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An Analysis of the Israel-Hamas Conflict

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HOW IMPARTIAL ARE FACT-CHECKING PLATFORMS? AN ANALYSIS OF THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

As fake news spreads rapidly in conflict and crisis, fact-checking platforms are critical in accessing reliable information. Although these platforms aim to provide accurate and unbiased information, they are often criticized, and their impartiality is questioned. Although studies evaluating such criticisms on a scientific basis are limited, they can help to analyze the effectiveness of fact-checking platforms in combating misinformation and ensuring societies' access to reliable information. Analyzing their impartiality, especially in sensitive crisis moments such as conflict, sheds a critical light on the credibility of these platforms. Through comparative qualitative content analysis, this study analyzes IFCN-certified fact-checking platforms operating in five countries (France, Germany, Iraq, USA, Türkiye) during the first month of the Israel-Hamas conflict. The findings show that fact-checking platforms are shaped not only by their accuracy criteria but also by how they are positioned within the political and social frameworks of the country in which they are located.

KEYWORDS

fact-checking • fake news • journalism • impartiality • conflict

INTRODUCTION

Misinformation or fake news has become a significant issue, especially with the rise of new communication technologies and social media. Detecting fake news has become more challenging in digital media, where millions of data circulate, compared to traditional media (Collins et al., 2021; Kalsnes, 2018; Van Heekeren, 2020). Historically, fake news has always been a problem, but today it has evolved into a global issue with the potential to cause serious harm. It negatively impacts various areas of life, including politics, health, and the economy (Bastick, 2021; Hoy & Koulouri, 2022; Vo & Lee, 2018).

Fake news is defined as information presented as accurate but lacking a factual basis, often bypassing the news media's editorial norms. It overlaps with other forms of information disorder, including misinformation (unintentional false information), disinformation (deliberately misleading information), and malinformation (genuine information used to cause harm) (Lazer et al., 2018; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). The spread of all these disorders of information on the internet poses a significant threat to society. Organizations and researchers are actively working to combat this epidemic. Fact-checkers play a crucial role in verifying, evaluating, and correcting the accuracy of dubious claims and news from both traditional and social media (Graves, 2017; Kyriakidou et al., 2022; Soprano et al., 2024).

In situations such as pandemics (Alam et al., 2021; Rocha et al., 2023; Ünal & Çiçeklioğlu, 2022), wars (Abu Salem et al., 2019; Kornieiev et al., 2023; Monsees, 2020), and natural disasters (Kwanda & Lin, 2020; Safitri et al., 2021) the dissemination of fake news accelerates. Fact-checking platforms aim to reduce the spread and impact of misinformation that undermines citizens' ability to think critically and make informed decisions, especially during these times (Kumar, 2022).

While fact-checking platforms are an effective weapon in the fight against fake news, they have their critics. A prevalent concern is their perceived ineffectiveness in eliminating false and misleading claims. Additionally, there are worries about potential bias in fact-checking efforts (Amazeen, 2013). These issues raise questions about the impartiality of fact-checkers.

In journalism, impartiality is judged by factors such as news selection, sourcing, and language. This principle also applies to fact-checking platforms, which affect every stage of a journalist's work. The debate about impartiality as a fundamental journalistic norm extends to fact-checking journalism. Basic practices such as fact-checking, cross-fact-checking,

systematic questioning, and impartial reporting form the basis of journalism (Kumar, 2022). As a result, the effectiveness of fact-checking platforms in combating fake news depends on their commitment to impartiality (Amazeen, 2015).

During the conflict between Israel and Hamas in October 2023, numerous fake news stories spread rapidly on social media, with various claims and images circulating globally in different languages (Shahi, 2024). Fact-checking platforms, vital in combating this information pollution, have been actively fighting fake news since the beginning of the conflict. In order to assess the impartiality of fact-checking platforms, this study analyses the fact-checking platforms operating in France, Germany, Iraq, the USA, and Türkiye during the first six months of the Israel-Hamas conflict. In this context, one IFCN (International Fact-Checking Network) member platform was selected from each country, and 231 fact-checks published in the specified period were analyzed through content analysis.

1. CRITICISM OF THE IMPARTIALITY OF FACT-CHECKING

The internet has significantly changed the information landscape by removing traditional media gatekeepers and allowing anyone to create and share content, democratizing information and increasing misinformation (Amazeen, 2020). While social media encourages open participation and is an important channel for the free dissemination of information, it raises concerns about the quality and accuracy of the shared content (Alam et al., 2021; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Wu et al., 2019).

