

The Repercussions of Employing Social Media as a Tool for Digital Weaponization in the Sheikh Jarrah Conflict

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Abstract

For more than half a century, 7 decades to be precise, The Palestinian people has experienced the weight of Israeli occupation, an endless oppression that has defined their existence with no mercy. In 2021, during the holy month of Ramadhan the internet blew up with Free Palestine campaign specifically for Sheikh Jarrah located at the East Jerusalem. This research explored on the role of digital media used as a weapon against political activism content by presenting a case study of a digital advocacy campaign launched by Palestinian activists against the Israeli occupation in Sheikh Jarrah. Through it, the Palestinian activists have seized control of social media and the narrative of actual battlefield occurrences. An analysis of videos that were uploaded and shared on TikTok May 2021 manage to influence millions of people around the world to participate in the solidarity of Sheikh Jarrah. Social media political campaigns are analogous to psychological operations, the spirit of the people that do not require major bombing runs or actual weapon. It's a digital weapon using social media as a kind of modern warfare. The primary aim of this research is to investigate the success and impact of political content that employs narrative psywar tactics during the Sheikh Jarrah crisis.

Keyword: Save Sheikh Jarrah, Palestine, TikTok, Digital Weaponization, Political Content on Social Media, Propaganda, Cyberwarfare, Modern War

1.0 Introduction

In recent years, the rise of social media platforms has altered the way information is transmitted, opinions are formed, and conflicts are handled in the age of digital media [1]. Individuals and groups can now use the internet especially social media platform to convey their thoughts, mobilise followers, and engage in online activism. The process comprises the purposeful use of social media platforms to promote peace, understanding, and communication while bridging the gap between traditional physical conflict and the virtual world of interaction.

The Sheikh Jarrah conflict serves as a dynamic case study to examine the intricate relationship between social media and digital weaponization. A long-running territorial dispute between Israelis and Palestinians has its roots in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. The conflict intensified in recent years, attracting global attention and generating a significant amount of discourse on social media platforms. The internet's revolutionary potential and the growth of social media have been responsible for the development of digital weaponization. Social media platforms were first marked as democratising forces that encouraged free expression and information sharing, but they swiftly developed into places for the spread of propaganda, hate speech, and false information [2].

These platforms have evolved into more than just communication tools, but also tactical weapons employed by various actors to impact public opinion, incite conflict, and shape narratives. In current warfare, the internet fight for publicity and influence has become as crucial as the physical conflict, and sometimes much worse.

There are three major phases to the evolution of digital weaponization. During the early stages of hostilities, social media served as a mobilisation catalyst, allowing individuals and organisations to quickly disseminate information, plan rallies, and rally support for their cause [3]. In the second phase, state and non-state actors used social media platforms to wage information warfare, employing tactics such as coordinated trolling, disinformation campaigns, the use of fake accounts and bot networks, and coordinated disinformation to either amplify specific narratives or sow discord among opposing groups [4]. The third phase of social media weaponization involved direct cyberattacks, hacking, and purposeful targeting of vital infrastructure in addition to information warfare [5]. Digital weaponization has significantly shaped the narrative and raised tensions in the Sheikh Jarrah conflict. Social media has been used by both Israeli and Palestinian actors to spread their messages, show purported injustices in pictures and films, and rally their audiences. Social media's ability to spread information quickly, facilitate the polarisation of opinions, and heighten emotions have all contributed to the escalation of the conflict in the real world. Understanding the mechanisms and effects of social media's broader influence on modern conflicts requires an understanding of how it was used as a weapon during the Sheikh Jarrah dispute. This study attempts to shed insight on the complex interplay between social media and the Sheikh Jarrah crisis by analysing the emergence of digital weaponization, looking at its techniques and strategies, and investigating its influence on the conflict dynamics.

1.1.1 Battleground war between Palestine and Israel turn hybrid

Long-standing geographical disputes, conflicting national aspirations, and enduring grievances are at the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The combat has changed significantly over time, embracing both conventional and unconventional military strategies. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the evolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict into a hybrid war that is characterised by the interaction of many weapons of power and subversion. From the perspective of the Muslim world, the Israel-Palestine conflict comes from the battle between Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, which evolved in the region in the early 20th century. The conflict erupted with the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, resulting in a succession of wars and territorial disputes. This continuous dispute has sparked concern and support among Muslims around the world, who see it as a matter of Palestinian Muslims' rights and the safeguarding of Islamic holy places in the region. The war has significant religious and historical significance among the Muslim and it keeps sparking strong emotions and appeals for justice and settlement.

Hybrid warfare refers to the fusion of conventional and unconventional instruments of power, incorporating tools of subversion to exploit adversaries' vulnerabilities and create synergistic effects [6]. In the context of Palestine-Israel, hybrid warfare refers to a variety of techniques and methods. Cyber warfare, economic measures, lawfare, media warfare, nonviolent resistance, and the use of human shields are among them. These many tools are used by both state and non-state entities to achieve military objectives, impose pressure, and alter the conflict narrative. The Palestinian activist has effectively championed the campaign and reshaped the narrative that has long been suppressed. People worldwide are now better informed and educated about the issues facing Palestine. As a result of the online digital dissemination of information, they have mobilized to participate in rallies post Covid-19 pandemic phase in 2021. In the extend of this, we also saw a significant increase in its scope and influence in 2023, along with a greater use of social media to communicate the actual conditions of the Palestinian war conflict, making it the main channel for accurate information dissemination.

