theory goes beyond this by investigating how various demographic groups understand media information. In his study, Morley (1980) on the television program "Nationwide" found that socioeconomic class and cultural background had a substantial impact on how people receive media messages. Morley also discovered that "interpretations of the same media content varied significantly among different social groups"

(1980, p. 113). Thus, education, economic standing, and cultural capital all play important roles in determining audience receptivity.

Digital media and the growth of social platforms have revolutionised audience response, allowing for more engaging and participatory kinds of participation. Jenkins (2006) refers to this trend as a "convergence culture," in which audiences not only consume media but actively create and share material, resulting in a more dynamic and participatory media landscape. He claims, "in convergence culture, audiences are not just recipients of media, but collaborators and co-creators" (2006, p. 257). This has resulted in new kinds of audience interpretation, in which media consumption is linked to content development and community interaction.

Furthermore, the worldwide accessibility of digital media has aided the cross-cultural circulation of media material, resulting in a variety of interpretations across cultural settings. As Kraidy (2002) points out, "global media flows result in complex interactions between global and local cultures, leading to hybrid forms of media reception and interpretation" (p. 317).

2.6. Previous Studies

Research on the representation of Palestine and Palestinians in Western media has been relatively extensive, focusing on issues such as framing, discourse analysis, and the influence of linguistic choices on public perception. However, when it comes to the Portuguese media, studies on this specific topic are extremely limited. While there is an abundance of research on Western media portrayals of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly in the British and American contexts, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding how Portuguese news media have depicted Palestine and Palestinians, especially during the last three months of 2023.

In a study conducted by Al-Ashqar (2024), the author examined the influence of language in framing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2021 on social media platforms, with a focus on Twitter. Although the study concentrated on social media rather than traditional media outlets, it provided valuable insights into how linguistic choices contribute to narrative framing and, consequently, how public opinion is shaped. This study adds to the broader understanding of how Western media tend to represent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Similarly, Sanz Sabido (2015) conducted a critical discourse analysis of the representation of Palestine in the British press. This research uncovered postcolonial narratives and highlighted the biases and stereotypes present in media coverage of Palestine. Sabido's work emphasised the importance of historical and cultural contexts in shaping media representations and demonstrated how these contexts feed into larger ideological frameworks.

In addition to these studies, several scholars have contributed significantly to the understanding of how Western media represent Palestine. Luke Peterson's (2015) Palestinian Political Discourse: Representation of Power and Struggle in Western News Media explored the framing of Palestinian narratives within the context of Western colonial discourse. Peterson's work is pivotal in demonstrating how dominant colonial frameworks continue to shape Western media narratives. Amahl Bishara's (2013) Back Stories: U.S. News Production and Palestinian Politics provides a critical examination of the constraints faced by Palestinian journalists, particularly within Israeli-dominated media structures. Bishara highlights how these structural limitations influence the narratives that emerge in the media, pointing to the difficulties in producing balanced reporting. Furthermore, Greg Philo and Mike Berry (2011) in More Bad News from Israel analysed British media's role in shaping public opinion about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, identifying biases that influence narrative framing and noting the long-lasting effects this has on public perceptions.

These works provide a crucial foundation for understanding media representations of Palestine and Palestinians. While previous studies have focused on British and American media, this research will build upon these foundational theories and frameworks by examining Portuguese media's portrayal of Palestine during the last three months of 2023. By doing so will contribute to the broader discourse on media representation, framing, and bias, particularly in contexts that have been under-researched.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods and approaches used in this research to collect data, test the framework, and answer the research questions. The research design section covers the approach, method type, and details related to the data collected from *Público* and *Diário de Notícias,* as well as questionnaires. This is followed by a discussion of the sample selection, sampling strategy, and ethical considerations. The final section presents the data analysis method. Figure 3.1 provides a general insight into the research methodology.

Figure 1

The Research Methodology
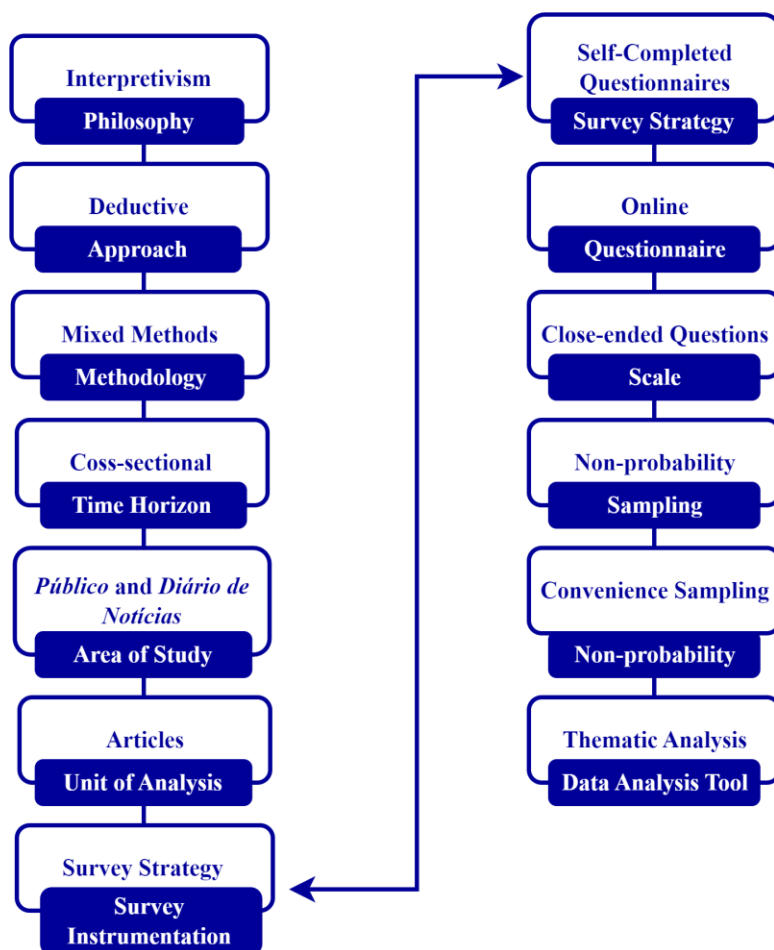
3.2 Research Design

3.2.1. Research Philosophy

Five fundamental philosophies were introduced by Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2019): critical realism, interpretivism, pragmatism, positivism, and postmodernism. The aforementioned authors suggest that interpretivism relies on understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals, which emphasises the role of human interpretation in social contexts. This philosophy focuses on exploring how people make sense of their world, often using qualitative methods, such as thematic analysis, to show underlying meanings and narratives. This mechanism is well-suited to this paper since it aims to understand complex social phenomena. This, in return, aligns with the study's objective to explore the perspectives and representations presented in media coverage.

3.2.2 Research Approach

Inductive and deductive methods are two of the main research approaches. In the inductive approach, a theory is formed after collecting and analysing data (Armat et al., 2018). On the other hand, the deductive approach involves a relevant theory and therefore necessitates developing a research methodology to test this theory. This method is often associated with a more structured, logical framework in which the researcher moves from the general (theory) to the specific (data). This allows for hypothesis testing based on existing literature. Considering the research's employment of a mixed-method approach, the deductive methodology was employed.

Considering the research's employment of a mixed-method approach, the deductive methodology was utilised. By doing so, the study was based on established theories, such as the agenda-setting theory, regarding media representation and audience perception, while using both qualitative and quantitative data to systematically test these theories. The deductive approach provides a framework to analyse how media framing techniques influence public perception. This, as a result, ensures that the research remains focused on either validating or challenging specific theoretical assumptions regarding the portrayal of Palestine and Palestinians in Portuguese newspapers. Finally, this approach offers clarity and structure by ensuring that the methodology aligns with the study's objectives to examine and compare existing theories with the data collected.

3.2.3 Research Methodology

According to Sekaran & Bougie (2019), research methodologies can be divided into three categories: quantitative, qualitative, and a combination of both. Quantitative research focuses on objective measurement and statistical analysis. It is done by gathering data through systematic and structured methods like surveys and experiments, aiming to identify patterns and causal relationships (Malhotra, 2019; Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). On the contrary, qualitative research seeks to understand social phenomena from the viewpoints of the subjects. This approach provides detailed data achieved by using techniques like focus groups, observation, and interviews. The information obtained through qualitative research is analysed through methods within qualitative data analysis approaches such as thematic analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Finally, a mixed-methods approach combines both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, providing a more comprehensive viewpoint. Hence, this study employed a mixed-method approach chosen for its compatibility with the particular research objectives being examined.

3.2.4 Time Horizon

Research can be categorised based on a temporal perspective into two types: cross-sectional and longitudinal. Cross-sectional studies focus on collecting data at a singular timeframe, while longitudinal studies extend over a long period of time, throughout which data is collected at multiple time intervals (Saunders et al., 2019). This study adopted a cross-sectional time frame as the data collection took place at a single point in time.

3.2.5 Area of Study

The area of this research focuses on two Portuguese newspapers, *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*, and their coverage of issues related to Palestine and Palestinians in their articles. These newspapers were chosen due to their significant influence and readership within Portugal, as well as their role in shaping public opinion and discourse on international issues. By analysing how these newspapers report on both the political situation in Palestine and the experiences and representation of Palestinians, this selection aligns with the research objective of analysing how prominent Portuguese media outlets portray Palestine and Palestinians, providing a representative sample for the study.

