



The Discursive Construction of Islamophobia in Western Media Political Discourses on Gaza: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the discursive construction of Islamophobia in Western media political interviews on Gaza, focusing on how Muslim actors are represented during the period of conflict. It is hypothesised that there are both explicit and implicit lexical construction in political figure' representation of Islam and Gaza crisis. Therefore, the study aims to explore how Islamophobic meanings are constructed, legitimised, and normalised through verbal and nonverbal practices in political media interviews. Adopting Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework within Critical Discourse Analysis, this study analyses sixteen selected Western political interviews during the Gaza crisis from 2023 to 2025, with Keir Starmer (UK prime minister) and Justin Trudeau (Canadian prime minister). The analysis integrates textual, discursive, and social practices, with particular attention to lexical choices, transitivity, modality, intertextuality, and ideology in addition to the nonverbal communication, whenever they convey significant ideological meaning. The findings show that Islamophobia in Western political leaders' discourses is discursively constructed through selective lexical choices, which are not random; rather, they serve to frame the conflict within threat and security narratives. However, humanitarian suffering is acknowledged, it is often abstracted and detached from responsibility. The study concludes that Islamophobia functions discursively in subtle and indirect ways, contributing to the normalisation of unequal power relations and reinforcing dominant Western ideological discourses.

Paper Info

Keywords

Islamophobia; Critical Discourse Analysis; Three-Dimensional Framework; Western Media; Political Interviews; Gaza Crisis; power and ideology.

1. Introduction

Although the modern world of the 21st century is often characterised by advances in human rights discourse and advocacy of non-discrimination, Muslims continue to experience various forms of marginalisation and misrepresentation. These practices are considered one of the most prominent manifestations of Islamophobia, which refers to exaggerated and irrational fear, hostility, and prejudice towards Islam and Muslims. This form of discrimination is not only socially embedded but can also be discursively constructed and reproduced through powerful social institutions, particularly the media.

In Western contexts, political media discourse constitutes a significant social practice through which Western dominant ideologies are produced, circulated, and legitimised. Political interviews, in particular, play a central role not only in reporting events but also in shaping public opinion and emotional responses toward specific groups and conflicts (Akinwotu, 2014). Accordingly, Western media discourse often functions as an ideological tool that reflects political positions and policy orientations, constructing Islam and Muslims through negative frames (Said, 1997; Poole, 2002).

Since the 7th of October 2023, the conflict of Gaza has dominated in international media coverage, particularly within the political discourse across Western platforms. During the period from 2023 to 2025, Western political interviews have actively framed the conflict in ways that influence public perception, responsibility attribution, and moral judgment. This raises critical questions regarding objectivity, ideological bias, and the reproduction of stereotypes concerning Islam and Muslims. Therefore, to address these concerns, this study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), employing Fairclough's three-dimensional model. CDA conceptualises language as a form of social practice embedded within relations of power and ideology (Baker & Ellece, 2010). Fairclough's model enables an integrated analysis of textual features, discursive practices, and broader social contexts, which is particularly suitable for examining political media interviews (Lee, 2025). From this CDA framework, the current study seeks to uncover how Islamophobia is discursively constructed, normalised, and legitimised within Western political interviews on Gaza.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Islamophobia: Definitions

The term "Islamophobia" is composed of "Islam" which means "submission", that refers to the name of the major religion spread by the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century CE, and "Phobia" which is a Greek word *phobos* means "fear", and often used to describe irrational fears. So, Islamophobia is literally interpreted as "fear of Islam," but in modern usage, it more broadly refers to prejudice, hostility, or discrimination against Muslims or Islam (Allen, 2010). Huntington (1997) argues that, the main reason behind this phenomena "Islamophobia" is the conflicts, especially between Muslims and Christians, which then leads to a bigger struggle between Islamic and Western civilizations. He believes that the conflict continues today because (although both religions believe in one God) they have different views; Muslims use religion to guide all parts of life, while Western societies keep religion separate from politics

(Huntington, 1997). Therefore, the West sees itself as modern, and views other cultures as either trying to catch up, or threaten them.