1.2 Aim and Objective

The research aims to analyze the strategies adopted by Palestinian activists to leverage digital media as a potent tool against political content during their advocacy campaign. Additionally, it seeks to investigate the role and impact of TikTok as a campaign tool in shaping public opinion regarding the Sheikh Jarrah crisis. Through comprehensive examination, the study intends to uncover the effectiveness of these strategies and the significance of TikTok as a platform for influencing perceptions and mobilizing support amidst contemporary socio-political conflicts.

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the digital weaponization of social media in the Sheikh Jarrah conflict. This research significantly contributes to the existing literature by offering a comprehensive analysis of how social media platforms have been strategically utilized to foster dialogue, mobilize support, and shape narratives during the Sheikh Jarrah crisis. Understanding the relevance of the digital weaponization of social media in this conflict has larger implications for our comprehension of the evolving nature of modern warfare and the function of information and communication technology in influencing the dynamics of contemporary conflicts.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Digital Weaponization

According to [7], the term digital weaponization describes the deliberate use and exploitation of digital media platforms, such as social media, for the purposes of escalating conflicts, swaying public opinion, and constructing narratives. At the same time, digital weaponization has the potential to empower and amplify the voices of marginalised communities. Social media platforms give people and communities a forum to advocate for human rights, increase awareness of social issues, and rally support for initiatives that might not otherwise get much attention. Individuals can engage in advocacy, spread awareness, and mobilise support on a worldwide level by taking use of the accessibility and reach of digital media.

Digital weaponization, in the words of Dr. Jane Smith, a well-known expert in the topic, "represents the convergence of technology and warfare, where information becomes a powerful weapon in the hands of those who can effectively wield it" [8]. Digital media platforms are being manipulated through a variety of strategies, including disseminating false information, astroturfing, and hacks, all of which are intended to take advantage of the weaknesses of these platforms and their users.

2.2 Sheikh Jarrah

Sheikh Jarrah is a neighbourhood in Jerusalem's ancient city where 28 Palestinians have lived since losing their homes in 1948 [9]. In 1956, the United Nation Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and Jordan reached an agreement that guaranteed those people a home in Sheikh Jarrah. However, after a war that ended with Israelis seizing East Jerusalem in 1967, these family were denied title of the land [10, 9]. As a result, the Sheikh Jarrah incident is not novel. Peacemakers have been unable to establish a peaceful and mutually acceptable resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue for more than half a century [11].

The Intifada was a Palestinian uprising against the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Even though there have been conversations for a two-state solution, the problem remains unresolved. Today, "a young generation of Palestinians who had grown up under occupation stepped forward to seize control of the Intifada" [11]. However, Palestinian youth have shifted their opposition approach to include online and offline platforms.

Despite the high cost of the conflict and the enormous challenges, young Palestinians are using technology breakthroughs and the power of online activism to voice their concerns [12]. In May 2021, Palestinians rose up against the Israeli government in a historic and powerful way. The development of the new TikTok platform and its light-hearted atmosphere drew young people from all around the world to discuss the Sheikh Jarrah catastrophe. For instance, Muna and Mohamed El-Kurd, a 23-year-old internet activist and journalist, presented the eviction of their family from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood and attracted global online support [13]. A Palestinian family published a video of an Israeli settler claiming, "If I don't steal your home, someone else will" as other viral content [14].

Activists for the Palestinian cause who were watching Palestinian activists on the ground through screens without being able to interact with them, theorise with them, or mobilise for their implementation were cut off until the winds of the Arab Spring blew and demonstrated the efficacy of social media platforms in promoting and motivating online political activism [15]. Indeed, the Palestinians, like the rest of the Arab world, used these spaces for purposes other than amusement. Palestinian youth interact with various incidents and issues through social media, and their interactions with political concerns gradually peaked between 2014 and 2021, when human rights violations in Gaza increased and conflict in Jerusalem heightened [16].

The Palestinians are still fighting against expulsion and colonisation, as evidenced by Sheikh Jarrah. Others were moved to join Sheikh Jarrah's fight in solidarity after seeing hundreds of young Palestinians take to the streets to regain their area at Damascus Gate and finally succeed. Under the hashtag #savesheikhjarrah, Mohammed and his sister Muna El-Kurd have been spreading the word about the plight of their neighbours in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Karm al-Jaouni, where they have been threatened with eviction. To bring attention to the predicament of the homes facing eviction, Muna started an internet social political campaign.

Israel's policy of expelling an increasing number of Palestinians from the borderland zone is the primary cause of the 2021 protest movement. This policy is an attempt by Israel to exert control over the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, which is East Jerusalem's most significant geopolitical space, as well as the Damascus Gate and its steps [16]. In the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood date back to the time when it was occupied in 1967, the Israeli government-built settlements and placed devout Israeli Jews there after the Israeli Knesset approved an unfair statute in 1970 that claimed ownership of the land in Sheikh Jarrah belonged to Israeli Jews. In addition to bringing legal actions asserting Israeli Jews' ownership of the land and residences constructed in Sheikh Jarrah, the Israeli government requested the deportation of Palestinians who had relocated there as well as the evacuation of local Palestinians. In 2022, some Palestinian families received the first formal removal order.

In 2022, some Palestinian families received the first formal removal order. Three thousand Palestinians currently reside in this area on a small fraction of the land that is still there after thousands of dunams were taken from the original occupants. 28 families are awaiting probable evacuation in open lawsuits in Israeli courts so that further settlements might be built [16]. Sheikh Jarrah serves as both an illustration of Israeli inconsistencies and a vivid sight into the constantly tense areas where we see the various ways in which Palestinians fight to protect their land and their identity.