Fact-checking initiatives that have emerged as a solution to this problem are vital in helping the public resist fake news, often reconstructing original news to expose manipulation (Luengo & García-Marín, 2020; Sundriyal et al., 2023). Research shows that these platforms effectively reduce false beliefs (Flynn et al., 2017; Gottfried et al., 2013; Van Erkel et al., 2024; Wasike, 2023; Wood & Porter, 2019) and have a positive impact on political beliefs (Nyhan et al., 2020; Walter et al., 2020; Wintersieck, 2017), especially about non-political misinformation (Liu et al., 2023).

Despite the increase in fact-checking worldwide, platforms occasionally face criticism (Dierickx & Lindén, 2023). Some of these criticisms are directed at users' perceptions of these platforms. They often focus on cognitive biases, motivated reasoning, and their effects, as defined by fact-checking bias and selective exposure. Cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, reduce the impact of fact-checking by leading people to seek out content that supports their views (Mena, 2019; Soprano et al., 2024). Selective exposure, where people select information consistent with their prior beliefs,

also limits the impact of fact-checking because viewers may prefer content that confirms their views (Hameleers & Van Der Meer, 2020). Motivated reasoning suggests that people uncritically accept and resist congruent information (Taber & Lodge, 2006; Thaler, 2024). This is evident in US political studies, where people accept ideologically congruent claims regardless of their veracity (Hameleers & Van Der Meer, 2020). The “rebound effect” emphasizes that exposure to contradictory fact-checks can reinforce false beliefs and make misinformation appear more credible to those exposed to it (Hameleers, 2019; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). As a result, fact-checking may not reach those most vulnerable to misinformation (Aruguete et al., 2023; Nyhan & Reifler, 2012).

2. IMPARTIALITY OF FACT-CHECKER

Beyond concerns about the effectiveness of fact-checking, there are also criticisms of the process and the fact-checkers, which is the primary concern of this study (Draws et al., 2021, 2022). These criticisms, which raise concerns about the impartiality of the fact-checking, are related to the selection of news to be verified and the frameworks used in the fact-checking process.

The fact-checking process is a four-stage process: selecting the claim, selecting the source of evidence, checking the accuracy of the claim, and publishing it. The transparency of these processes demonstrates the impartiality of fact-checking (Kumar, 2022). IFCN analyzed fact-checking platforms worldwide, assessed their objectivity and impartiality, published a principles guide for this process, and explained the steps required for objective fact-checking. These principles will promote consistency and impartiality in fact-checking and leave no room for bias (Fernández-Roldán et al., 2023). The IFCN Code of Principles emphasizes that signatory fact-checking organizations should transparently publish impartial reports on viral claims (Kumar, 2022). IFCN member fact-checking platforms state that when selecting claims to verify, they choose newsworthy ones, making viewers wonder whether these claims are valid (Graves, 2016). However, some fact-checking organizations are still often accused of not being impartial in both news selection and news presentation (Stencel, 2015).

Criticisms of the impartiality of fact-checking platforms are based on cognitive biases. Research has shown that cognitive biases affect fact-checking journalists as much as they affect readers, and that fact-checking journalists may also be vulnerable to such biases (Charman et al., 2017). Cognitive biases stem from mental shortcuts and heuristics that lead to systematic thinking errors in people’s decision-making pro-

cesses. Stages such as news selection, evidence search, and rating may be subject to cognitive biases influenced by external factors such as time pressure and lack of information (Masotina et al., 2023).

Azzopardi (2021), who examines cognitive biases that may jeopardize the fact-checking process in his studies, has categorized the causes of factors that may trigger cognitive biases in the information fact-checking process under four headings by reviewing the literature, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Cognitive biases that may jeopardize the fact-checking process.
Source: Authors

1.	Too Much Information	Confirmation bias, anchoring, availability, framing effects
2.	No Meaning	Bandwagon effects, exposure effects, reinforcement effects
3.	Act Fast	Decoy effects, ambiguity effects, less is more, Dunning-Kruger effects
4.	Remember	Priming effects, order effects, peak-end rule

Masotina et al. (2023) categorized the cognitive biases that may affect fact-checking under 10 headings: Availability bias leads us to overestimate the likelihood of something based on how easily we recall it. Confirmation bias makes us favor information that supports our beliefs while ignoring contradictory evidence. Anchoring bias causes us to rely too much on the first information we encounter. The ambiguity effect makes us avoid uncertain options, even if they are beneficial. The bandwagon effect pushes us to adopt popular opinions without critical thinking. Framing bias influences decisions based on how information is presented. The less-is-more effect makes too many options overwhelming, leading to inaction. The reinforcement effect makes repeated exposure to a claim more believable. Selection bias results in only certain events being reported while others are ignored. Source bias makes us trust information based on its origin rather than its actual credibility.