The Runnymede Trust's report, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* (1997) distinguishes between narrow and broad understanding of Islamophobia. The narrowed definition considers Islamophobia as “*anti-Muslim racism*”, while the broad one frames it as “*any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life*” (p.4). The report refers to Islamophobia as a kind of racism between the superior and an inferior group. In addition, the most carefully considered definition of Islamophobia is “*a rejection of Islam, Muslim groups, and individual Muslims, based on prejudice and stereotypes*” (Stolz, 2005, p. 549).

In the context of Western media, Muslims are presented in ways that are incomplete, misleading, and distorted (Geisser, 2010, p. 31). Therefore, media play a very strong role to spread and evolve Islamophobia, and have a strong influence on how people see Islam and Muslims. Richardson (2004) argues that media do not only spread Islamophobia through explicit hate speech, it also uses implicit discursive constructions like reporting certain stories, leaving out important context, and giving attention to extreme or marginal opinions, in addition using images, metaphors, and familiar narratives. These media patterns normalise anti-Muslim perspectives, which can seriously harm Muslim communities by increasing discrimination, hate crimes, and social isolation (Allen, 2010).

Ultimately, Islamophobia in Western media is not simply a matter of biased reporting but rather a deeply embedded discourse that reflects broader power structures and cultural ideologies. It functions to legitimise unequal social hierarchies, shape public consciousness, reflect how communities are treated, and how trust is either built or broken in society.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a relatively recent field of linguistic research that focuses on the relationship between discursive and social activities. It begins in the late 1980s and has become one of the most important approaches in social sciences (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 2). Fairclough, one of the key figures in this field, explains that CDA is an interdisciplinary approach, that looks at how language is used to support control and dominance, and how it can challenge unfair power relationships (1989, p.24). Then, Fairclough (1992, p.6) explains that CDA aims to uncover hidden messages and manipulations in texts that most readers miss, it also shows how language is being used for the interest of one party rather than another, and helps people develop the critical thinking skills needed to spot these hidden meanings. Later, he expands his view by describing CDA as a method for studying how texts and communication are shaped by deeper social and cultural systems (Fairclough, 1995, p.132). In this sense, Fairclough focuses on how these systems embed ideas of power and control, often in hidden ways. Another prominent figure in this field, van Dijk (2001) who explains that CDA focuses on important issues like dominance, control, social class, gender, racism, and discrimination (p.353). He explains that CDA is not trying to create a new field of study, but instead offers new ways of thinking, analysing, and applying ideas across the whole area of discourse studies. In other words, CDA is not a separate discipline but rather a critical perspective applied within discourse studies.

Experts in CDA have different views about the main aims of this fields. Some aims are general, which form the basis for all CDA methods and approaches, while others are specific for each method and approach. This variety, reflect why CDA is considered as an interdisciplinary field of study. Hammersley (2011, p.252) argues that CDA does not just aim to understand how language works, it also looks at society as a whole, identifies its problems, and suggests and how it can be solved. Then, Tenorio (2011, p.184) adds that the main goal of CDA is to raise awareness about the tools used to build and keep power relationships through language.

Weiss and Wodak (2003) explain that ideology and power are considered the foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Accordingly, in order to deal with CDA, one must deal with these two concepts. Ideology is understood in two main ways, the first considers ideology as a collection of beliefs, ideas, dogmas and practices (Mayr, 2008). These ideologies are formed through everyday communication, so studying language closely helps reveal how they work and what roles they play. The second way (that is adopted in the current study) is rooted in Marxist theory, which sees ideology as a tool used by powerful groups to maintain control. Therefore, ideology is not just a set of ideas, but a way to influence how people think, often promoting beliefs that seem natural or obvious but actually serve elite interests (Macdonald, 2003). Accordingly, Matheson (2005) defines ideology to this view as “*systems of representations*” that benefit dominant groups and appear neutral or common-sense (p.179).