As a result of the unjust and equally questionable treatment of Palestinian citizens in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, massive, yet peaceful, demonstrations in solidarity with the residents took place in Jerusalem, other Palestinian cities and towns, the Gaza Strip, and Palestinian towns. Despite the Israeli army's efforts to prevent news and events from being leaked from within the neighbourhood by restricting off the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood and barring anybody from approaching or entering the neighbourhood unless they could prove they were a resident [17].

In this academic paper, the researcher aims to bring attention to and explore multiple aspects that advocate for the rights of Palestinians. Central to the analysis is the Sheikh Jarrah case, which serves as a critical focal point in addressing the pressing human rights issues faced by the Palestinian community. The case not only highlights immediate challenges but also underscores the enduring struggle for justice, which, despite its complexities, remains a steadfast pursuit that may extend over generations. Not only does the Sheikh Jarrah case have political implications for the Palestinian-Israel conflict, but also for regional and international politics.

By analysing the case, researchers are able to investigate the roles of various actors, diplomatic efforts, and the obstacles to achieving a resolution.

Ayat 74 of Surah An-Nisa' in the Quran can be translated as follows:

"Therefore, let those [believers] who exchange this life for the Hereafter fight in Allah's cause. And whoever battles in Allah's cause, whether he is killed (shahid) or wins, We will grant him a great reward."

This verse encourages believers to prioritise the Hereafter over the the fleeting pleasure of the worldly life. It calls upon Muslims to engage in righteous efforts and struggles in Allah's cause, such as defending Islam, advocating justice, and standing up against oppression. When relating this verse to the Muslim obligation to assist the Palestinians, it is crucial to note that the Quran emphasises the significance of defending the weak, the oppressed, and those who face injustice. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Muslims who wish to fulfil their religious obligations can interpret this verse as a call to support and stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people, who are enduring a variety of afflictions.

2.3 Hashtag

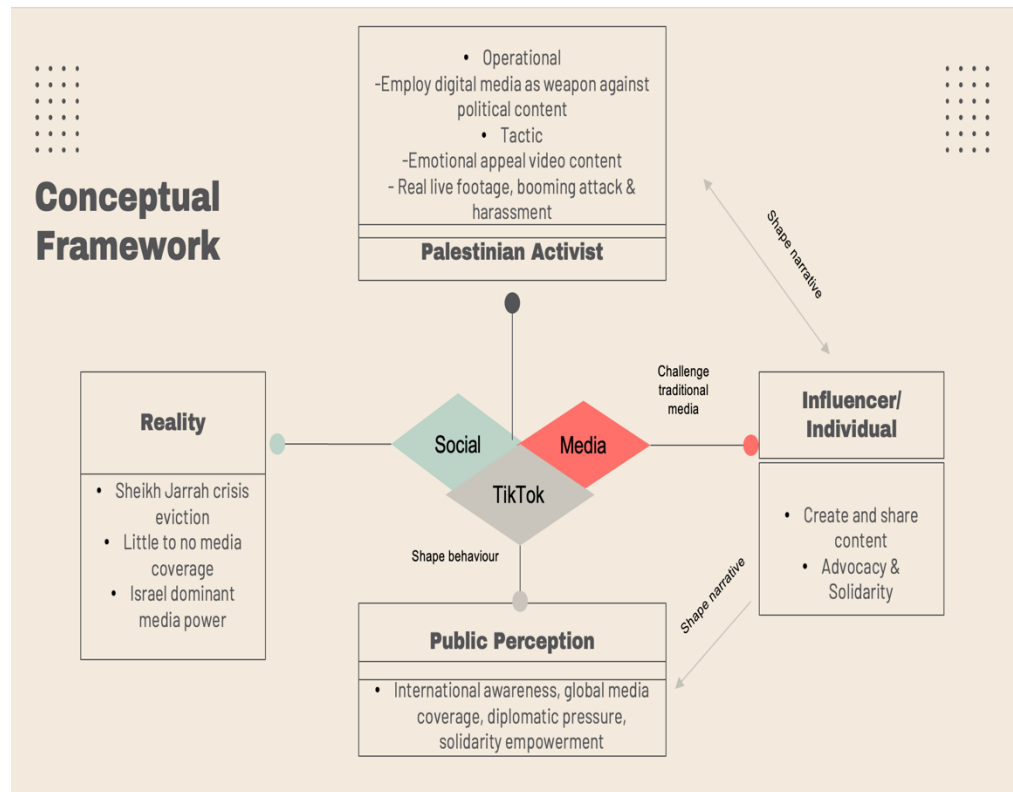
A hashtag is a keyword associated with information that characterises a tweet and facilitates searching. It is denoted by the symbol "hash" (#). On Twitter, where there are 50 million tweets every day, hashtags are essential for information organisation. Using hashtags, you can direct conversation to a particular subject or event. Political hashtags gained popularity during occasions such as the 2009 Iranian presidential election [18]. Recent academic interest has been sparked by the widespread usage of hashtags in contemporary human communication, which has made the use of hashtags in general a prominent research topic.