Soprano et al. (2024) identified 39 cognitive biases on this issue by reviewing the literature. These issues centred on the selection of the news to be verified (Colicchio, 2023; Draws et al., 2022) and the frameworks used in fact-checking (Farnsworth & Lichter, 2019). Along with these biases, the fact-checking process also requires the construction of a narrative. Verifying a suspicious claim and its presentation is also a form of journalism; in journalism, it is essential that the news text is the closest to the truth. Therefore, this feature is sought in fact-checking, which is a new journalistic practice.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study examines fact-checking platforms in the context of impartiality in the Israel-Hamas conflict, focusing on five platforms certified by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN).

Criticisms of impartiality in claim selection concentrate on two main points: First, whether one side's claims are more substantiated than the other's, i.e., whether different views are equally represented. Secondly, whether substantiated claims are more negatively biased against one side, which is associated with the negative presentation of the statements used (Birks 2019:23). In this context, the study will examine two main points: whether the parties are given equal coverage in news selection and the statements used about the parties.

The following research questions (RQ) will be addressed in this study:

- *RQ1. Are there ideological tendencies in selecting news to be verified?*
- *RQ2. Is there a difference in news language in the fact-checking on the subject?*

The most appropriate analysis method for the research is qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is a method used to analyze visual and verbal data content and reduce facts or events into categories for better analysis and interpretation (Harwood & Garry, 2003, p. 479). Qualitative content analysis is a method used to systematically identify the meanings of qualitative data that may not be obvious and allows focusing on aspects of meaning related to the overall research question (Kracauer, 1952; Mayring, 2014; Richards et al., 2024; Schreier, 2012).

This study examines fact-checks related to the 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict by collecting fact-checks between 7 October and 6 November 2023. The conflict, which began when Hamas attacked and Israel responded, has led to widespread misinformation, particularly on social media. Globally, fact-checking platforms have worked to address this issue (Oguejiofor, 2024; Yakubu & Oyigebe, 2024).

Platforms were selected considering the ideological stances of their respective countries on the conflict. The U.S. (a strong ally of Israel), along with France and Germany, generally support Israel (Emir, 2024; Wade, 2023), while countries like Türkiye and Iraq support Palestine (Göksedef, 2024).

The study includes five platforms from IFCN-member organizations: AFP Fact Check, Correctiv, PolitiFact, Teyit, and Tech4Peace (T4P), all adhering to IFCN's transparency standards. Transparency, a fundamental principle

to ensure the press’s objectivity and correct misinformation, is a requirement for IFCN membership (Ye, 2023, p. 2265). All claims investigated by IFCN member platforms describe the fact-checking process and provide source links. Therefore, the five platforms examined in this study maintain transparency and document their fact-checking methods.

Each platform’s language varied, with AFP and PolitiFact offering English content, Correctiv in German, T4P in English and Arabic, and Teyit in Turkish, Azerbaijani, and English. Translations were done using Google Translate to ensure consistent English-language analysis. Data collection employed web scraping, focusing on fact-checking reports containing the terms “Israel,” “Palestine,” and “ Hamas” and excluding general news. The final dataset comprised 231 fact-checks. In the 6-month period analysed, Corrective 23, AFP 67, Politifact 52, T4P 27, and Teyit 62 suspicious allegations regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict were investigated.

The fact-checking content examined in the study was obtained by web scraping from the archives of the fact-checking platforms’ web pages. Web scraping is a technique used to collect data on the web (Diakopoulos, 2019). This technique allows the automatic collection of almost unlimited Google search results for various predefined search queries (Schwab et al., 2023). The R programming language was used for collecting and batch-processing the data sources.

After the data was collected, the fact-checking was systematically examined, and a coding table was created within the framework of the questions created according to the purpose of the study. This coding table also included questions regarding suspicious claims during this period. The coding table was shaped according to the headings in Table 2.

Table 2: Dimensions and levels of coding. Source: Authors

Dimensions	Levels
Name of the fact-checking platform	Correctiv, AFP, PolitiFact, T4P, Teyit
Subject of the fact-check	Support for Hamas, support for Israel, attack by Israel, attack by Hamas, positive claim about Hamas, negative claim about Hamas, positive claim about Israel, negative claim about Israel, condemnation or non-support for Israel, condemnation or non-support for Hamas, other
Confirmation result	True, false, mixed, inconclusive
Misleading aspect of the suspicious claim	Incorrect attribution, taking it out of context, distortion, manipulation, parody, imitation, fabrication, unclear, accurate news
Type of suspicious claim	Text/video/photo/Livestream