On the other hand, power focuses on how dominant social groups use their power to control those who are less powerful. Furthermore, it tends to highlight the perspectives of marginalised groups and critically examine the language of those in authority. Simpson and Mayr (2009) describe two ways of power, “the mainstream” and “the secondary-stream.” The mainstream sees power in institutions like governments, churches, and corporations, where authority is enforced through mechanisms like laws and punishment. The second-stream focuses on persuasion, when dominant groups instead of using force, they shape public beliefs and values so their perspectives seem natural or common-sense (Macdonald, 2003). The current study focuses on the second-stream perspective, to examine how powerful political leaders persuade the public by normalising their perspectives and Western ideologies, through media platforms.

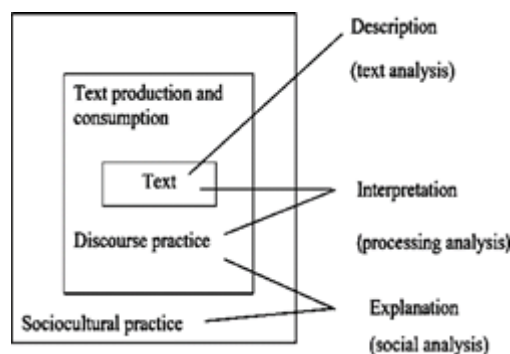
2.3 Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Framework

Fairclough's (1992) Three-Dimensional Framework is regarded as one of the most widely used approaches in CDA. It is designed to examine the relationship between language and power in various discourse genres. Fairclough (1989) states that his approach is “*a contribution to the general raising of consciousness of exploitative social relations, through focusing upon language*” (p.4). This perspective is particularly relevant to the current study, as it allows for uncovering implicit power relations embedded within the political media discourse. The main goal of Fairclough's approach is to develop a systematic framework for CDA based on the assumption that the texts are ambiguous and impossible to be analysed in isolation because “*they can only be understood with webs of other texts and with the social context*” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 70). Therefore, this approach is created to “*bring together linguistically-oriented discourse analysis and social and political thought relevant to discourse and language*” (Fairclough, 1992, p.62). Accordingly, Fairclough argues that every communication event has three layers:

- The Text Itself (the micro-level); this could be spoken words, writing, images, or a mix of these.
- Discursive Practice (the meso-level); this includes processes of text production, distribution, as well as intertextual relations.
- Social Practice (the macro-level); the broader social and cultural context that shapes and is shaped by the text.

In order to study these layers, Fairclough introduced three stages successively in CDA; Description, Interpretation, and Explanation (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p.448). The description stage, focuses closely on the structure and features of the text. As Fairclough (2001) states, “*the formal properties of a text*” (p. 21). Interpretation stage, emphasises how the text connects to communication and interaction. Fairclough (2001) describes this stage as seeing the text both as a result of how it was made and as something people use to make sense of things (p. 21). Explanation stage, explores how the text fits into the larger social context. It looks at how social systems influence the text and how, over time, texts can shape those systems.

In addition, to have further understanding of these stages, an attention should be given to the nonverbal cues that accompanied the verbal ones. Fairclough (1995) in his Media Discourse mentions, “*It should also include detailed analysis of visual images and sound effects (compare linguistically oriented approaches with semiotics)*” (p.33). These analytical stages are interlinked with each other, shaping the overall analytical result, that contributing to a comprehensive critical analysis (Janks, 1997, p.1), as it is illustrated in the following figure.



2.4 Previous Studies

Rezaei, Kobari, and Salami (2019) investigate how Islam is represented in Western societies by adopting CDA. This study focuses on headlines from The Guardian, The Independent, and The New York Times published in (2015). It applies Van Dijk’s ideological square and socio-cognitive approach, with van Leeuwen’s framework. The findings of this study reveal that Western media frequently represents Islam and Muslims negatively, while simultaneously positively presenting Western identities. Although, this study provides insights into the mechanisms of Islamophobia in Western media and illustrates how discursive practices contribute to biased representations, it is limited to newspaper only rather than visual media interviews.

On the other hand, Suryandari (2021) examines the negative representation of Islam and Muslims in Western and international media, focusing on how media framing represents Muslims as an “alien other” at the global level. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, basing on existing media reports and previous studies to demonstrate that media discourse consistently frames Islam and Muslims negatively by linking them to security threats and terrorism. While, Suryandari’s

study provides an important overview of negative media framing, it remains largely descriptive and focuses on general media representations rather than the discourse of specific political actors or concrete media events.