3.2.6 Sampling Strategy

According to Rai & Thapa (2015), purposive sampling helps in gathering a comprehensive and targeted dataset from a specific unit. Accordingly, this study employed a purposive sampling strategy in the selection of articles from Público and *Diário de Notícias*. This strategy involved choosing articles based on their relevance to the topic.

Additionally, Bougie & Sekaran (2019) suggest that convenience sampling involves gathering information from individuals within a certain population who are easily accessible. It does not follow a random or systematic sampling method; rather, it selects participants who are ready and available to provide data. Therefore, for the questionnaires utilised in this study, a convenience sampling strategy was used.

This strategy is important as it allows efficient collection of data from university students aged 18-34 who are accessible and relevant to the study's focus on public perception. Convenience sampling was selected due to time and resource constraints, making it a practical choice to gather data quickly while still gathering valuable insights from a population that is more likely to engage with media representations of international issues.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Data Collection Tool

According to Saunders et al. (2019), there are various types of questionnaires, such as self-completed questionnaires, which can be distributed to respondents either online or by hand. In this study, online self-completed questionnaires were used and administered to university students aged 18-34. These respondents were chosen to assess the influence of two Portuguese newspapers, *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*, on public perception regarding the representation of Palestine and Palestinians. The primary purpose of using questionnaires was to gather data on how media coverage affects readers' understanding of the conflict, thus providing insights into the newspapers' role in shaping public opinion. Therefore, it was crucial to design the questionnaires to ensure their reliability, validity, and clarity of questions by using reliable sources for questionnaire design. The questionnaire featured closed-ended questions, offering simplified data analysis, enhanced comparability, efficient response times, and increased objectivity in enforcement and evaluation (Saunders et al., 2019; Malhotra, 2020).

Furthermore, this study utilised archival research and content analysis of articles taken from *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*. These two techniques were employed to systematically code and quantify the frequency and context of specific words, phrases, or themes within the newspaper articles, ensuring a systematic assessment of the data (Ventresca & Mohr, 2017).

3.3.2 Survey Instruments

The survey employed in this study was conducted using information from various literature sources, primarily derived from recent research on media representation and framing. This survey, designed specifically for the context of Portuguese media's portrayal of Palestine and Palestinians, is structured into several key segments to ensure comprehensive data collection.

The first part of the survey is an introductory component aligning with the researcher's commitment to ethical research practices and providing participants with a clear understanding of the survey's goals and objectives. The second part categorises the participants based on essential demographic criteria, including gender, age, educational level, and field of study. In the third section, variables are examined through closed-ended questions formulated on a 5-point Likert scale. Respondents were expected to express the extent of their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements. The Likert scale ranges from 5 ("strongly agree") to 1 ("strongly disagree"), following the framework proposed by Saunders et al. (2019).

Participants were chosen based on their accessibility and relevance to the study. University students aged 18-34 were selected as they represent a demographic that is both educated and engaged with media content. Hence, they are more likely to form opinions influenced by media representation. This population is also part of the social environment where media discourses about international conflicts are discussed and analysed, which aligns with the research objectives. These online self-completed questionnaires were constructed using Google Forms and distributed to participants via university email lists and academic social media platforms. The appendices contain the finalised version of the questionnaire.

3.4 Research Ethics

It is essential to consider research ethics to ensure the integrity of the different research segments and processes, especially when examining sensitive topics. According to Saunders et al. (2019), it is crucial to get consent from survey participants while also informing them of the

study's objectives so that they have an understanding of how their information was going to be utilised. Consent was obtained through an introductory section in the online questionnaire, where participants were provided with clear information about the research goals and the nature of their involvement. Following the guidelines of Sekaran & Bougie (2019), and to ensure confidentiality, no personal information was collected. As for content analysis, only newspaper articles that are publicly available were worked with, respecting the standards of research.

3.5 Data Analysis

In the current study, the data analysis employed thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns within the qualitative data. This represented a deeper understanding of the narratives regarding the representation of Palestine and Palestinians in Portuguese newspapers. The data was systematically coded, in which themes were categorised based on their significance and frequency. This allowed a detailed exploration of the underlying messages and tones, resulting in a more profound interpretation of how media framing influences public perception.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

In this study, the initial phases of data analysis involved data preparation, screening, and descriptive analysis, which were crucial for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the dataset. To identify recurrent themes and patterns within the textual data from *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*, a thematic analysis was conducted. This method facilitated a deep understanding of the underlying narratives and representations.

Additionally, a questionnaire was administered to gather audience perceptions, which provided valuable insights into how readers interpret the coverage of the conflict. Furthermore, this chapter presents an analysis of the framing techniques employed in the newspapers, focusing on how specific frames shape the portrayal of the conflict and its stakeholders. While both newspapers offer different approaches to coverage, these differences are explored in detail later in the chapter, highlighting their distinct tones, framing, and focus. Coverage patterns were also examined to understand the frequency and context of reporting on Palestine and Palestinians in *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*. Through this analysis, the chapter aims to interpret the data, highlighting how language and narrative structures contribute to the representation of Palestine and Palestinians in these newspapers.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

This section presents a detailed thematic analysis of the data collected from *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* regarding the representation of Palestine and Palestinians. The analysis was conducted in a systematic manner, following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. **Data familiarisation:** This step involved immersing oneself in the data by reading and re-reading the articles to develop a deep understanding of the content. Initial reviews of the articles were conducted, and preliminary notes and impressions were made, which were crucial for grasping the context.

2. **Generalising initial codes:** Guided by the research questions, this step involved systematically working through the articles to generate initial codes. Significant

extracts were identified, and codes were assigned to relevant segments of the data. These codes represented key patterns related to the research objectives.

3. **Searching for themes:** At this stage, the codes were organised into potential themes, with relevant coded data gathered within these themes. After comparing the findings and examining the commonalities and differences, the themes were refined to create a cohesive framework. These themes were then further divided into sub-themes to capture additional aspects of the data.

4. **Reviewing themes:** The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. This process involved verifying that the themes were distinct from one another and were well-supported by the data.

5. **Defining and naming themes:** Each theme was then defined and named, identifying the essence of each theme and its sub-themes. This included clarifying the scope of each theme and selecting representative quotes from the articles to illustrate them.

6. **Producing the report:** The final step involved producing the report, where the findings were presented in a coherent manner. This section includes detailed descriptions and analyses of each theme, supported by relevant excerpts from the data.

4.2.1 Civilian Casualties and Human Suffering

4.2.1.1. Casualties and Loss of Life

The reporting in both *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* extensively addresses the casualties and loss of life among Palestinians, employing specific language and terminology to evoke empathy and underscore the severity of the situation. Terms such as 'matança' (slaughter), 'mortes' (deaths), 'crianças mortas' (dead children), 'desaparecidas' (missing), 'enterradas' (buried), 'fatalidade' (fatality), 'cadáveres' (corpses), and 'vítimas' (victims) are frequently used, highlighting the violence inflicted upon Palestinians.

The term 'matança' (slaughter), which appears five times across the 69 selected articles, conveys a strong sense of brutality and indiscriminate violence, often associated with large-scale killings (Struhl, 2018). However, it is important to note that the articles do not explicitly

use terms like "massacre" or "genocide," which have distinct legal and historical connotations. 'Matança' is used in the context of the articles to describe the killings as barbaric and inhumane, typically targeting defenceless and helpless civilians (Solutions, 2004), thus portraying these acts as unjust and immoral. Other terms, such as 'mortes' (deaths), mentioned 15 times, and 'crianças mortas' (dead children), appearing ten times, further emphasise the human toll and tragic loss of life.

Terms like 'fatalidade' (fatality) and 'cadáveres' (corpses), used six and seven times respectively, further illustrate the scale and horror of the conflict. These terms carry significant emotional weight, aiming to elicit reactions such as shock, anger, or horror from the audience. Höijer (2004) notes that the strategic use of such language amplifies the perceived magnitude of the conflict, thereby creating a sense of urgency.

The terms 'desaparecidas' (missing) and 'enterradas' (buried), mentioned four and three times, respectively, not only highlight the ongoing uncertainty and unresolved tension but also evoke emotional ambiguity for the audience. In his study of World War I, Winter (1998) discusses how such terms reflect the suffering of victims' families who are left without closure, particularly in the context of soldiers who went missing or were never properly buried. His analysis of the cultural memory of war demonstrates how these unresolved fates contribute to prolonged grief and emotional ambiguity. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, similar emotions are evoked in media representations, as families continue to face uncertainty regarding the fate of missing persons and the dignity of proper burial, further deepening the psychological toll on the affected communities.

The term 'vítimas' (victims), which appears 13 times, includes all those affected by the violence, emphasising their helplessness, passivity, and suffering. Like 'desaparecidas' (missing) and 'enterradas' (buried), it evokes a collective sense of innocence in need of protection. Moeller (2002) discusses how the media's frequent portrayal of victims in conflict, particularly in the context of war and disaster reporting, can shape public perceptions by emphasising their vulnerability and helplessness. In this case, the frequent use of 'vítimas' (victims) in the articles frames Palestinians as passive recipients of violence rather than active participants in the conflict.