Where the suspicious claim originated	X, Meta, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram or WhatsApp, Tiktok, TV, newspaper, multiple social media, both traditional media and social media, webpage, unclear
Fact-checking method	Reverse image or video search, keyword search, refer to social media, refer to experts, refer to journalists, refer to official sources, refer to another fact-checking platform, refer to the parties to the claim, unclear

The fact-checking texts were re-analyzed using a coding table, and coders discussed any discrepancies in their coding decisions to reach a consensus on valid choices. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Krippendorff’s Alpha (α) to quantify the agreement between two independent coders across ten nominal coding dimensions. The dataset comprised 231 entities per dimension, with coders assigning nominal values numerically encoded for analysis. Krippendorff’s Alpha was computed using the nominal method in R, which is appropriate for categorical data. The analysis was conducted dimension-wise and for the aggregated dataset (2,079 total observations).

Table 3 summarizes the reliability coefficients for each dimension and the overall dataset. Krippendorff’s Alpha values ranged from $\alpha = 0.887$ to $\alpha = 1.000$, indicating strong to perfect inter-rater agreement. The overall reliability for the aggregated data was excellent ($\alpha = 0.961$).

Table 3: Krippendorff’s Alpha Coefficients by Coding Dimension.

Source: Authors

Coding Dimension	Fact-Checking	α
Subject	231	0.935
Verification Result	231	1.000
Misleading Aspect	231	0.925
Type of Suspicious Allegation	231	0.954
Place	231	0.903
Verification Method	231	0.942
Proof	231	0.887
Header Structure	231	0.908
Background Info	231	0.909
Overall	2079	0.961

Notably, *Verification Result* achieved perfect agreement ($\alpha = 1.000$), suggesting unambiguous coding criteria for this dimension. The lowest agreement occurred for *Proof* ($\alpha = 0.887$), though this still exceeds the conventional threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.800$ for acceptable reliability (Krippendorff, 2011). All other dimensions demonstrated robust agreement ($\alpha \geq 0.903$).

To answer the research questions, the first step involved counting each topic's frequency across platforms and calculating the percentage distribution based on these frequencies, revealing which topics were more prominently covered. For instance, topics like "Support for Hamas" and "Attack by Israel" were noted to have higher coverage on specific platforms. A heat map was then created to visualize the frequency of these topics, facilitating comparisons among platforms.

Another analysis examined the words following specific word pairs, focusing on the target words "Israel" and "Hamas." This process involved several stages: preprocessing the data, creating binary word groups (bigrams), and calculating word ratios. The raw text data underwent preprocessing, including converting to lowercase, removing punctuation and numbers, cleaning spaces, and eliminating common stop words, with lemmatization applied to reduce words to their grammatical roots.

The proportions of words following the target words were calculated to highlight usage differences. Only bigrams that appeared more than ten times were considered to enhance the analysis's reliability. Finally, a logarithmic ratio was computed to clarify the differences in word usage following "Israel" and "Hamas," providing an in-depth understanding of language patterns in the texts.

4. FINDINGS

When accepting members, IFCN requires fact-checking platforms to regularly publish reports. For this reason, the examined platforms regularly examine and share suspicious claims. The fact-checking platform that made the most fact-checks on this issue during this period was AFP fact-checking. AFP, which made up 29% of the total fact-checks with 67 fact-checks, was followed by Politifact operating in the United States with 52 fact-checks (22.5%), Teyit, a Türkiye-based fact-checking platform, with 62 (26.8%) fact-checks, and T4P, an Iraq-based fact-checking platform, with 27 (11.7%) fact-checks. The platform that made the least fact-checking during the one month examined was Correctiv, a Germany-based fact-checking organization, with 23 (10%) fact-checks. Verify, a Syria-based fact-checking platform, did not include any fact-checks related to the conflict on its website during this period. Therefore, this platform could not be examined.

Fact-checking platforms present the claims they examine with various labels according to their results. Each fact-checking platform has its labels. However, a standard label system was created in this study. The study used a fact-checking system with four labels according to the result of the verified claim: *true*, *false*, *mixed*, and *unconcluded*. As a result of this analysis, it was found that most of the examined claims, i.e., 227 out of 231 fact-

checks, were false. This analysis revealed that only one of the examined claims published on T4P was true.

Another aspect of the study is the content of suspicious claims examined. In this aspect, which examined whether the suspicious claims were text, photo, video, or document, it was found that there were more suspicious claims in the “video” content. In this context, it was found that 180 of the 231 suspicious claims were in the video content. 82.3% of the claims in Teyit, 82.1% in AFP, 77.8% in T4P, 71.2% in PolitiFact, and 69.6% in Correctiv were in the video content. The other prominent content was determined to be photos (26).