In addition, Bushra, Akber, and Muhammad (2024) highlights media interpretation of Islam in the West. It examines how Western social media platforms, especially Facebook, have consistently portrayed Muslims and Islam negatively, contributing to the rise of Islamophobia globally. The findings of this study indicate that such representations distort Islam and reinforce prejudiced perspectives, demonstrating the media's critical role in influencing public opinion. Although, the study analyses discussions surrounding Islam, Muslim beliefs, and related topics, showing that Western media often emphasises themes such as extremism, jihad, religious attire, and mosques, its data is limited to written post from only 50 Facebook pages.

Similarly, Irfan and Aqeel (2024) present a CDA of Islamophobia in the context of the Gaza–Israel conflict through a case study of BBC news reporting. The study adopts Fairclough's three-dimensions framework to uncover ideological bias in selected BBC articles. The findings suggest that Islamophobia is reflected through bias, stereotyping, and marginalisation of Muslims, where Islam is often associated with violence, fear, and extremism. Despite its contribution to understanding media bias in conflict reporting, the study is limited to written BBC news respects and does not examine spoken or interactive media discourse.

Finally, Fatima, Akram, and Mukhtar (2025) present a comparative CDA of the United Nations General Assembly speeches delivered by Imran Khan and Tayyab Erdoğan, focusing on the discursive construction of Islamophobia and the Palestinian genocide. This study adopts van Dijk's Social Schema Theory to examine the ideological polarisation, group representations, and socio-cognitive processes. The findings reveal that both leaders rely heavily on binary oppositions, repetition, and rhetorical questions to construct in-groups (the Muslim world) and out-groups (Western communities), to reflect their ideological stances and challenging dominant global narratives. While, this study offers valuable insights into counter-hegemonic political discourse and highlights how Muslim leaders contest Islamophobia within international diplomatic meetings, positioning them as representatives of marginalised groups.

Although these studies investigate Islamophobia in Western media, and some apply van dijk's Ideological Square to political discourse, limited attention has been given to the live media interviews with western political leaders. Accordingly, the current study examined Islamophobia representation in Western media political discourse, by adopting van Dijk's Ideological Square within CDA. It focuses on the live media interviews with the political leaders, particularly in the context of the Gaza crisis after October 2023. Therefore, this clear gap highlights the need for the current study.

2.5 Methodology

This study examines Western media political interviews, focusing on Islamophobic discourse about the ongoing conflict in Gaza, by adopting a qualitative research approach as the most appropriate method for media discourses. Qualitative approach provides a detailed explanation of meaning-making processes, ideological representation, and power relations embedded within these political discourses. It is particularly suitable for uncovering implicit assumptions and discursive strategies that may not be visible through quantitative methods.

In order to analyse such complex discourses, the study adopts the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Despite the contributions of various CDA

scholars, the current study depends mainly on Fairclough's model. This model provides a systematic methodological foundation for analysing political interviews in Western media. It is suitable for this study to examine how Islamophobia is discursively constructed across textual, discursive, and social levels. Fairclough's approach conceptualises discourse as a form of social practice and provides an integrated model for analysing texts at three interrelated levels, which are the textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. Thus, the analysis focuses on how linguistic choices, discursive strategies, and broader social contexts interact to construct and legitimise Islamophobic meanings within Western political interviews.

At the micro level, the analysis examines selected linguistic features such as lexical choices, transitivity patterns, and modality. The second meso level focusing on discursive practices such as intertextuality. At this discursive level, the focus is set on how the text relates to other text, and how it is interpreted. Then, at the social practice or the macro level, the analysis situates these discursive patterns within wider socio-political and ideological contexts, particularly those related to power, dominance, and representations of Muslim actors during the Gaza crisis.

The data for this study cover sixteen selected Western political media interviews which are related to Gaza crisis, during the period (9 October 2023 – 13 October 2025). These data are taken from official televised interviews broadcast on prominent British and Canadian media outlets, such as the BBC, LBC, CBC, Sky News, CNN, Channel 4, and CTV. In addition, they also include spontaneous media interactions, including doorstep and street interviews, as well as parliamentary questions directed to the political leaders concerning the Gaza crisis.