Moreover, the mention of 'crianças' (children) underscores the vulnerability of the victims, as they are universally regarded as defenceless (Ščerba, 2020). Their deaths are

particularly tragic and, according to the UN, represent one of the six grave violations against children in times of war (2023). Specifying the number of children killed highlights the moral and ethical dimensions of this situation, illustrating the indiscriminate nature of the violence and the injustice of harming the most defenceless members of society. By choosing such terms, the journalists not only document the events but also guide the audience's response, stirring empathy and outrage.

It has been observed that the choice of the word 'pessoas' (people) instead of 'Palestinianos' (Palestinians) has been occasionally used. On the surface, this might appear inclusive and neutral (Badiou, 2016). However, not specifying 'Palestinianos' (Palestinians) obscures the identity of the victims, diluting the reader's understanding of the ethnic, cultural, and national aspects of the tragedy. Referring to Palestinians as 'pessoas' (people) can minimise or even erase their identity, which is problematic in a conflict where identity is crucial. This affects the clarity of the Palestinian narrative, making it vague and difficult to understand who is suffering and why.

Additionally, figures and numbers are used to highlight the magnitude of the conflict and evoke a sense of urgency. For example, the repeated mention of casualty figures, such as '[s]egundo as autoridades locais, mais de oito mil pessoas morreram, incluindo cerca de 3500 crianças' (more than eight thousand people have died, including around 3500 children) (Público, 2023), not only quantifies the loss but also personalises the tragedy by forcing the audience to confront the human cost. This underscores the ethical dimension of the reporting, emphasising the necessity of ethical considerations and holding the involved parties accountable.

4.2.1.2. Psychological and Emotional Impact

The psychological and emotional impact of this tragedy on Palestinians is profound and multifaceted, making it an essential aspect to address. The reporting in Público and Diário de Notícias delves deeply into the psychological and emotional toll of the conflict on Palestinians, employing language that vividly captures the mental anguish experienced by those living under constant threat.

The nature of the Palestinians' suffering is reflected in the language used in these reports. Statements such as '75 anos de traumas coletivos que foram e continuam' (75 years of collective trauma that has been and continues) (Público, 2023) illustrate the shared and intergenerational

impact of the conflict, underscoring that the psychological effect is both deep and ongoing. This portrayal aligns with research on intergenerational trauma, which demonstrates how the psychological scars of conflict can be passed down through generations, perpetuating a cycle of persistent suffering (Danieli, 1998).

This language shapes and influences the audience's perception of the conflict by framing the trauma as a continuous and unresolved issue. This ongoing psychological damage is further emphasised by the statement '[n]enhum de nós consegue dormir' (none of us can sleep) (Público, 2023), which vividly presents the pervasive anxiety and insomnia experienced by Palestinians. The disruption of sleep, a fundamental human need, symbolises the extent to which the conflict has permeated every aspect of their lives, leading to a community living under constant stress and mental burden. Additionally, an article from Diário de Notícias quotes a child from Gaza saying, "os meus sonhos foram destruídos. Eu queria ser jogadora de futebol, mas já não posso" (my dreams were destroyed. I wanted to be a football player, but I can't anymore) (Diário de Notícias, 2023). This highlights how the conflict not only physically harms the children but also destroys their hopes for the future, further contributing to their psychological trauma. By highlighting these disruptions, the journalists effectively draw attention to the severe psychological consequences of chronic stress in conflict zones, consistent with studies showing that continuous exposure to violence and insecurity can lead to psychological disorders, including anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Hobfoll et al., 2012).

Despite the inevitability of mourning, grief, and sadness, there is a deliberate effort to resist being consumed by these emotions. This suggests a psychological strategy where strength is drawn from the ability to endure and not allow emotions to overpower one's determination. Mourning and sadness, which typically represent withdrawal and sorrow, are portrayed as processes that, while deeply felt, do not diminish the Palestinians' will to resist. Phrases such as 'que o luto não lhes roubou a determinação em permanece' (mourning has not robbed them of their determination to remain) and 'É claro que estou triste, mas não deixo que isso me enfraqueça' (of course I am sad, but I don't let it weaken me) (Público, 2023) suggest a conscious decision to maintain inner strength. This inner strength is further emphasised in statements like "[f]icarei aqui enquanto for viva" (I'll stay here as long as I live) (Público, 2023), highlighting a form of psychological resistance marked by an unwavering commitment to their homeland. Ungar (2013), a researcher in the field of psychological resilience, suggests

that framing victims as active agents in their own survival fosters a greater sense of empathy and solidarity among the audience.

Finally, the inclusion of human-interest stories plays a crucial role in personalising the psychological and emotional impact of the tragedy by focusing on the lived experiences of Palestinians and their emotional journeys. By bringing these narratives closer to the audience, the journalists evoke empathy and a deeper understanding of the situation. Such stories help bridge the gap between distant conflicts and the audience's everyday experiences, making them more immediate and relatable (Kitch, 2000). This approach deepens the audience's emotional engagement and connection to the victims.

4.2.1.3. Impact on Families and Communities

When examining the impact of this tragedy on Palestinians, it is essential to recognise that the consequences extend far beyond the immediate physical destruction and loss of life. The tragedy deeply disrupts the social fabric, fracturing its most fundamental units: families and communities. The reporting in both newspapers goes beyond surface-level coverage, using powerful language to convey the profound devastation caused by displacement, loss, and the relentless struggle for survival.

Terms and phrases such as 'pessoas deslocadas' (displaced persons) and 'palestinianos que abandonaram as suas casas' (Palestinians who fled their homes) (Público, 2023) serve as reminders of the physical and emotional trouble experienced by Palestinian families forced to flee their homes due to the tragic violence. The language used by journalists mirrors findings from research by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), which highlights that displacement is not merely a physical relocation but a deeply traumatic event that strips individuals of their identity, security, community ties, and sense of belonging (Ferris & Kirisci, 2016). This loss, combined with the uncertainty of their future, as Palestinian families struggle to find new shelter and access basic services, amplifies the emotional impact of leaving everything they know behind. The journalists' language not only reports the facts but also engages the audience by focusing on personal loss and displacement, making the narrative more relatable and emotionally charged to help the audience internalise the struggles of Palestinians.

The repeated mention of Palestinian families being displaced and fleeing their homes underscores the urgency that accompanies such forced migrations. The decision to leave is made under extreme duress, resulting in the abandonment of homes, possessions, communities, and even loved ones. By consistently using language, such as '1,8 milhões de pessoas em Gaza, o equivalente a 75% da população, foram deslocadas' (around 1.8 million people in Gaza, 75% of the population, have been displaced) (Diário de Notícias, 2023), which captures the emotional and psychological toll of these forced migrations, the journalists ensure that the audience perceives the profound injustice of this tragedy. This portrayal is particularly impactful when considering research that highlights the long-term psychological and physical health effects of forced relocations, especially on children (Betancourt & Khan, 2008). Displaced children are at a higher risk of experiencing traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and behavioural issues, exacerbated by the loss of social networks and disruption to their education. By focusing on these vulnerable groups, the journalists not only report the facts but also evoke a deep emotional response from the audience, urging them to empathise with the victims and understand the full scope of the tragedy.

Additionally, displacement is not only an individual experience but also a collective trauma that affects entire families and communities, leading to a breakdown in the Palestinian family structure. Journalists reporting on the conflict frequently highlight these disruptions by focusing on the stories of families torn apart, with men often killed or imprisoned, leaving women and children to fend for themselves. This shift in family dynamics, as women and children take on new roles and responsibilities, increases their vulnerability, exposing them to the violence and chaos of displacement (Moser & McIlwaine, 2004). The journalists' careful portrayal of these experiences, using touching language and emotive narratives, emphasises the human suffering behind the statistics, making the audience aware of the deep and lasting impact of the conflict on civilian life. By emphasising these personal stories, the journalists evoke a profound emotional response, fostering empathy and a sense of urgency to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Moreover, *Público* often uses more emotive language when describing the psychological and emotional impact on families, such as referring to "the loss of homes, possessions, and loved ones" (*Público*, 2023), which amplifies the audience's emotional connection to the victims. On the other hand, *Diário de Notícias* tends to maintain a more neutral and detached tone, concentrating on the socio-political consequences of displacement,

such as the broader disruption to the Palestinian community and its institutions, rather than focusing on personal grief and trauma.

The portrayal of family dynamics also varies between the two newspapers. In *Público*, there is more emphasis on the role of women and children who are left vulnerable due to the loss of male family members, as seen in references to families torn apart, with men either killed or imprisoned. The narrative in *Público* often draws attention to the emotional burden on women and children, portraying them as the most affected by the conflict, both emotionally and practically. *Diário de Notícias*, however, places more focus on the broader societal breakdown caused by displacement and its long-term impact on community cohesion, with less attention paid to the intimate details of individual family members' struggles.

4.2.1.4. Resource Shortage

The ongoing tragedy in Palestine has led to a severe shortage of essential resources, significantly increasing the suffering of Palestinians. The reporting in both newspapers highlights the struggles Palestinians face, particularly the lack of food, water, medicine, and other vital supplies, making it a humanitarian crisis that requires immediate attention.