Among others, conducted extensive research on the cross-hatch communicative functions [19]. After seeing that a classical speech actions paradigm is appropriate in social media studies. The studied the hashtags on Twitter from a linguistic pragmatics point of view. He showed that hashtags may be used to structure, play, and provide meta-comments in addition to categorising labels [19]. Many authors [20], to name a few, have observed that hashtags are being used for a variety of purposes, ranging from irony to marketing, and no one can deny that the cross-hatch sign is still used as it was intended. The current article includes a more extensive analysis of these and other experts' conclusions, as well as examples and evidence gathered by the author from social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

TikTok, a prominent social media network, has also implemented the use of hashtags to categorise and organise content. While Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter were early adopters of hashtags, TikTok incorporated them as platform features to improve content discovery and engagement. TikTok recognised hashtags efficacy in aiding content discovery and encouraging community participation on social media platforms. TikTok allows users to identify their videos with certain topics or themes, making it easier for others to find and participate with content relevant to their interests. Users can put relevant hashtags in their video captions or comments to join larger conversations and reach a larger audience. As a result, this research focuses on the role of digital media in a social political campaign utilising the hashtag #savesheikhjarrah.

This hashtag was used by the activist who initiated the social media campaign to raise awareness and advocate for the safety of Palestinian residents in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. The campaign's goal is to raise awareness of possible forced evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah and to advocate for their right to remain in their homes. The "Save Sheikh Jarrah" movement links with broader political and socioeconomic circumstances, highlighting the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as the difficulties encountered by Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem and elsewhere. It has become a focal point for campaigners.

2.4 Conceptual Framework



Based on figure 2.4 the researcher study's conceptual framework is built on the integration of three theories: Agenda Setting Theory, Hybrid Warfare Theory, and User Generated Theory. These theories provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and impact of the Sheikh Jarrah crisis digital advocacy campaign. The diagram illustrates the application and development of these theories in the context of the campaign. The study begins with the recognition that the Sheikh Jarrah crisis, despite being a significant issue of ethnic cleansing, received limited coverage in mainstream media.

2.5 Hypotheses

For the purpose of this study, a number of hypotheses have been put forth, addressing both the tactics used by pro-Palestinian activists and the impact of content themes and narratives. The hypothesis is derived from the literature generated.

H1: Pro-Palestinian activists employ various strategies and mechanisms to utilize digital media as a weapon against political content during their advocacy campaign.

H2: Content themes and narratives presented in TikTok videos addressing the crisis shape the dominant narratives surrounding the issue, with potential implications on international understanding and support

3.0 Methods

In order to analyse the TikTok social media campaign during the Sheikh Jarrah crisis, the study used a quantitative content analysis methodology. By analysing the top 100 TikTok videos using the #savesheikhjarrah hashtag, the research seeks to identify the tactics and strategies employed in the campaign and understand the themes and narratives circulated by Palestine on TikTok during the conflict.

The research helps us comprehend the function of social media in modern warfare and the use of digital propaganda in conflict resolution. The data will be analysed statistically in order to find patterns, trends, and relationships between content themes, narrative techniques, and their influence on public opinion. Previous research has shown that political content using narrative psywar strategies was successful and influential during the Sheikh Jarrah incident. The data collecting period occurs from May 1st, 2021 to June 5th, 2021, which corresponds to the duration of the Sheikh Jarrah occurrence. The emphasis on TikTok allows for an examination of a trend of engaging political participation and its implications for digital activism. TikTok's platform affordances analysis provides a unique viewpoint on social media activism and the possibility for global advocacy and engagement in pushing for change. The following process is identifying operational definitions.

It is essential for maintaining objectivity and clarity throughout the coding process. The content analysis rigorously classifies and examines the chosen TikTok videos by using a coding system based on theories of hybrid warfare, propagandist tactics, prior research and key value that emerge.

Intercoder reliability is given priority in the study, which makes use of statistical tools like RStudio's Cohen's kappa coefficient. A Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.83 for theme coding and 0.89 for variable coding, which demonstrate the high level of intercoder agreement, verifies the accuracy and consistency of the coding procedure.

4.1 Findings and Discussion

The findings will be presented in a systematic manner, allowing for a thorough understanding of the observed patterns and trends. The initial stage of the analysis involves describing the interactive features of TikTok and examining the various functions that influence the engagement with the audience and data collection. The features including like, favourite and repost button and also comment section. This will influence the impact of each video and at the same time allow the researcher to present the data more effectively and strengthen the findings.

Next the research question of the study will be answer from the data gather from the 100 sample videos. The data is process through RStudio. It is a dedicated integrated development environment (IDE) designed specifically for the R programming language. It enhances productivity and efficiency in data analysis and statistical modelling. RStudio provides a range of powerful visualization options through packages like ggplot2 and base R graphics, allowing researchers to create compelling visual representations of their data.

The digital advocacy campaign relating to the Sheikh Jarrah issue experienced a significant intensity in terms of engagement and reach on numerous social media platforms from 1st May to 5th June 2021. The campaign drew the attention of millions of users, resulting in a large number of likes, views, and multiple reaction comments. One key indicator of the campaign's intensity is the level of user engagement, as reflected by the number of likes and views received by the top content creators during this period. Several TikTok videos addressing the Sheikh Jarrah crisis managed to reach an impressive range of 2 to 5 million likes and views. This level of engagement demonstrates the significant interest and support garnered by the campaign among TikTok users. The comments section of these viral videos was swamped with supportive remarks in addition to receiving a lot of likes and views. Users expressed their support for the cause, expressed their feelings, and supported the Palestinian activists' efforts to spread awareness of the Sheikh Jarrah issues.