Fact-checking platforms usually indicate where the suspicious claims they examine originated in the fact-checking text. The place where the claim arose is significant, as it can indicate where suspicious content and fake news spread most quickly. The areas where suspicious claims were seen on fact-checking platforms examined in the first month of the Israel-Hamas conflict were grouped under 13 categories. X stood out as the place where 95 of the 231 fact-checking occurred. It was followed by Instagram (32), Meta (31), and TikTok (21).

When evaluated on a platform basis, it was found that 75.8% of the allegations examined in Teyit were sourced from X. A significant portion of the accusations in AFP and Correctiv were also sourced from X. This may lead to the conclusion that the circulation of fake news content that emerged in Türkiye, France, and Germany during the period examined was most commonly through X.

When looking at the source of PolitiFact’s claims, it was found that Instagram (46.2%) stood out. When looking at T4P, it was analyzed that 85.2% of fake news content appeared on multiple social media platforms.

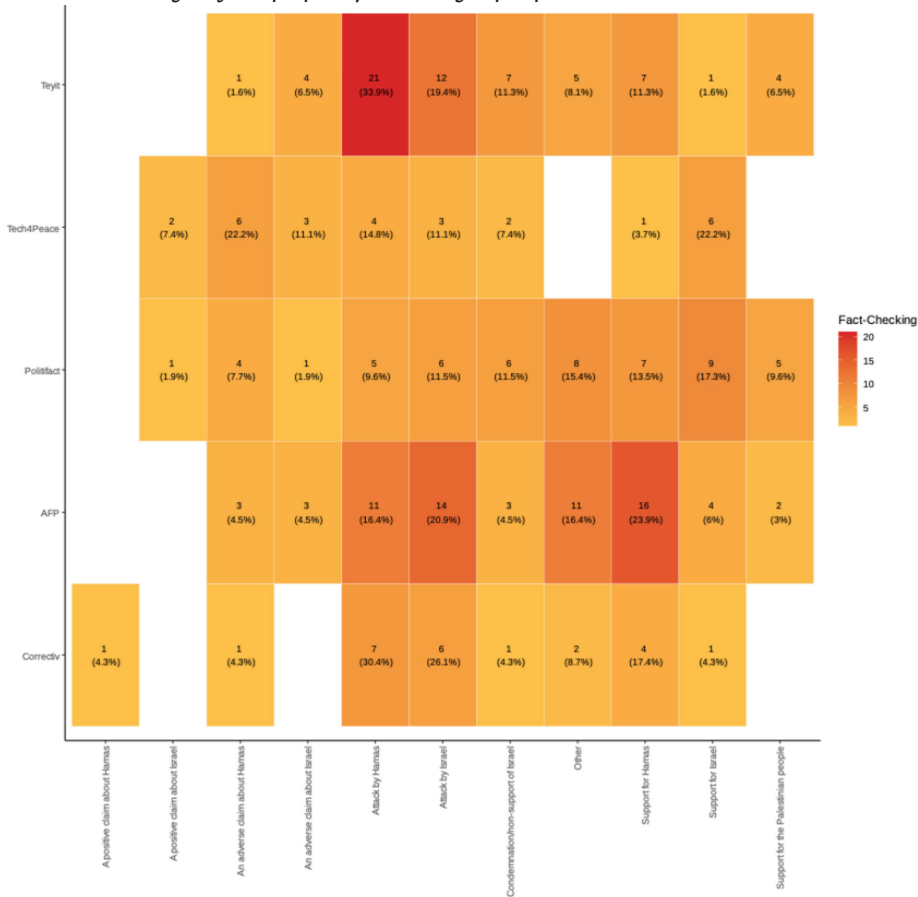
Several methods are used to produce fake news, and IFCN member fact-checking organizations clearly state what these methods are in the text of the suspect allegation investigation. 39.1% of the claims in Correctiv, 74.6% in AFP, 55.8% in PolitiFact, 7.4% in T4P, and 79% in Teyit are misleading due to false attribution. False attribution constitutes 139 of the 231 total fact-checking, followed by fabrication with 41 fact-checking. In this regard, 16 fact-checks were detected as manipulation, 14 fact-checks as decontextualization, two fact-checks as distortion, and one fact-check as an imitation. The number of news articles whose misleading aspects are unclear is 9.