The repeated mention of food shortages in the reporting—highlighted eight times—underscores the critical nature of this issue. Journalists emphasise how displacement forces families to leave their homes, disrupting their access to essential nutrients and leading to widespread malnutrition and hunger. For example, Diário de Notícias reports on "vários casos de crianças e famílias que não têm acesso à água, abrigo e comida durante vários dias seguidos" (several cases of children and families who do not have access to water, shelter, and food for several days in a row) (Diário de Notícias, 2023). This highlights the acute deprivation faced by Palestinian families as they endure this humanitarian crisis. Moreover, a Diário de Notícias article references a UN food security report, which concludes that "mais de um em cada quatro agregados familiares em Gaza enfrenta uma carência alimentar extrema e existe o risco de fome nos próximos seis meses" (more than one in four households in Gaza faces extreme food shortages, and there is a risk of famine within the next six months unless access to food, water, and health and sanitation services is restored) (Diário de Notícias, 2023). This underscores the looming threat of famine and the urgent need for resources. The reporting not only brings attention to the physical weakening of Palestinians due to lack of food but also illustrates the psychological toll, including the stress and anxiety of not knowing when the next meal will

come, which can contribute to health issues such as depression and PTSD (El-Khodary, Samara, & Askew, 2020). Additionally, the journalists' focus on the children's suffering from malnutrition draws attention to the long-term developmental problems caused by inadequate nutrition, such as stunted growth and cognitive impairments (UNICEF, 2019). Through their coverage, the journalists make the audience aware of the resource shortages and their serious impact on the Palestinian population.

Water shortages, though mentioned less frequently than food, are equally important in the journalists' coverage. Access to clean drinking water is a basic necessity for survival, yet many Palestinian families find themselves without reliable sources. The shortage of water, mentioned five times in the report, is not just a matter of convenience but a matter of life and death. Journalists highlight how the lack of clean water increases the risk of waterborne diseases, which can be deadly in a population already weakened by hunger and stress (WHO, 2018). As noted in Diário de Notícias, "mais de meio milhão [de habitantes de Gaza] esgotaram as reservas alimentares e enfrentam uma 'fome catastrófica'" (more than half a million [of Gaza's inhabitants] have exhausted their food reserves and face a 'catastrophic famine'), further illustrating the severe situation (Diário de Notícias, 2023). This issue is further deepened by the inability to maintain hygiene, leading to additional health complications and adding another layer of suffering to an already vulnerable population.

4.2.2. Ethical and Human Rights Violations

4.2.2.1. Violation of International Law

In their reporting, both *Público* and Diário de Notícias address Israeli violations of international law concerning the tragedy unfolding against Palestinians. The reporting also focuses on the language used to describe incidents that constitute war crimes, informing the audience that these incidents are not merely military operations but rather violations of fundamental human rights.

For example, when using the expression 'assassinato indiscriminado de população civil' (indiscriminate killing of civilians) (Público, 2023), journalists aim to highlight the lack of distinction between military targets and civilian areas, as well as the unlawful, arbitrary violence akin to extrajudicial killings, as presented in legal analyses (Aceves, 2018). The articles further illustrate Israeli ethical violations and the disregard for legal protections meant to safeguard civilians. Such language reinforces a narrative of brutality and lawlessness,

evoking a strong moral response from the audience. The frequent mention of "crimes de guerra" (war crimes) further emphasises this narrative, as journalists aim to underscore the consequences of these actions, which are intended to hold the involved party accountable in the court of public opinion.

Similarly, in their reporting on violations of international law, *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* give significant attention to targeted attacks on religious sites such as churches, which have both legal and moral implications. By highlighting such attacks, journalists demonstrate the importance of religious sites to the cultural and religious structure of Palestinian society and show that their destruction results not only in physical loss but also in deliberate attacks on religious freedom. This narrative aids the audience in understanding the Israeli violation of Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion as a fundamental human right. By using terms like "[a] igreja atacada fica no centro da Cidade de Gaza" (the church that was attacked is in the centre of Gaza City) (Público, 2023), the articles document these violations, amplifying the moral shock among the audience and resonating deeply with their sense of justice and morality.

4.2.2.2. Collective Punishment

The reporting on collective punishment against Palestinians presents both the human cost and the legal implications of such actions. By employing specific language, journalists aim to reinforce the narrative that these actions constitute violations of international humanitarian law.

For example, terms such as "limpeza étnica" (ethnic cleansing) and "expulsar milhões de palestinos" (expel millions of Palestinians) (Público, 2023) are used to illustrate the systematic ethnic cleansing directed against Palestinians. The term ethnic cleansing, which refers to the "rendering [of] an area ethnically homogenous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons from another ethnic or religious group" (Bassiouni, 1994), is frequently used in both newspapers to emphasise the deliberate alteration of Gaza's demographic composition.

In Público, for instance, the Israeli far-right is explicitly linked to "os bombardeamentos maciços de Gaza e com a limpeza étnica na Cisjordânia" (the massive bombardment of Gaza and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank) (Público, 2023). On the other

hand, Diário de Notícias focuses on the devastating impact of displacement, as seen in the reporting that "os bombardeamentos israelitas devastaram o enclave palestiniano. Estes ataques forçaram o deslocação de 1,7 milhão dos seus 2,4 milhões de habitantes" (Israeli bombings have devastated the Palestinian enclave. These attacks forced the displacement of 1.7 million of its 2.4 million inhabitants) (Diário de Notícias, 2023). These explicit references to ethnic cleansing and mass displacement help frame the events as a deliberate strategy aimed at altering Gaza's demographic makeup.

The articles heavily emphasise actions related to ethnic cleansing due to their effects, which extend beyond physical and material loss to inflict severe psychological harm. Victims of ethnic cleansing have been reported to suffer from higher levels of depression, PTSD, and other psychological disorders (Weine et al., 1995). By highlighting such terms, journalists seek to evoke strong moral emotions from the audience, as they can "encourage political consciousness, mobilise action, and bind the community in solidarity and care" (Pajnik, 2024).

It is noticed that in *Público*, ethnic cleansing is often rationalised by invoking 'danos colaterais' (collateral damage), which refers to "harm done to persons, animals, or things that agents are not morally permitted to target in the conduct of war" (Lefkowitz, 2008). This justification is critically examined in the articles, which contrast it with Article 8(2)(b)(iv) of the Rome Statute, prohibiting the "intentionally launching an attack in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss" (Heller & Lawrence, 2007). In their reporting, journalists condemn the notion of collateral damage, arguing that even if "the combatant does not intend to cause harm to noncombatants... it does not suffice to justify his conduct" (Heller & Lawrence, 2007), nor does it mitigate the trauma inflicted. This reporting encourages 'emotional involvement and personal identification' among the audience as a means of increasing their engagement, passion, and solidarity (Pajnik, 2024).

Additionally, the repeated mention of "bloqueio total" (total blockade) and "cerco" (siege) illustrates the oppressive restrictions imposed on Palestinians, which have become a pervasive aspect of life in Gaza, forming part of a strategic policy based on collective punishment. According to the United Nations, a blockade is 'an act of war whereby one party blocks entry to or departure from a defined part of an enemy's territory, most often its coasts' ('blockade', n.d.), while a siege refers to "the surrounding of a place by an armed force in order to defeat those defending it" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), rendering the area 'completely closed and isolated by walls and fences' (Veronese et al., 2021). The articles highlight how

blockades and sieges are deliberate actions aimed at eradicating the Gazan population by denying them basic necessities. As such, blockades and sieges constitute violations of international law since they deny the Gazan population access to the goods and supplies necessary for survival (Oswald, 2003). The articles focus on the significant impact of these blockades and sieges on Gaza, resulting in a 'chronic humanitarian crisis characterised by food insecurity, limited access to health care, lack of electricity and fuel, unemployment, and widespread poverty, as well as an environmental emergency due to air, land, and water pollution' (Winter, 2016). The psychological impact on the victims, including "hopelessness", "compromised resilience", "anxiety, stress, and depression" (Veronese et al., 2021), is also a critical issue addressed in the reporting. This coverage is crucial in evoking the audience's moral outrage, helping them to understand the severity, injustice, and inhumanity of the situation, encouraging public opinion against the ongoing policies, and potentially influencing political discourse.

4.2.2.3. Healthcare Crisis

The healthcare crisis in Palestine, as reported in both newspapers, reflects the ongoing situation and the systematic destruction of healthcare infrastructure. This analysis focuses on the language used, by focusing on certain phrases, to explore how these terms influence the public perception and highlight the implications of this reporting.