Table 4.1 Positive Comments from #savesheikhjarrah campaign

Positive Comments	Likes
I don't understand how cruel and evil a person can be to enjoy someone struggle	63,500
Yes right. Allah definitely will be with them	36,700
Explore! SHARE THE TRUTH	30,100
God please protect them	17,300
I will never understand how humans can do that to other humans. We all need to wake up and spread awareness	14,400

The overwhelming positivity in the comments section demonstrates the campaign's great resonance and influence on people's attitudes and thoughts. The immense support and unity the campaign has generated are further evidenced by the comments area, which are extremely favourable. According to Table 4.1, the top 5 comments with the highest number of likes are displayed. The likes on TikTok serve as a form of support or endorsement for a comment. In terms of engagement on TikTok, which encompasses views, likes, and various other factors, the number of likes received for a comment holds significance as it reflects its strength appeal or support. Performing sentiment analysis on social media posts presents unique challenges due to the prevalence of short and informal content. These posts often contain abbreviations, typos, and ungrammatical language usage, making it more difficult to accurately assess the sentiment conveyed [21]. Despite the comment "I don't understand how cruel and evil a person can be to enjoy someone's struggle" receiving 63,500 likes in the #savesheikhjarrah campaign, it may not convey a positive sentiment. However, it shows support for the campaign and reflects the emotional expression shared by others regarding the discrimination faced by Palestinians.

Furthermore, the campaign's success can also be attributed to the effective use of engagement features on TikTok platforms. The repost and favourite buttons played a crucial role in generating further engagement and expanding the reach of the campaign's content. By enabling users to easily share and save the videos, these features facilitated the dissemination of the campaign's message, allowing it to reach a broader audience beyond the initial viewership.

Table 4.2 Cross tabulation between TikTok Key Feature and Objective Categorical Theme

*Measure in proportion: $0.1 \times 100 = 1\%$

	Activis m & Advoca cy	Artistic Expressi on	Awarene ss & Educatio n	Personal Stories & Experien ce	Solidari ty & Symbol ic Gesture
Duet	0.1	0	0.05	0	0
Filters & Effects	0	0	0	0.03	0.08
Live Video Streaming	0	0.1	0	0.11	0
Stitch	0	0.05	0.15	0.06	0.15
TikTok Sounds	0.2	0.35	0.2	0.31	0.38
Video Editing	0.2	0.15	0.2	0.06	0.08
Video Recording & Uploading	0.5	0.25	0.4	0.36	0.31
Voiceover	0	0.1	0	0.08	0

The platform on TikTok not only makes use of the hashtag feature for algorithmic prominence, but it also provides a number of key features that encourage user engagement and creativity. These TikTok features include the ability to record, edit, and post original videos by content creators, as well as duet functionality, filters, effects, live video streaming, TikTok sounds, and voiceover tools as a metric engagement. The data provided in Table 4.2 gives the cross-tabulation of two categorical themes: the primary tools used by content creators and the objectives of their videos content. This analysis aims to identify patterns and associations between these variables. The analysis of the cross-tabulation data revealed interesting insights into the relationship between the primary tools used by content creators on TikTok and the objectives of their videos.

The data indicated that TikTok Sounds emerged as the most extensively utilized key feature, with 35 occurrences in artistic expression videos, 31 occurrences in personal stories and experience content videos, and 38 occurrences in solidarity and symbolic gesture content videos.

Additionally, video recording and uploading were also prominent features used by content creators, with 36 occurrences in personal stories and experience videos, 31 occurrences in solidarity and symbolic gesture videos, and 25 occurrences in artistic expression videos. It was also observed that 11 videos were related to live video streaming, indicating the use of this feature to capture and broadcast real-time events during the Sheikh Jarrah crisis. The primary objective associated with its usage was found to be the dissemination of information and the cultivation of solidarity. Notably, both Palestinian content

creators and others utilized this feature to narrate personal experiences, depict the real-life situation during the Sheikh Jarrah crisis, and express solidarity through artistic creations. It was also discovered that other content producers preferred to record original videos in which they related personal stories of Palestinians.

The videos were subsequently posted on TikTok with the aim of promoting solidarity and raising awareness. pro-Palestinian activists demonstrated their adeptness in utilizing digital media to construct narratives, garner solidarity, and garner worldwide support during the Sheikh Jarrah advocacy campaign. They effectively employed emotional storytelling, visual elements, hashtags, user-generated content, and international outreach to capture the attention of millions, resulting in a global solidarity movement in support of Sheikh Jarrah residents and the Palestinian cause.

The TikTok campaign primarily relied on the strategic use of hashtags, with the hashtag #savesheikhjarrah serving as a unifying force that consolidated content related to the cause. Through hashtags, users could easily discover and engage with videos, contributing to the formation of a cohesive movement. Hashtag activism facilitated not only the accessibility of relevant material but also encouraged active participation, enabling individuals to voice their opinions and propagate the campaign's message. This strategic use of hashtags played a significant role in the campaign's virality and the establishment of a global solidarity movement.

Additionally, activists promoted user-generated content by issuing challenges and suggestions pertaining to Sheikh Jarrah. By encouraging people to create their own videos, the campaign expanded beyond the immediate activist circle, reaching a wider audience and fostering grassroots support. This participatory approach empowered individuals to contribute to the campaign, fostering a sense of collective action and mobilizing support from the ground up. TikTok offers a range of features that enhance user engagement and creativity, complementing the algorithmic prominence of hashtags. These features include video recording, editing, and posting capabilities, duets, filters, effects, live streaming, TikTok sounds, and voiceover tools.

Analysing the data provided, it became evident that TikTok Sounds were the most widely utilized feature on the platform. Content creators, both Palestinians and others, used this feature to disseminate information, foster solidarity, and convey personal experiences during the Sheikh Jarrah crisis. Additionally, many creators opted to record original videos sharing personal stories of Palestinians, with the objective of promoting solidarity and raising awareness.