4.1. Impartiality in the selection of suspicious claims

The study also analyzed the context in which fact-checking platforms examined suspicious claims in the Israel-Hamas conflict more. In this comparison made on a platform basis, 11 topics were determined to evaluate the

impartiality of the fact-checking. The issues of the fact-checks included Israeli attacks, Hamas attacks, support for Israel or Palestine, and positive or negative statements about Israel or Hamas/Palestine, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Fact-checking subject's frequency according to platforms. Source: Authors



The study found that Teyit, which operates in Türkiye, mostly confirmed claims related to Hamas attacks. Fake news was produced on social media about attacks carried out by both Israel and Palestine regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict, especially by using images from old or other conflicts. Claims such as the consequences of violence by either side, the ruthlessness of the violent side, and the helplessness of people subjected to violence have caused quite a stir on social media. Hamas was the subject of

these attack claims, which constituted a significant portion of the allegations examined by Teyit. The second topic that Teyit examined the most in this analysis was attacks carried out by Israel. However, among Teyit's fact-checks, Hamas attacks accounted for 33.9%, while fact-checking related to attacks carried out by Israel were found to be 19.4%.

23.9% of the claims verified by AFP are fake news related to support for Hamas. In the previous analysis, all the allegations examined by AFP were analyzed as false. In other words, this fact-checking platform operating in France has debunked many claims related to support for Hamas. Another issue that stands out in terms of fact-checking in AFP is the attacks carried out by Israel. Fourteen fact-checks, which constitute 20.9% of the claims examined by this platform in the one month, are about the attacks alleged to have been carried out by Israel not being true to reality.

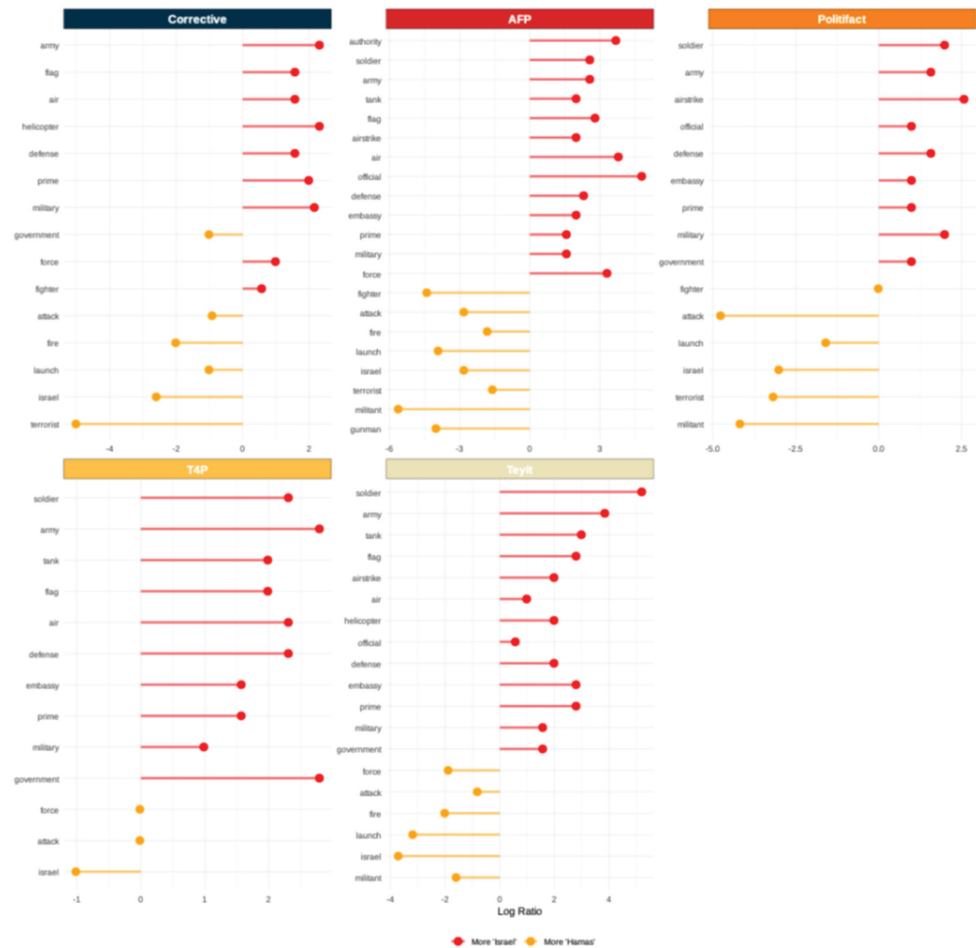
This analysis, which was conducted to answer RQ1, "Are there ideological tendencies in the selection of news to be verified?" shows that there are ideological tendencies. In short, the study analyses the ideological tendencies of verification platforms in news selection in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict. Analyzing 11 topics, it was determined that most of the news verified by Teyit was about Hamas attacks (33.9%), while the rate of verification about Israeli attacks was 19.4%. AFP, on the other hand, most frequently debunked false reports about support for Hamas (23.9%) and also frequently investigated allegations about Israeli attacks (20.9%). In general, it was concluded that there are ideological tendencies in the selection of news to be verified. This result can be evaluated in the context of "selection bias," which is one of the cognitive processes affecting fact-checking journalists in selecting the claim to be verified. Selection bias, which refers to how events are or are not covered by the media, refers to the bias in selecting the news topic. While some issues may be covered in the media, others are ignored (Masotina et al., 2023).