The statements like "[o] sistema de saúde [em Gaza] entrou em colapso" (The Health System [in Gaza] has collapsed) and "[e]stão a ficar sem geradores de energia nos hospitais" ([h]ospitals are running out of power generators) (Público, 2023) were used repeatedly to describe the state of the healthcare system. Such statements also highlight the degradation of medical infrastructure due to years of conflict, blockades, and neglect. This has been amplified due to the oppressive actions against Palestinians after October 7th and the blockade and siege that have been strictly imposed on them since they contribute to the collapse of the healthcare system because of the restriction on the entry of goods and supplies, including medical ones, making it an emergency in the healthcare system. Hence, the articles emphasise that the system is a consequence of physical damage from military operations as well as the chronic underfunding and resource shortages that have been happening for years. The articles also show how these facilities are overwhelmed and yet they lack sources, suffering from the inability to maintain or replace essential medical equipment. The reporting aligns with a report that has

been conducted years ago on Gaza by the World Health Organisation which reports that Gaza's health sector faces a "chronic emergency" due to these severe restrictions (2021).

More importantly, phrases such as "hospitais bombardeados" (the bombed-out hospitals) and "[a]mbulâncias baleadas" (ambulances shot at) (Público, 2023) were frequently mentioned in the articles. The articles report the targeting of ambulances, medical personnels and hospitals which "violates the Geneva Conventions, customary international law, and various provisions of international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" (Rubenstein & Bittle, 2010). By reporting on such attacks, journalists emphasise the inability of medical facilities and vehicles to function properly and to provide actual care to the patients. They also highlight that the attacks are against trained medical personnel, which resulted in the murder of a significant number of them, leaving the healthcare system understaffed and severely overwhelmed. It additionally highlights the deliberate military operations against hospitals and medical personnel as a "part of generalised violence directed towards civilians to achieve a political goal—e.g., ethnic cleansing, control or forced movement of populations, or demoralisation of population" (Rubenstein & Bittle, 2010). The articles emphasise the repetition of such horrific actions against Palestinians and their medical facilities, making "calls for action after attacks on hospitals… commonplace" (Van der Heijden, 2023). This language presents the brutality of the actions against Palestinians and seeks to raise public awareness and outrage. By highlighting attacks on ambulances, hospitals, and medical personnel, journalists emphasise the disregard for basic human rights and the rules of war, strengthening the argument for holding involved parties accountable. Reporting such an issue is quite crucial due to its significant effects as it causes "grandes vagas de doenças" (major waves of disease), as the articles reported, which happen due to the overcrowded living conditions, poor sanitation, and a weakened healthcare system in Gaza (Hussein, Ahmed, Qurbani, Fareeq & Essa, 2024), with the most vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly, being disproportionately affected.

4.3. Framing Techniques

The relationship between media framing and agenda-setting theory is complex, particularly when examining coverage of conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian issue. This analysis of framing techniques in the reporting on Palestinians during the conflict in both

Público and *Diário de Notícias*, based on the summary tables, provides critical insights into how media coverage not only reflects but actively constructs public perception and priorities.

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, victimisation and humanitarian crisis frames are among the most frequently used, appearing in approximately 57% and 54% of the coverage, respectively. These frames emphasise human suffering, which aligns with how the media tend to set the agenda for humanitarian concerns (Entman, 1993). They help direct the public's attention to the humanitarian aspects of the conflict by portraying Palestinians as victims. Through the lens of agenda-setting theory, which suggests that the media shape what people think about and how they think about it, the frequent use of these two frames indicates the authors' effort to position Palestinians as victims, thereby influencing public opinion and policy decisions by prioritising humanitarian intervention (Robinson, 2000).

Political and moral/ethical frames are also prominent, each appearing in approximately 42% of the coverage. The political frame tends to emphasise the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and the broader geopolitical implications of the conflict. This framing aligns with the second level of agenda-setting theory, in which the media impacts the public's interpretation of the conflict by framing it from ethical, moral, and political perspectives (McCombs, 2005). This leads to a stronger public reaction and greater media attention, as the conflict is framed as an important issue of political sovereignty and human rights (D'Angelo, 2002). The moral/ethical frame, which appeals to international law and human rights, plays a role in shaping public opinion and international responses, potentially encouraging public support for policy actions such as humanitarian aid (Cohen, 2001).

The responsibility frame, appearing in approximately 40% of the articles, is significant in shaping the narrative of accountability within the conflict. It influences how the audience assigns blame for the conflict's outcome, affecting their support for certain policies (Iyengar, 1991). When the media hold Israeli actions accountable for bombardments or military strikes, they can influence public opinion to view these actions as contributing to the ongoing situation. According to agenda-setting theory, this framing shapes the public's understanding of the conflict, including its causes and consequences, leading to increased public demand for policy changes (Kim, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2002).

The economic impact, heroism, and ethnic/religious frames were the least frequently employed in the coverage, reflecting selective reporting that focuses on certain aspects of the

conflict. The economic impact frame, appearing in 18% of the coverage, represents the limited representation of the economic consequences of the conflict on Palestinians. The heroism frame, which highlights Palestinian bravery and resilience, appeared in 25% of the coverage, which may result in a less empowered representation of Palestinians. Similarly, the ethnic/religious frame, appearing in 25% of the articles, potentially limits the audience's deep understanding of the cultural, historical, and religious aspects of the conflict. This further emphasises the media's tendency to focus on specific narratives over others, potentially disregarding essential aspects of the conflict.

Table 1

Framing techniques in Público

Framing Techniques	October's Articles	November's Articles	December's Articles	Total
Victimisation	6	7	7	**20**
Heroism	4	2	4	**10**
Ethnic/Religious	4	3	3	**10**
Political	6	6	5	**17**
Humanitarian Crisis	6	6	6	**18**
Economic Impact	3	2	2	**7**
Moral/Ethical	5	5	4	**14**
Responsibility	4	5	5	**14**

Table 2

Framing techniques in Diário de Notícias

Framing Techniques	October's Articles	November's Articles	December's Articles	Total
Victimisation	7	5	7	19
Heroism	3	3	1	7
Ethnic/Religious	3	2	1	6
Political	6	3	3	12
Humanitarian Crisis	6	6	7	19
Economic Impact	2	1	2	5
Moral/Ethical	5	5	5	15
Responsibility	5	4	4	13

This connection between framing and agenda-setting reflects the media's role in shaping the narratives and how they influence the public understanding. The regular mention of certain frames like victimisation, humanitarian criticism, political, and moral/ethical frames indicate the author's attempt to show the conflict as a significant moral and humanitarian crisis. This corresponds to the core of the agenda-setting theory in which the audience perceives the most covered coverage as the most important (McCombs, 2005). The selective framing in media coverage, where certain aspects are either highlighted or downplayed, indicates that the implications for international relations and policy are significant. Framing the conflict in terms of victimisation and humanitarian crisis might potentially influence international bodies to prioritise this issue in their policy agendas, causing some pressure on Israel to change its policies or to encourage humanitarian support. Although, as Gilboa (2005) argues, media framing and coverage can influence diplomatic strategies and international relations, the expected strong international response has not yet materialised. This raises questions about the

effectiveness of moral and ethical framing in fostering international action, despite the theory's predictions.

In conclusion, framing techniques in the reporting on Palestine and Palestinians during the ongoing actions reflect the media's ability to shape public understanding and set the agenda to prioritise humanitarian, political, and moral concerns. This influences public discourse and international policy and relations by focusing on certain aspects.

4.4. Coverage Patterns

4.4.1. Frequency of Coverage

When analysing the coverage patterns in *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* regarding their reporting on Palestine and Palestinians, significant differences emerge. *Público*, for example, demonstrated an editorial commitment to covering the conflict, which was evident in the substantial number of articles published over the three-month period. This ensured the prominence of the conflict and its developments in the newspaper's coverage.

In contrast, *Diário de Notícias* published far fewer articles on the conflict, as reflected not only in the number of articles but also in the search engine results on the website. For instance, the term 'Palestine' appears around 2,000 times, while the term 'Israel' appears approximately 300,000 times. This substantial gap suggests a greater focus on Israel rather than Palestine, which could potentially influence the narrative presented to readers.

Moreover, the frequency of published articles on the conflict was inconsistent. There were instances where a week or more passed without any conflict-related articles, indicating a lower editorial priority was given to this topic. This contrasts with *Público*'s consistent reporting, where articles related to the conflict or Palestine appeared regularly, ensuring sustained engagement.

The limited coverage in *Diário de Notícias* may have contributed to a less comprehensive understanding of the conflict among its audience. In contrast, *Público*'s frequent and detailed reporting likely played a crucial role in shaping its readers' perception of the conflict, aligning with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) Agenda-Setting Theory, which asserts that the frequency of media coverage influences public perception of an issue's importance.

This difference in editorial choices reflects the impact on public discourse. *Público*'s readers were exposed to a more consistent narrative regarding the conflict, while the audience of *Diário de Notícias* may have received a less frequent narrative that focused predominantly on Israel, potentially influencing how the conflict is perceived.

4.4.2. Tone of Coverage

The tone of reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict differs significantly between *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*, reflecting distinct editorial approaches that shape the narrative and influence how readers perceive events.

Público's reporting appears to be more balanced, offering a critical approach that examines the actions of all involved parties. It explicitly critiques both sides within a broader context that considers the complexities of the conflict, resulting in a more balanced tone. *Público* acknowledges the challenges and moral ambiguities in this deeply rooted conflict while incorporating a degree of sympathy, particularly when addressing the humanitarian impact on civilians. This sympathetic tone is employed to the suffering experienced by those caught in the crossfire, drawing attention to the ethical and moral aspects of the conflict. In doing so, *Público* encourages readers to consider not only the human cost of the conflict but also its geopolitical and strategic implications.