To ensure broad reach, activists shared videos in multiple languages and incorporated subtitles, transcending language barriers and effectively engaging a diverse global audience. This approach facilitated the internationalization of the Sheikh Jarrah issue, generating awareness and garnering support from individuals across the world. Overall, TikTok served as a powerful medium for sharing narratives, spreading information, and fostering a global sense of solidarity in support of Sheikh Jarrah residents and the Palestinian cause. The platform's features, combined with the creativity and engagement of content creators, played a crucial role in amplifying the message and mobilizing a diverse audience to take part in the advocacy campaign.

Table 4.3 Video Views Engagement on #sheikhjarrah

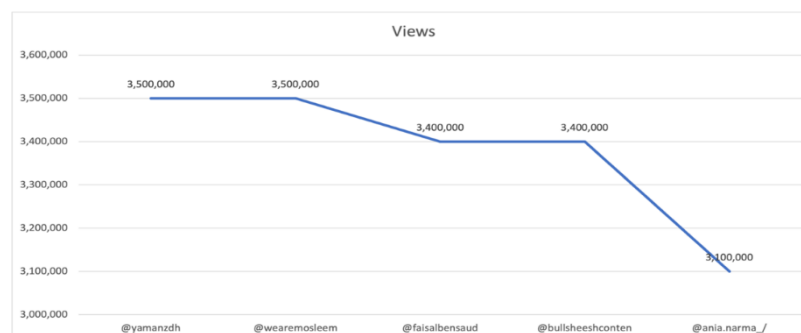
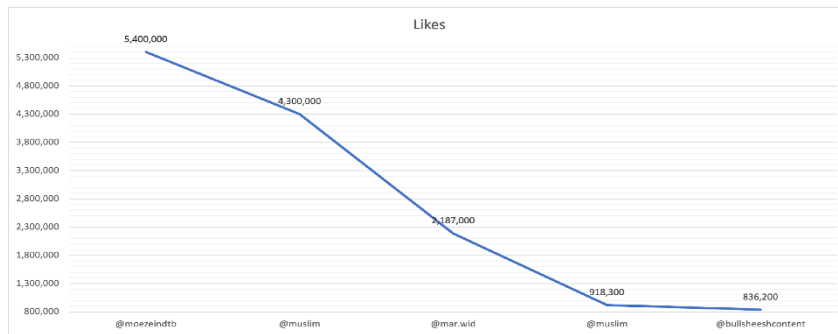


Table 4.4 Video Likes Engagement on #sheikhjarrah

TikTok played an important role as a campaign weapon in amplifying the impact of the Sheikh Jarrah cause and influencing worldwide debate and public opinion. In this context TikTok's algorithmic nature and user behaviour patterns contributed to Sheikh Jarrah-related content's viral spread. Because the platform's algorithm favoured engaging and popular content, videos relating to the cause gained traction quickly and reached a large audience. This viral nature enabled the rapid dissemination of videos beyond the initial circle of activists, capturing the attention of users worldwide and amplifying the impact of the campaign. TikTok provided a platform for pro-Palestinian activists to share emotionally compelling stories that humanized the plight of Sheikh Jarrah residents.

Short videos were used by activists to stir emotions, relate personal accounts, and expose the realities of individuals under the Israeli occupation. The sentimental storytelling element of TikTok content was extremely important in shaping public opinion and inspiring solidarity among viewers. TikTok is primarily a visual platform with a focus on video content, activists were able to convey Sheikh Jarrah-related messages with impact by using real visuals. Videos of destroyed homes, demonstrations, and personal experiences had an impact on viewers visually. These images not only increased awareness, but also provided proof of the injustices experienced by the locals. TikTok helped spread powerful imagery and raised awareness for the cause by presenting these graphics in a captivating and understandable style. TikTok's global user base and multilingual capabilities facilitated the internationalization of the Sheikh Jarrah cause.

Activists were able to create content in different languages, including subtitles, to broaden the reach of their message. This global outreach resulted in the campaign transcending geographical boundaries, generating awareness, and influencing public opinion on a global scale. Users from various countries were exposed to the issue, fostering international solidarity and support for the cause.

According to [22], video had at least 557,000 views because this is the average number of views of a viral TikTok video. In accordance with the data presented in Table 4.3, the five most popular videos on TikTok associated with the #savesheikhjarrah campaign have accumulate viewership ranging from 3.1 million to 3.5 million. These videos, originating from various individuals worldwide, notably from Malaysia, demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting Palestine and addressing the Sheikh Jarrah crisis. The content produced by these individuals carries significant influence and resonates deeply with the audience, making a substantial impact through their powerful videos. Table 4.4 presents data on video engagement pertaining to the campaign. It indicates that the top five accounts received an average of 836,000 to 5.4 million engagements.

Table 4.5 Table Cross Tabulation between Target Audience and Objective Theme*Measure in proportion: $0.1 \times 100 = 1\%$

	Activism & Advocacy	Artistic Expression	Awareness & Education	Personal Stories & Experience	Solidarity & Symbolic Gesture
International Community	6	10	15	27	9
Malaysians	4	5	5	2	4
Palestinians	0	5	0	7	0

According to the Table 4.5, a sizable number of videos were created with the goal of reaching a global audience. The noticeably high values noted in each column, which correspond to their respective goals, reinforce the objective of the campaign. A notable participation from Malaysians was observed in the campaign, as they localized the content by creating videos in the Malay language. On the other hand, videos specifically intended for Palestinians were predominantly in Arabic.