The selected interviews focus mainly on two Western political leaders: Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada, with eight interviews analysed for each leader. These political leaders are chosen due to their political influence, frequent media visibility, and their leadership roles within two major Western democracies that publicly advocate human rights and liberal values. Furthermore, both are native English speakers, which ensures linguistic authenticity and avoids issues related to translation. Therefore, analysing their media discourse provides valuable insight into how Western political elites discursively construct Islamophobia and represent Muslim actors within the context of the Gaza crisis.

3. Analysis and Discussion

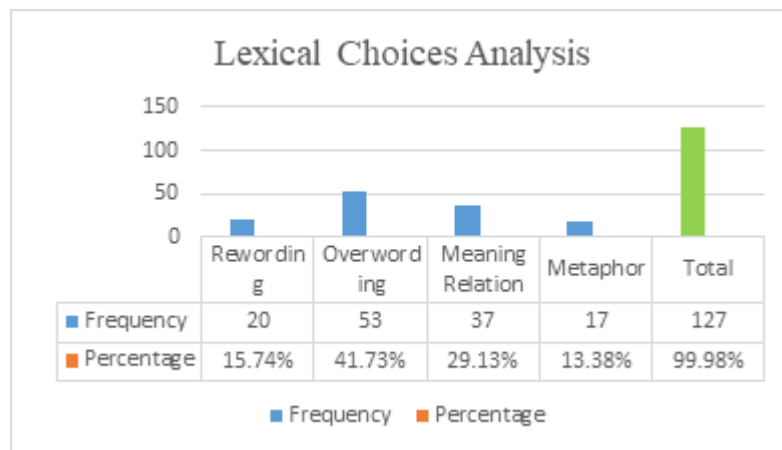
3.1 Data Analysis

The main results of the current study are based on the analysis of the micro, meso, and macro levels of Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, shows how Islamophobia is discursively constructed in Western political interviews. It reveals consistent patterns of linguistic and underlying ideologies that are used about Gaza crisis (2023-2025).

1. Micro level of analysis (Description stage)

a. Lexical Choices

Fairclough considers the lexical analysis an ideological tool that naturalises political positions. Thus, the analysis of linguistic choices in the selected interviews creates legitimisation rather than spontaneous utterances. It can be illustrated in the figure below, where the ideological and discursive constructions are strategically employed in specific selected linguistic categories.



It is noticeable that overwording constitutes the highest total frequency of (53) items with (41.73%) percentages, across the interviews of both political leaders. This high occurrence suggests an intentional repetition of semantically related lexical items, particularly around themes such as “*security, peace, humanitarian aid, responsibility, and ceasefire.*” Therefore, this repetition functions not merely as linguistic choices, but as mechanisms of ideological reinforcement, normalising particular narratives while marginalising others, particularly those related to Muslim representing in Hamas¹. The second highest total frequency is for meaning relations with (37) items and (29.13%) percentage, when both political leaders employ meaning relations linguistically and ideologically. These lexical relations, such as synonymy, antonyms, and hyponymy are used to guide audience interpretation and influence their perspectives through reporting and framing the political actions and actors within different linguistic choices.

Concerning rewording, it occurs less frequently than the first two lexical choices, (20) items and (15.74%). However, it is ideologically important. Rewording enables the political figures to reframe issues, especially those of violence, responsibility, and legitimacy through other lexical choices. This process enables the political figures to avoid accountability or shift blame without changing the intended message. On the other side, although metaphor occurs in only (17) items in all the interviews (13.38%), it has important ideological roots, for instant expressions like “*build those bridges,*” “*the only path toward peace,*” and “*building communities of empathy*” conceptualise political solutions as direct and inevitable.