For example, *Público's* article reflects on the moral equivalence between Hamas and Israel, condemning both sides for their actions: "O ataque do Hamas é absolutamente condenável, e muitos aspectos da resposta israelita em Gaza são igualmente absolutamente condenáveis. São moralmente equivalentes? São." ("The Hamas attack is absolutely condemnable, and many aspects of the Israeli response in Gaza are equally absolutely condemnable. Are the two morally equivalent? They are.") (Público, 2023). This balanced critique demonstrates Público's effort to provide an unbiased perspective while grappling with the moral complexities involved in the conflict.

In contrast, Diário de Notícias frequently adopts a more pointedly critical tone, particularly when reporting on actions associated with Palestinian groups. It tends to emphasise the threats posed by these groups, framing them as primary initiators of violence and instability. For example, in a report, Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy is quoted as saying, "Para o porta-voz do governo israelita, Eylon Levy, citado pela AFP, a culpa pelas mortes é do Hamas, tendo dito ainda que 'ainda estariam vivos' se o grupo não tivesse realizado os ataques

de 7 de outubro" ("For Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy, cited by AFP, the deaths are Hamas's fault, adding that 'they would still be alive' if the group had not carried out the October 7 attacks") (Diário de Notícias, 2023). This direct and sometimes harsher tone can contribute to a narrative that portrays one side of the conflict as more responsible, potentially leading to a less balanced understanding among readers.

Moreover, while *Diário de Notícias*'s tone when addressing the humanitarian aspects of the conflict is generally sympathetic, similar to *Público's*, it is often overshadowed by the critical tone used in other contexts. The sympathetic reporting on the humanitarian crisis focuses on the suffering of civilians, particularly highlighting the lack of basic resources such as food, water, and medical supplies. For instance, reports like "mais de dois milhões de pessoas estão em risco de perder a vida se a água não chegar nos próximos dias" ("more than two million people are at risk of losing their lives if water does not arrive in the coming days") clearly reflect a humanitarian concern (*Diário de Notícias*, 2023). However, this focus on civilian suffering is often compartmentalised and presented separately from the broader narrative of the conflict, where Palestinian groups are frequently portrayed as primary aggressors. This creates a dissonance in the reporting, as the empathy extended to the civilians is often diminished by the more critical framing of Palestinian actions in other contexts. This contrast not only impacts the tone of the overall coverage but can also lead readers to prioritise the framing of Palestinian groups as aggressors over the human suffering on the ground, as the two narratives rarely intersect in a cohesive manner. The result is a layered, and at times conflicting, narrative that struggles to balance sympathy for the victims with a more critical stance on the conflict's broader causes.

When addressing international reactions and diplomatic efforts, Público tends to adopt a neutral tone, presenting these topics with factual clarity and without obvious emotional language. This neutrality reflects balanced reporting and offers a comprehensive view of global dimensions, stakeholders' roles, and perspectives regarding the conflict. For instance, in a report on the Gaza crisis, Público details the support of major international actors like the United States while highlighting humanitarian concerns without emotional overtones: "Antony Blinken...was clear in his declaration of support for Israel but also emphasised the need for a humanitarian ceasefire to allow aid into the Gaza Strip. However, international appeals have been ignored by Israel, which continues to prepare a large-scale ground offensive" (Público, 2023)

On the other hand, *Diário de Notícias* also uses a neutral tone when covering international reactions, but this can occasionally come across as more detached. For example, in discussing the growing number of displaced Palestinians, the reporting appears to lack the same depth of context, stating, "A ONU estima que mais de 200.000 palestinianos tenham sido deslocados desde o início dos ataques israelitas" (The UN estimates that more than 200,000 Palestinians have been displaced since the beginning of Israeli attacks) (Diário de Notícias, 2023). This detachment may lead to a perception that these international efforts are less relevant or impactful compared to the immediate and on-the-ground realities of the conflict.

In summary, both *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* employ critical and sympathetic tones in their coverage. However, *Público*'s reporting tends to be more balanced and contextually rich, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict. By contrast, *Diário de Notícias* often presents a more segmented tone, where the critical aspects, particularly towards Palestinian groups, are more prominent and can overshadow the humanitarian and diplomatic elements of the coverage. This may result in a narrative that emphasises conflict and aggression over the underlying causes of the situation.

Público's tone encourages readers to engage with the conflict on multiple levels, considering not only the immediate actions and consequences but also the broader historical, ethical, and international implications. In contrast, *Diário de Notícias* tends to focus more narrowly on the immediate threats and the portrayal of certain actors within the conflict, which could lead to a more polarised understanding among its readers.

These differences highlight the powerful impact of editorial choices in shaping public perception. *Público* adopts a more balanced approach, fostering a more comprehensive and empathetic understanding of the conflict, while *Diário de Notícias*' sharper, more critical tone may contribute to a more confrontational or simplistic view. Both approaches aim to inform the public, but they do so in ways that reflect different editorial priorities and potentially lead to distinct public discourses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

4.4.3. Source Selection and Balance

When comparing *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* regarding their source selection and balance in covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, distinct differences emerge that reflect the editorial priorities and approaches of each newspaper.

Público endeavours to include a wide range of sources to provide a balanced presentation of the conflict. The authors attempt to expose readers to both sides of the conflict by including statements from both Israeli and Palestinian officials. To offer a comprehensive understanding of the events, *Público* cites government officials, military spokespeople, and representatives from various organisations, such as Josep Borrell, The High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Palestinian Information Centre. The inclusion of international perspectives further illustrates their balanced selection of sources, with references from international organisations such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and various NGOs. This approach helps add an extra layer of context, including humanitarian and legal aspects of the conflict.

However, *Diário de Notícias* appears to have a more segmented approach to source selection, leaning more heavily on Israeli sources, especially when addressing military and security-related actions. This tendency aligns more closely with the Israeli perspective. Although *Diário de Notícias* does include Palestinian voices, these are not as prominent, and they often highlight defensive aspects rather than providing a full spectrum of perspectives. The reliance on Israeli sources, coupled with the limited use of Palestinian sources, can create an imbalance in the coverage, leading to one side of the conflict being more heavily represented than the other.

Moreover, *Público* tends to incorporate the perspectives of those directly affected by the conflict, such as civilians, aid workers, and local residents. This approach offers a richer and more detailed picture of the impact of the conflict on everyday lives, thereby humanising the conflict. On the other hand, *Diário de Notícias* focuses more on official narratives, particularly Israeli ones, which can result in a more simplistic and less nuanced portrayal of the events, often overlooking the lived experiences of victims.

It is evident that *Público* employs a broader and more inclusive approach to source selection. This strategy encourages readers to engage with the conflict in all its complexities,

thanks to the balanced and informed perspectives provided in the reporting from multiple angles. By doing so, *Público* adheres to journalistic standards that prioritise fairness, accuracy, and comprehensiveness, ultimately offering a complete picture of the conflict. Conversely, *Diário de Notícias*'s approach, which relies more heavily on Israeli sources and less frequently includes Palestinian voices, may result in a portrayal that does not fully explore the complexity of the conflict. This could potentially lead to a more polarised or simplistic understanding of the situation, limiting readers' ability to grasp the multifaceted nature of the conflict and leaving them with a less comprehensive understanding of the issues at play.

In conclusion, both newspapers cover the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, albeit with marked differences in their approaches to source selection and balance. *Público* presents a more balanced and diverse representation of voices, enhancing the depth and accuracy of its coverage. In contrast, *Diário de Notícias*'s reliance on a more limited range of sources may lead to a more segmented portrayal of the conflict. These differences underscore the significant impact that editorial choices in source selection can have on the quality and balance of news coverage, ultimately shaping how the conflict is understood by their respective audiences.

4.5. Demographic and Descriptive Analysis

4.5.1 The Response Rate of the Respondents

In April and May, a survey was conducted and made available to students aged 18-34 in Lisbon. A total of 3,000 paper questionnaires were distributed using a barcode system, and 700 responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 23.3%.

Table 3

Response rate details

Population	Paper Questionnaires		
Students aged 18-34 in Lisbon	Distributed	Responses Received	Response Rate
	3000	700	23.3%
	Complete and Usable Questionnaires = 700		

4.5.2 Demographic Profile and Media Habits of the Respondents

This section provides an overview of the demographic information of the respondents, including gender, age, education level, primary source of news, frequency of news reading, newspaper preference, and level of expertise in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These characteristics offer important insights into the study sample and subsequent analysis. Detailed demographic characteristics are provided in Appendix B.

Respondents were requested to provide demographic information about themselves. The findings revealed that 27.7% of the respondents were men, while 43.14% were women. Additionally, 7.86% identified as other genders, and 21.29% preferred not to disclose their gender. In terms of age distribution, the sample was fairly balanced, with 47.71% of respondents aged 25–34 and 52.29% aged 18–24

Regarding education levels, the majority of respondents (36.86%) held a Bachelor's degree, followed by 36.43% with a Master's degree, 18.86% with a Secondary School education, and 7.86% with a Doctorate.