4.2. Impartiality in news language

When we look at the words Israel and Hamas are most frequently used together across fact-checking platforms (Figure 2), we find that Correctiv's most commonly used words along with the word Israel are "army," "helicopter," and "military." This shows that the platform focuses on military activities and operations in its fact-checks about Israel. These words are generally used in news about military operations, conflicts, and military presence. Correctiv emphasizes Israel's military power and activities. The word most frequently used by this platform with Hamas is "terrorist." The fact that the word most commonly used with Hamas is "terrorist" shows that Correctiv defines Hamas as a terrorist organization and expresses it

this way in its news. This usage reveals that Hamas’ activities and identity are discussed within this framework and that the platform adopts this approach in its news.

Figure 2: Relative word appearance after “Israel” compared to “Hamas”. Source: Authors.



The words most frequently used by AFP together with Israel were found to be “official,” “air,” “force,” and “authority.” These words show that expressions related to Israel’s state structure, official authorities, and military power are at the forefront. Israel has experienced various wars and conflicts since its founding in 1948 and has established a strong state and military structure in the process. For this reason, topics such as official

statements, government officials, and military operations are frequently included in news about Israel.

On the other hand, the words most frequently used by the AFP regarding Hamas were “militant,” “fighter,” and “gunman.” These words show that Hamas members are characterized as individuals participating in the armed struggle and that this aspect is emphasized. In the AFP’s fact-checks, Israel’s state structure and military power are expressed in official and military terms in the news. In contrast, Hamas’ armed struggle as a resistance movement is mainly described as militant and warrior. This use of language aligns with both sides’ historical backgrounds and international perceptions.

PolitiFact’s most frequently used Israel-related words were “airstrike,” “military,” and “soldier,” indicating that PolitiFact’s fact-checking texts prioritize news about Israel’s military operations, airstrikes, and soldiers.

Contrarily, PolitiFact’s most frequently used words regarding Hamas were “attack,” “militant,” and “terrorist.” These words, along with Hamas’ attacks, militants, and terrorist characterizations, highlight its armed attacks and terrorist activities. While Israel’s military power and operations are expressed in military terms in news stories on this platform, Hamas’ attacks and armed resistance are more often covered with the terms militant and terrorist. In this regard, T4P used words such as “government,” “army,” and “air” defense more frequently with the word Israel, while with Hamas, it used the words “Israel,” “attack,” and “and force” the most.

The most frequently used words related to Israel by T4P show that expressions associated with Israel’s state structure, military power, and defense policies are highlighted. The most used words associated with Hamas show that expressions related to Hamas’ attacks on Israel and the use of armed force are highlighted.

Teyit’s most frequently used words regarding Israel were “soldier,” “army,” and “tank.” These words indicate that news about Israel’s military power and ground forces is prominent. The most frequently used words regarding Hamas were “Israel,” “launch,” and “militant.” These words indicate that news about Hamas’ rocket attacks on Israel and militant activities are prominent.

This analysis, which was conducted to answer the second research question, “Is there a difference in the language of the news in the fact-checking related to the issue?”, tried to reveal the difference in the language of the news with the expressions used with the parties to the conflict. This difference shows the importance of framing the news. The framing effect, one of the cognitive processes that will affect the fact-checking process (Soprano et al., 2024), is defined as drawing different conclusions from logically

equivalent information items based on context, alternatives, and presentation methods (Lindgren et al., 2024). The fact that some fact-checking platforms use negative and positive characterizations of the same concepts indicates framing in the new language. This makes the fact-checking process, which should be impartial, suspicious.

The analysis shows that the language used by fact-checking platforms such as AFP, Corrective, PolitiFact, T4P, and Teyit in their coverage of Israel and Hamas offers different framings. While the state structure, official authorities, and military power are generally emphasized in the news about Israel, militancy and attacks are emphasized in the news about Hamas. These word choices raise questions about objectivity in fact-checking processes and reveal the impact of news framing on fact-checking.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Objectivity, one of the most important ethical principles in journalism, is also related to the principle of impartiality. This principle requires the journalist not to include personal comments and opinions in the news, to present news information based on the reality of the event, and to avoid tendencies that may cause sudden emotional changes in the reader (Daştan, 2021, p. 41). Impartiality is more critical on fact-checking platforms that aim to prevent the spread of fake news. Impartiality, which forms the basis of these activities to correct misinformation, starts with choosing which news story or suspicious claim to verify. Objectivity and impartiality influence news production by guiding journalists as they select, gather, and present news (Skovsgaard et al., 2013). Therefore, an impartiality assessment can be made through news selection in this study.