Despite the language differences, the research findings indicate that the content remains fairly comprehensible, highlighting the existence of effective communication despite the presence of a language barrier and for international target audience most of the videos are in English. The data presented in the table provides insights into the types of content that effectively reach the target audience. Out of the 27 videos analysed, a significant portion consisted of narrative content, where Palestinians shared their personal experiences or content creators retold those stories.

These videos were primarily intended to engage the international community. In contrast, the content produced for the Malaysian audience demonstrated a balanced approach. Among the 20 videos, various themes were covered, including activism and advocacy, artistic expression, awareness and education, personal stories and experiences, as well as solidarity and symbolic gestures. This diverse range of content aimed to cater to the interests and concerns of the Malaysian audience.

On the other hand, videos specifically dedicated to Palestinians or created by them focused primarily on artistic expression and personal stories and experiences. These videos aimed to provide a platform for Palestinians to share their unique perspectives and narratives with the broader audience.

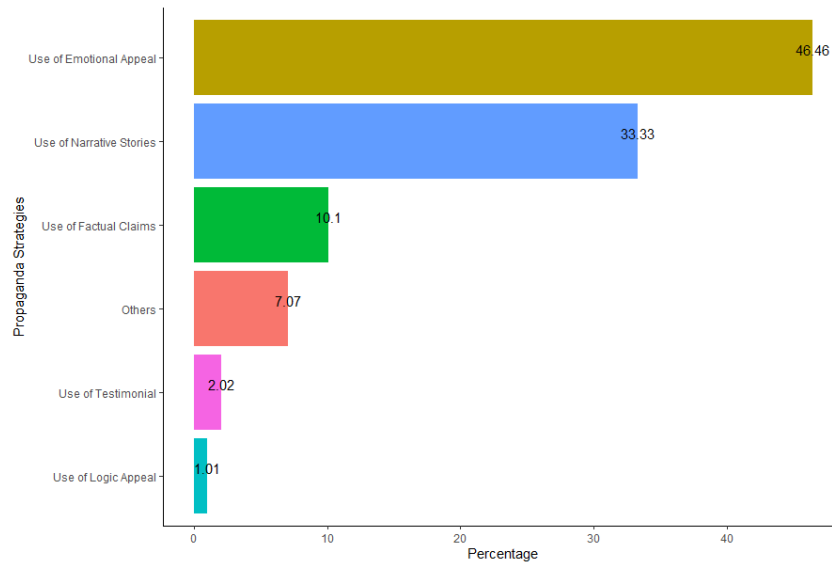


Figure 4.1 Propaganda Strategies Percentage

To explain the relationship between the content themes presented in TikTok videos addressing the crisis, this research presents the key themes and narratives that emerged from the content analysis. Throughout the research there were 7 themes emerged including TikTok key features, objective, cause, target audiences, propaganda strategies, persuasive strategies and hybrid warfare tactics.

TikTok is seen to be as a weapon pro-Palestinian activist during the Sheikh Jarrah issue in their advocacy campaign. The data analysis suggests that the solidarity displayed by Palestinian activists had a substantial impact on content creators, leading to the production of emotionally stirring videos. These videos employed strategies, engaged influencers, and leveraged the distinctive features of TikTok to effectively convey their messages towards international community. Muslims all throughout the world were outraged over Israel's continued discrimination against Palestinians. It got more pressing when Israel's attacks, such as bombardment and harassment, continued even throughout Ramadhan. As a result, Muslim solidarity grew stronger during that time, and the campaign became well known and quickly escalated and with their creativity they create more impactful videos and repost to create more awareness on Sheikh Jarrah crisis.

During the research conducted on the Sheikh Jarrah campaign, it was observed that the videos analysed employed specific strategies, leading to their classification as propaganda strategies and hybrid warfare tactics. According to Rid's study, a variety of historical approaches have been used as hybrid warfare tactics. Disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, hacking, psychological operations, proxy warfare, political intervention and electoral interference, media manipulation, and hybrid intelligence operations are some of these techniques [23]. Rid's work highlights the importance of understanding the impact of disinformation campaigns in the digital age. He analyses case studies and historical events to demonstrate the significant role that propaganda plays in modern conflicts. By examining the methods, motives, and consequences of these strategies, Rid provides valuable insights into the nature of hybrid warfare and the manipulation of information for political gain.

The 100 videos sampling can be classified as a social political campaign video. Based on figure 4.1, it was found that emotional appeal was utilized in 42.22 percent of the videos, making it the most prevalent propaganda strategy. The second most common propaganda approach was the use of narrative stories, accounting for 33.33 percent of the videos analysed.

Additional strategies, such as the inclusion of factual claims 10.1 percent, testimonials 2.02 percent, and other miscellaneous approaches 7.07 percent, were observed in the analysed videos, but their utilization was relatively minimal compared to emotional appeal and narrative stories.