When asked about their primary source of news on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 42.43% reported using online news websites, 20.71% preferred newspapers, 17.71% relied on social media, 17.14% used television, and 2.00% cited other sources. The frequency of news consumption showed that 38.86% read news daily, 31.29% several times a week, 19.43% once a week, and 10.43% less than once a week.

Regarding preferred newspapers for news about Palestine, 62.71% of respondents selected *Público*, while 37.29% preferred *Diário de Notícias*. In terms of expertise on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 39.86% rated their knowledge as basic, 40.86% as intermediate, 13.43% as advanced, and 5.86% as expert.

In summary, the sample represents a diverse range of demographics, educational backgrounds, news consumption habits, and levels of expertise on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

4.5.3 Descriptive Analysis of Questionnaire Responses

Público

Público's coverage of the Palestine-Israel conflict is generally perceived as compassionate, with 59% of respondents recognising a tone that evokes empathy towards the humanitarian situation of Palestinians. This suggests that *Público* often frames its reports in a way that highlights the human impact of the conflict. Furthermore, the sense of urgency in *Público*'s reporting is strongly acknowledged, with 55.7% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the newspaper effectively conveys the critical and immediate nature of the humanitarian challenges faced by Palestinians. This indicates that *Público*'s coverage likely emphasises the pressing needs and the severity of the situation.

When it comes to giving attention to the voices and experiences of Palestinians, 56% of respondents believe that *Público* often or always includes these perspectives in its coverage. This suggests a strong editorial focus on ensuring that the narratives of those directly affected by the conflict are represented. However, there is a perception of selectiveness in the newspaper's reporting, with 40.2% of respondents indicating that *Público* is often or always selective in how it reports the challenges faced by Palestinians. This could imply that while the coverage is empathetic and urgent, it may not always be comprehensive in addressing all aspects of the situation. Table 5 presents a summary of the questionnaire responses related to *Público.*

Table 5

Summary Table of the Questionnaire Response Regarding Público

Category	Response Summary	Percentage
Tone	Somewhat or Very Compassionate	59%
	Neutral	25.4%
	Somewhat or Very Uncompassionate	15.5%
Urgency	Agree or Strongly Agree	55.7%
	Neutral	26.5%
	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	17.7%
Attention to	Often/Always	56%

Voices/Experiences	Sometimes	23.8%
	Rarely/Never	20.1%
Selectiveness	Often/Always Selective	40.2%
	Sometimes	37%
	Rarely/Never Selective	22.7%

Diário de Notícias

Diário de Notícias's coverage is viewed as compassionate by 53.1% of respondents, indicating that while the newspaper does show empathy in its reporting, this is less consistent compared to *Público*. Additionally, the tone is often perceived as neutral by 25.4% of respondents, suggesting a more balanced or less emotionally charged approach to covering the conflict. The sense of urgency in *Diário de Notícias*'s reporting is less pronounced, with only 50.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the newspaper effectively highlights the immediacy of the humanitarian crisis. This indicates that while there is recognition of urgency, it is not as consistently conveyed.

Attention to the voices and experiences of Palestinians is perceived to be less frequent in *Diário de Notícias*, with only 47% of respondents believing that the newspaper often or always includes these perspectives. This points to a potential gap in the coverage where the experiences of those directly affected by the conflict might not be as prominently featured. Furthermore, 42.7% of respondents feel that the newspaper is often or always selective in its reporting of the challenges faced by Palestinians. This suggests that, while the coverage may be balanced, it might also lack depth in addressing the full spectrum of issues related to the conflict. Table 6 presents a summary of the questionnaire responses related to *Diário de Notícias.*

Table 6

Summary Table of the Questionnaire Response Regarding Diário de Notícias

Category	Response Summary	Percentage

Tone	Somewhat or Very Compassionate	53.1%
	Neutral	25.4%
	Somewhat or Very Uncompassionate	21.4%
Urgency	Agree or Strongly Agree	50.5%
	Neutral	24.1%
	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	25.2%
Attention to Voices/Experiences	Often/Always	47%
	Sometimes	25.4%
	Rarely/Never	27.5%
Selectiveness	Often/Always Selective	42.7%
	Sometimes	31%
	Rarely/Never Selective	26.2%

In conclusion, *Público*'s coverage of the Palestine-Israel conflict is perceived as more compassionate and urgent, with a stronger emphasis on the humanitarian impact and Palestinian voices, as evidenced by higher percentages of respondents recognising these aspects. The thematic analysis revealed a frequent use of emotionally charged language highlighting the humanitarian crisis and victimisation of Palestinians. This highlights the humanitarian crisis and victimisation of Palestinians, aligning with the questionnaire results in which 59% of respondents recognised *Público*'s tone as compassionate, and 55.7% noted a sense of urgency in its reporting.

In contrast, *Diário de Notícias* tends to have a more neutral, detached tone, with fewer instances of emotional language or focus on Palestinian voices. This aligns with the questionnaire results where only 53.1% of respondents perceived *Diário de Notícias* as compassionate, and 50.5% felt a sense of urgency in its coverage. The questionnaire also revealed that *Diário de Notícias* provided less attention to Palestinian perspectives, with 47%

of respondents agreeing that it often or always included these voices, compared to 56% for *Público*.

While *Público* is seen as more selective, its coverage often works to intensify the emotional and humanitarian aspects of the conflict, which aligns with the 40.2% of respondents who found *Público* selective. In contrast, *Diário de Notícias*, seen as less selective, provided less focus on the Palestinian experiences. This comparative analysis highlights how both thematic analysis and audience perceptions give insights into the differences in how *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* frame the conflict and represent Palestinian voices.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Research Objectives and Research Questions

This study aimed to investigate the portrayal of Palestine and Palestinians by Western news media, particularly Portuguese publications, following October 7th, 2023. The research sought to analyse the representation regarding language, tone, and framing strategies employed by the newspapers *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* during the final three months of 2023. The research was directed by two principal questions:

1. How do *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* portray Palestine and Palestinians, focusing on language, tone, framing techniques, and coverage patterns during the last quarter of 2023?

2. How does the agenda-setting theory explain the impact of *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*' coverage on public perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

The study aimed to determine if these depictions reinforced or contested prevailing preconceptions and misrepresentations, focusing on the media's influence in moulding public perception and conversation.

5.2. Summary of Key Findings

Thematic and framing analyses produced significant findings relevant to the study questions and objectives. One of the key findings is the prominent use of victimisation and humanitarian framing in the reporting of *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*. These newspapers extensively employed various frameworks of victimisation and humanitarian crisis in their reporting, highlighting civilian casualties, shortages of resources, and the psychological repercussions of the conflict. The use of emotionally charged language serves to elicit significant emotional responses from the audience. The terminology employed, charged with significant connotations, influenced the representation of Palestinians as passive victims of violence and played a role in the humanitarian framing of the conflict. The deliberate choice and reiteration of these terms can significantly shape public perceptions, constructing a narrative that highlights the human cost and ethical implications of the conflict. This study examines a wide range of language selections to investigate how particular linguistic structures can influence the audience's comprehension of the events and the participants involved.

Another notable finding is the differential framing of actors in the conflict, in which the reporting tone varied markedly between the two newspapers. *Público* had a more balanced perspective, critiquing both Israeli and Palestinian acts, while *Diário de Notícias* undermined the Palestinian side of the story by focusing more on the Israeli part, making it more prominent over the other. This inconsistency underscores a possible bias in the selection of sources and the prioritisation of various participants.

Furthermore, beyond victimisation, there was a focus on Palestinian resistance, especially in *Público*. Narratives of persistent psychological trauma, with determination and resistance, arose, resulting in a sophisticated representation that encompasses both pain and agency.

Both newspapers emphasised the critical humanitarian crisis in Gaza, particularly focusing on the shortage of food, water, and medical supplies. This framing illustrated a narrative of collective punishment and systemic denial of fundamental human rights, sometimes characterised as breaches of international law.

Lastly, the study revealed that the examination of media patterns indicated that *Público* provided more consistent and frequent reporting on the conflict, whilst *Diário de Notícias* devoted less attention to Palestine, notably due to its notable editorial emphasis on Israel. The disparity in coverage may have influenced public perceptions variably among the audiences of the two publications.

5.3. Interpretation of the Results

This study's findings substantially enhance the current research on media representation, agenda-setting, and the depiction of international conflicts, especially in less-explored environments like Portuguese media. The varied portrayal of the conflict and the recurrent application of victimisation frames correspond with prior research indicating the media's inclination to emphasise humanitarian issues in its coverage of Palestine. This analysis reveals that *Público* sought to humanise Palestinians via tales of resilience, in contrast to *Diário de Notícias,* which can be seen as less flexible, and with a more conflict-focused framing.

The study confirms McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory, demonstrating that the media's framing of the conflict influenced public perception by emphasising humanitarian and victim narratives over other frames, such as political or economic viewpoints.

This framing certainly shaped readers' perceptions of the battle, leading them to regard it mostly as a humanitarian catastrophe.