Moreover, these linguistic choices are also reinforced nonverbally, with calm tones, hand gestures, and steady distributed eye contacts with audience while discussing humanitarian or diplomatic issues, which also adds to the authoritative sense. On the other hand, stressed tones, and specific facial expressions and gesture are also commonly observed while mentioning Muslim actors or security threats narratives, which also adds to the negative representation, and further contributing to Islamophobic discourse. Finally, these linguistic and semiotic (non verbal) choices together work a discursive tool that normalises certain ideological positions, takes care of moral responsibility, and simplifies the conflict with clear ideological structures, according to Fairclough’s model. These linguistic and semiotic choices

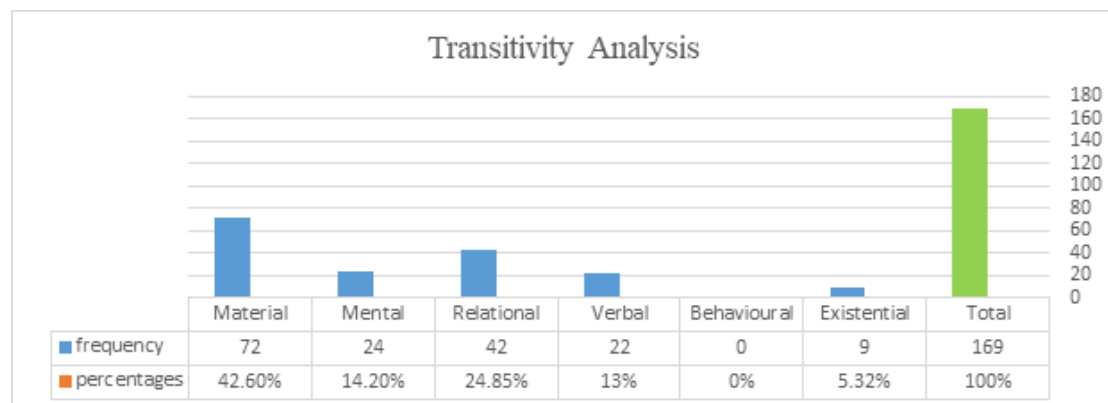
¹ Hamas is a Palestinian militant organisation, which was considered as a terrorist one by the US, EU, and other countries (State, 2023). It has controlled Gaza in the recent years and has been in a long conflict with Israel.

become more significant if considered the wider context of power dynamics and Islamophobia discourse.

b. Grammar

- Transitivity

Transitivity analysis is used to discover the dominant process types, such as material, mental, relational, verbal, behaviour, and existential processes, in Western political interviews. These processes contribute to shaping ideological meanings and framing actions and events related to the Gaza conflict. The results of the transitivity analysis of both prime ministers are illustrated in the figure below.



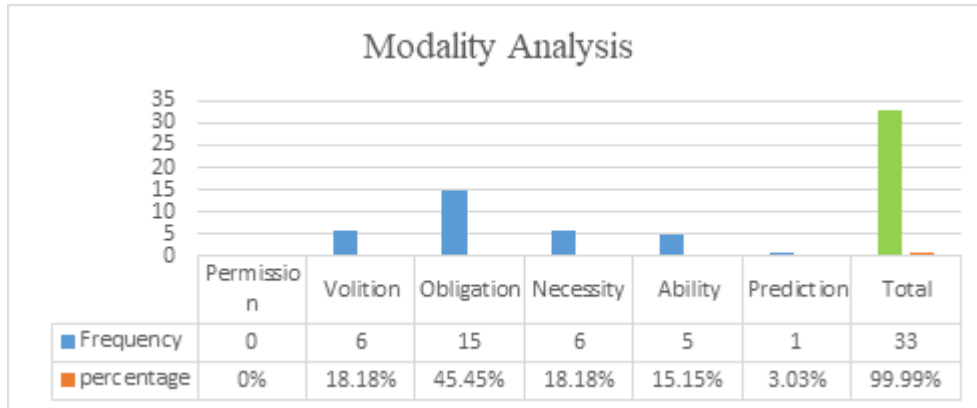
This figure demonstrates a significant prominence of the material processes with (42.60%) percentage. This high percentage indicates that the discourse is action-oriented. They play a crucial role in reproducing Islamophobia discourse by foregrounding actions, events, and concrete measures in order to construct political actors as active agents. Within CDA framework, the dominance of material verbs has an ideological perspective to present authority, control, and decisiveness, especially in a highly politicised humanitarian context. However, the relatively limited use of mental processes, which are used (24) times with (14.20%) percentage, contributes to dehumanisation by marginalising Muslim perspectives, emotions, and lived experiences. These limited choices of emotional verbs align with Islamophobic narratives that deny Muslims full human subjectivity. They reflect Fairclough's (1995) view of 'unequal discourse access,' where marginalised groups are denied discursive agency within dominant Western media discourse.