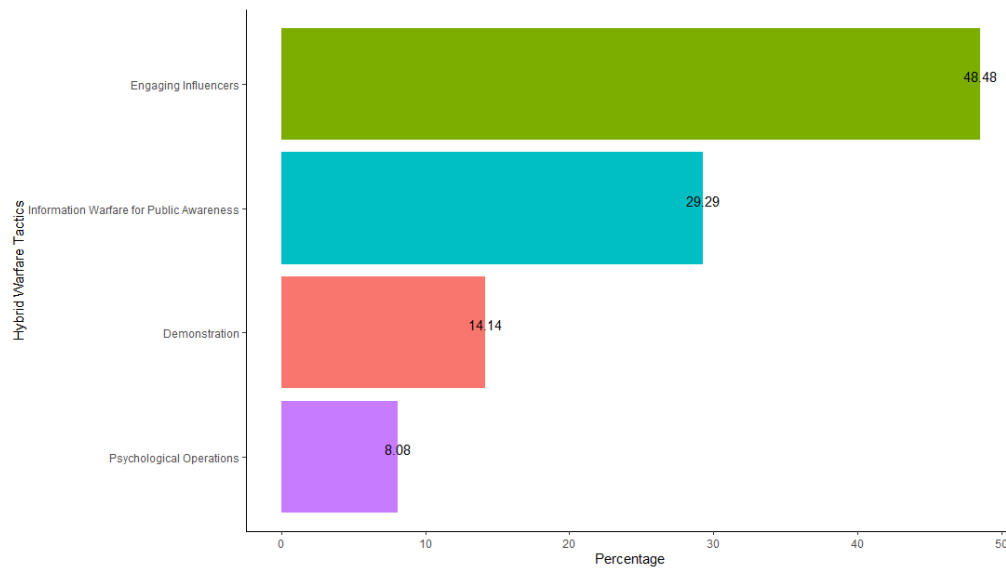


Figure 4.2 Hybrid Warfare Percentage

In addition to employing propaganda strategies, the videos created by individuals in solidarity with the Sheikh Jarrah crisis also incorporate elements of hybrid warfare tactics. By leveraging influencers or key opinion leaders with large followings, these videos effectively impact their audience. The majority of creators harness the power of influence to engage their followers and garner support for the campaign. Based on figure 4.2, specifically, 48.48 percent of the videos engage with influencers on the TikTok platform, while 29.29 percent employ information warfare techniques to raise public awareness about the crisis. Additionally, 14.14 percent of the content portrays demonstrations from various parts of the world, calling for solidarity with the people of Sheikh Jarrah and Palestine as a whole. Furthermore, psychological operations tactics are employed to influence the behaviour, emotions, and attitudes of the target audience.

Finally, this study looked into many aspects of the TikTok Sheikh Jarrah campaign, such as the platform's key features, campaign objectives, target audiences, propaganda strategies, persuasive techniques, and hybrid warfare tactics. During the campaign, TikTok emerged as a strong tool for pro-Palestinian activists, helping them to effectively advocate for the Sheikh Jarrah issues. The analysis of data revealed that Palestinian activists' display of solidarity had a significant impact on content creators, leading to the production of emotionally stirring videos. These videos strategically employed various persuasive strategies and leveraged the unique features of TikTok to effectively convey messages to the international community. The campaign gained momentum and awareness as Muslims worldwide expressed outrage over Israel's discrimination against Palestinians, especially during the holy month of Ramadan. The outcomes of this campaign not only shaped the public perception discourse but people around the world go down to the street for demonstration and demand a solidarity for Palestinian people in Sheikh Jarrah.

The research also identified the utilization of propaganda strategies and hybrid warfare tactics within the videos analysed. Drawing from Thomas Rid's study, the tactics employed included disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, psychological operations, and more. The prevalence of emotional appeal and narrative storytelling in the videos demonstrated the effectiveness of these propaganda strategies. Additionally, the videos created by individuals in solidarity with the Sheikh

Jarrah crisis incorporated elements of hybrid warfare tactics. The involvement of influencers, information warfare techniques, and demonstrations from around the world contributed to engaging the target audience and garnering support for the cause. In conclusion, this study highlights the effective use of TikTok as a platform for social-political campaigns, emphasising the use of hybrid warfare techniques and propaganda strategies. The results highlight how crucial it is to comprehend how information may be played and how digital platforms can influence public opinion in order to mobilise support for critical situations like the Sheikh Jarrah crisis

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study gave useful insights into the content themes, propaganda strategies, and hybrid warfare tactics used in TikTok videos addressing the Sheikh Jarrah crisis. According to the findings, the most common propaganda methods used in the analysed videos were emotional appeal and narrative storytelling. Furthermore, the use of hybrid warfare tactics such as influencer leveraging, information warfare strategies, and demonstrations revealed the dynamic nature of digital weaponization in the social-political landscape. The study emphasised TikTok's important significance as a medium for social-political campaigns, demonstrating its ability to successfully deliver messages, engage audiences, and mobilise support. The Sheikh Jarrah crisis campaign demonstrated how digital media can be a powerful weapon for activism and social change, allowing individuals to express solidarity, raise awareness, and affect public opinion on a worldwide scale.

Furthermore, the study emphasised the importance of ongoing research and analysis in order to fully comprehend digital weaponization and its repercussions. To address the issues posed by misinformation, manipulation, and propaganda distribution in the digital arena, the dynamic nature of technology and hybrid warfare techniques needs continual examination of emerging trends, countermeasures and legal frameworks. While the study provides useful information, it is critical to recognise its limits. The sample size, specialised setting, and inherent subjectivity in content analysis all limit the findings' generalizability. To get a thorough knowledge of digital weaponization, future research should incorporate larger and more diverse samples, investigate numerous contexts, and use mixed-method approaches.

Finally, this research adds to the growing body of information about the interaction of digital media, propaganda campaigns, and hybrid warfare tactics. This study sheds insight on the opportunities and problems given by digital platforms in moulding social-political narratives and mobilising support for crucial issues by investigating the dynamics of TikTok videos in the context of the Sheikh Jarrah crisis. The findings can help policymakers, activists, and scholars navigate the complicated digital ecosystem and support responsible digital practises for positive social change.

6.0 References

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