The analysis revealed that most allegations were false, with only one verified claim during the Israel-Hamas conflict. This indicates that nearly all suspicious claims consisted of fake content. Most of the suspicious content analyzed was in video format. A vital issue was false attribution, where images from previous wars or conflicts were misrepresented as related to the current situation. As multimedia technology develops, fake news increasingly uses visual content, including pictures or videos, to mislead consumers (Cao et al., 2020). In this conflict, the credibility of visuals was exploited, with old videos used to portray damage caused by one of the parties. Another study finding is related to the platform where fake news emerged. Most of the news analyzed by the fact-checking platforms appeared on X.

The study analyzed the topics on which fact-checking platforms focus on the Israel-Hamas conflict. Selection bias occurs when news is selected or excluded by the media. Selecting some topics for verification and excluding others affects impartiality (Masotina et al., 2023). These findings in the

study, which seeks to answer RQ1, show that fact-checking platforms can exhibit certain tendencies in the news selection phase despite their claim of impartiality. While Teyit's increased focus on Hamas attacks may be related to the media and political atmosphere in Türkiye, AFP's intense refutation of Hamas support claims may have been influenced by France's domestic and foreign political dynamics. This suggests that fact-checking platforms are shaped not only by the principles of truth but also by the media and political ecosystems in which they operate. Therefore, when evaluating fact-checking processes, it is necessary to question the methods, which claims are deemed worthy of fact-checking, and how this selection is made. This result supports the findings of Ostermeier's research, which shows that news selection, i.e., election bias, affects impartiality. Ostermeier (2011) investigated whether Politifact, which operates in the United States, gave more coverage to Democratic or Republican claims in its analyses and found that there may be problems of impartiality in news selection.

An analysis of the most frequent words used by the five fact-checking platforms about Israel and Hamas provides insight into their impartiality in fact-checking. In response to RQ2, the analysis findings suggest that the language used by these platforms tends to promote an ideological divide between the parties, raising important questions about journalistic impartiality. This is defined as the framing effect, which refers to presenting the same issue through different frames (Masotina et al., 2023). Many journalistic studies have been conducted on the news about the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These studies have also addressed the problems of impartiality in framing the news on this issue, and different frames have been found in different countries (Friedman & Herfroy-Mischler, 2020; Neureiter, 2017). The findings of this study, which overlap with the results of the studies (Al-Sarraj & Lubbad, 2018; Kareem & Najm, 2024; Shahzad et al., 2023; Thomas, 2011) that identified the presence of biases in news texts and choices about the parties to the conflict, showed that this time, concerns about impartiality also emerged in the fact-checking platforms. Correctiv and PolitiFact adopt a harsher terminology, labeling Hamas as terrorists, while AFP and Teyit use more neutral descriptions of Hamas. In contrast, T4P emphasizes the military actions and power of both sides. These inconsistencies are crucial for assessing the impartiality of fact-checking platforms, as the language and terminology used can shape readers' perceptions and portray one side in a more favorable or unfavorable light.

These analyses show that fact-checking platforms are shaped not only by accuracy criteria but also by the political contexts, media ecosystems, and ideological tendencies of the countries in which they are located. Factors ranging from news selection to the language used reveal that impartial-

ity in fact-checking processes is not an absolute principle but a practice that changes depending on environmental and political factors. This factor questions the reliability of fact-checking platforms and proves that impartiality is a claim and a process that needs to be constantly reviewed. This study overlaps with discussions in the literature (Birks, 2019) on the impartiality of fact-checking platforms. Birks's study analyses UK fact-checking platforms' activities in electoral processes. In the study, a comparative analysis of the fact-checking content of different platforms is made, and the differences in the fact-checking approach of these organizations, the distribution of fact-checked political claims, and ideological neutrality are discussed. As a result, this study and Birks' study on fact-checking platforms and impartiality found that fact-checking platforms adopt different approaches to the same issue.

However, the impartiality of fact-checking is not limited to the words used; the context of the news, accuracy, and presentation of a balanced perspective is also critical. Therefore, future studies should conduct a more in-depth analysis of the platforms' general editorial policies and news presentations. Another limitation of this study is the number of countries selected. In future studies, a more comprehensive analysis can be conducted by increasing the number of countries. In addition, expanding the specified period and increasing the number of fact-checks analyzed would also make the analysis more valuable.

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