Furthermore, the results highlight a complex portrayal of Palestinians in Portuguese publications. While there were instances of bias in the framing of stories, both *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* brought important humanitarian perspectives to their coverage. *Público*, in particular, highlighted narratives of resilience and the psychological toll of the conflict, while *Diário de Notícias* placed greater emphasis on the Israeli perspective. 5.4. Discussion of Implications

This research has extensive and varied results, influencing both academic discourse and journalistic practices as well as policy development. In terms of policy and advocacy, the results indicate that media coverage, particularly when biassed or selective, significantly influences public opinion and may affect governmental decisions. The humanitarian narrative employed by *Público* may cultivate popular backing for an increasing humanitarian assistance and diplomatic exertion on Israel to modify its actions towards Palestine. In contrast, *Diário de Notícias*'s emphasis on violence committed by Palestinian groups may keep unfavourable perceptions and sway policy towards heightened security measures instead of humanitarian approaches.

From a journalist perspective, this study underscores the necessity for media practitioners to engage in fair reporting that equally represents all sides of the issue. The dependence on particular sources and the disproportionate representation of various characters indicate that Portuguese journalists need to critically evaluate their source selection methods and framing strategies. The results support a more sophisticated strategy that acknowledges the complexities of the conflict instead of reinforcing established dichotomies.

In terms of academic contributions, this study addresses a notable gap in the literature about the representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by Portuguese media. It allows for future studies to expand the analysis to include more media forms, such as television or internet platforms, or do comparative analyses between Portugal and other Western nations to evaluate the uniformity of media representations across diverse national settings.

5.4. Recommendations and Researcher's Comments

In light of the findings, the subsequent recommendations are put forth. Portuguese media outlets have to pursue more equitable and thorough reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, guaranteeing that both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives are adequately portrayed. Journalists must proactively include a broader range of sources, especially from Palestinian civil society, to provide a more balanced perspective of the conflict.

Additionally, it is essential to foster critical media literacy among readers, urging the public to analyse news material critically and to question the portrayal of foreign conflicts. Educational programs that promote critical examination of media portrayals may reduce the impact of biassed reporting.

Future research should incorporate longitudinal evaluations of media coverage to investigate the evolution of depictions of Palestine across time. Moreover, broadening the scope to include other Western media outlets would provide a more thorough comprehension of the global media narrative on Palestine.

In conclusion, this research illustrates the significant impact of media framing on public comprehension of international conflicts, especially in circumstances frequently overlooked in the literature. This research examines Portuguese news media to elucidate how local cultural and political settings influence the portrayal of global concerns, with considerable ramifications for journalism, policy, and public debate.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire on Media Perception: Representation of Palestine and Palestinians

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This questionnaire is part of a research study to analyse the perception of media coverage regarding Palestine and Palestinians in Portuguese newspapers post-October 7th, 2023 on the readers of *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*.

Your responses are anonymous and will be used solely for academic purposes.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1) Age:

O 18-24

O 25-34

2) Gender:

O Male

O Female

O Other

O Prefer not to say

3) Education Level:

O Secondary school

O Bachelor's degree

O Master's degree

O Doctorate

4) Primary source on the news on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

O Television

O Newspapers

O Online news websites

O Social media

O Other : _____

5) Frequency of reading news:

O Daily

O Several times a week

O Once a week

O Less than once a week

6) Which newspaper do you read to get news about Palestine?

O Público

O Diário de Notícias

7) Level of expertise in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

O Basic

O Intermediate

O Advanced

O Expert

Section 2: Perceptions of Media Coverage

8) How balanced do you find *Público*'s portrayal of events in Palestine?

○ Very balanced

○ Somewhat balanced

○ Neutral

○ Somewhat unbalanced

○ Very unbalanced

9) How balanced do you find *Diário de Notícias*'s portrayal of events in Palestine?

○ Very balanced

○ Somewhat balanced

○ Neutral

○ Somewhat unbalanced

○ Very unbalanced

10) To what extent do you believe that the media coverage in *Público* reflects the reality of the situation on the ground in Palestine?

○ To a great extent

○ To some extent

○ Neutral

○ To a limited extent

○ Not at all

11) To what extent do you believe that the media coverage in *Diário de Notícias* reflects the reality of the situation on the ground in Palestine?

○ To a great extent

○ To some extent

○ Neutral

○ To a limited extent

○ Not at all

12) To what extent do you believe that *Público* gives adequate coverage to the impact of the conflict on Palestinian civilians?

○ To a great extent

○ To some extent

○ Neutral

○ To a limited extent

○ Not at all

13) To what extent do you believe that *Diário de Notícias* gives adequate coverage to the impact of the conflict on Palestinian civilians?

○ To a great extent

○ To some extent

○ Neutral

○ To a limited extent

○ Not at all

14) How frequently do you notice that *Público* provides context to the historical background of the Palestinian struggle?

O Very frequently

O Frequently

O Occasionally

O Rarely

O Never

15) How frequently do you notice that *Diário de Notícias* provides context to the historical background of the Palestinian struggle?

O Very frequently

O Frequently

O Occasionally

O Rarely

O Never

16) How often do you see diverse perspectives from within the Palestinian community in *Público*'s coverage?

O Always

O often

O sometimes

O Rarely

O Never

17) How often do you see diverse perspectives from within the Palestinian community in *Diário de Notícias***'s coverage?**

O Always

O Often

O Sometimes

O Rarely

O Never

Section 3: Perception of Representation

18) Do you believe that *Público* **accurately represents the daily struggles of the Palestinian people?**

O Strongly agree

O Agree

O Neutral

O Disagree

O Strongly disagree

19) Do you believe that *Diário de Notícias* **accurately represents the daily struggles of the Palestinian people?**

O Strongly agree

O Agree

O Neutral

O Disagree

O Strongly disagree

Section 4: Perception of Media Tone

20) How would you describe the overall tone of *Público* when covering the Palestine-Israel conflict post-October 7th, 2023?

○ Strongly positive towards Palestinians

○ Positive towards Palestinians

○ Neutral

○ Negative towards Palestinians

○ Strongly negative towards Palestinians

21) How would you describe the overall tone of *Diário de Notícias* when covering the Palestine-Israel conflict post-October 7th, 2023?

○ Strongly positive towards Palestinians

○ Positive towards Palestinians

○ Neutral

○ Negative towards Palestinians

○ Strongly negative towards Palestinians

22) How would you describe the tone of *Público* when covering the humanitarian impact on Palestinians?

○ Very compassionate

○ Somewhat compassionate

○ Neutral

○ Somewhat uncompassionate

○ Very uncompassionate

23) How would you describe the tone of *Diário de Notícias* when covering the humanitarian impact on Palestinians?

○ Very compassionate

○ Somewhat compassionate

○ Neutral

○ Somewhat uncompassionate

○ Very uncompassionate

24) In your view, does the tone of the articles in *Público* contribute to a sense of urgency regarding the humanitarian situation in Palestine?

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

25) In your view, does the tone of the articles in *Diário de Notícias* contribute to a sense of urgency regarding the humanitarian situation in Palestine?

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

26) In your view, does the tone of the articles in *Público* contribute to raising awareness of the resource shortages and healthcare challenges faced by Palestinians?

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

27) In your view, does the tone of the articles in *Diário de Notícias* contribute to raising awareness of the resource shortages and healthcare challenges faced by Palestinians?

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

Section 5: Perception of Bias

28) In your opinion, does *Público* give sufficient attention to the voices and experiences of Palestinians?

○ Always

○ Often

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

29) In your opinion, does *Diário de Notícias* give sufficient attention to the voices and experiences of Palestinians?

○ Always

○ Often

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

30) How often do you perceive *Público's* coverage to be selective in reporting the challenges faced by Palestinians?

○ Always

○ Often

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

31) How often do you perceive *Diário de Notícias's* coverage to be selective in reporting the challenges faced by Palestinians?

○ Always

○ Often

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

32) Do you recognize any bias in *Público*'s coverage of the Palestine-Israel conflict?

O Very pro-Palestinian bias

O Some pro-Palestinian bias

O Neutral

O Some anti-Palestinian bias

O Very anti-Palestinian bias

33) Do you recognize any bias in *Diário de Notícias*'s coverage of the Palestine-Israel conflict?

O Very pro-Palestinian bias

O Some pro-Palestinian bias

O Neutral

O Some anti-Palestinian bias

O Very anti-Palestinian bias

Demographic Profile and Media Habits of the Respondents

Group	Choice	Frequency	Proportion
Age	18-24	366	52.29%
	25-34	334	47.71%
Gender	Female	302	43.14%
	Male	194	27.71%
	Other	55	7.86%
	Prefer not to say	149	21.29%
Education level	Secondary school	132	18.86%
	Bachelor's degree	258	36.86%
	Master's degree	255	36.43%
	Doctorate	55	7.86%
Primary source of news on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict	Newspapers	145	20.71%
	Television	120	17.14%
	Social media	124	17.71%
	Online news websites	297	42.43%
	other	14	2.00%
Frequency of reading news	Daily	272	38.86%
	Several times a week	219	31.29%

	Once a week	136	19.43%
	Less than once a week	73	10.43%
Which newspaper do you read to get news about Palestine?	Público	439	62.71%
	Diário de Notícias	261	37.29%
Level of expertise in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict	Basic	279	39.86%
	Intermediate	286	40.86%
	Advanced	94	13.43%
	Expert	41	5.86%