Similarly, verbal processes consists (13%) of all the processes. They are used to legitimise institutional authority rather than enable dialogue. Statements, calls and demands recognised to Western political leaders are foregrounded, while Muslim voices are largely silenced or reported indirectly. This inequality reinforces discursive power and sustains unbalance access to representation. On the other hand, the minimal presence of existential processes with only (5.32%), and the complete absence of behavioural processes suppress spontaneous human reactions and the mere acknowledgment of Muslim suffering. This avoidance of bodily responses in all the discourses maintains emotional control and detachment, which contributes to the normalisation of violence against Muslim populations.

Ultimately, the dominant use of material and relational processes reflects an ideologically structured discourse that perpetuates Western agency, rationality, and legitimacy while marginalising Muslim subjectivity and experience. Thwaite (1983, p.23) states that in order to influence and persuade others, it is more suitable to do so

with the domain of “doing” than sensing, speaking, or behaving. Accordingly, these linguistic choices actively participate in the reproduction of Islamophobic ideology by framing Muslims primarily through action-based threats, rigid categorisation, and silenced emotional presence.

- Modality



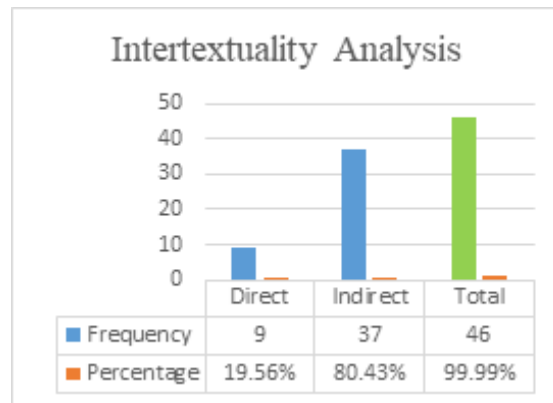
The analysis of modality reveals a significant dominance of obligation modals as it is illustrated in the figure above. Obligation is used about (15) times out of (33) with (45.45%), which indicates a discursive tendency to frame actions and positions as strong necessary duties rather than optional choices. This use of obligation constructs authority and moral responsibility, especially in relation to political decisions about sensitive issues like the Gaza crisis, where agency is implicitly assigned to Western communities and their allies. On the other hand, the responsibility of violence is discursively assigned to the other side of the conflict (Hamas and Islamic communities). Volition has less frequency than obligation with (6) and (18.18%) percentage. This reflects controlled commitment and intentionality, allowing prime ministers to express willingness without assuming full responsibility. The complete absence of permission modality in Western media political interviews suggests avoiding yielding agency to specific actors, reinforcing unequal power relations.

However, some type of modality is limited in use by both political figures, for instance necessity appears (6) times, and ability (5) time, with (18.18% and 15.15%) percentages respectively. They are employed to legitimise actions as unavoidable, and emphasise capability without certifying outcomes. Prediction appears only (1) to reflect an avoidance of future accountability, particularly in politically sensitive crisis, to manage the public pressure.

It is worth noting, although the total number of modal verbs considered limited and little according to the whole number of interviews, but their distribution and function within the Western media discourse provide a significant insight into power relations and ideological positioning. In addition, the unequal distribution of modality across the whole interviews, and especially the absence of modal verbs in most of Trudeau’s interviews indicates strategic preference for neutral, careful, descriptive, and non-committal discourse. This linguistic restraint serves to minimise ideological exposure while maintaining political legitimacy.

2. Meso Level of Analysis (The Interpretation Stage)

The analysis of the intertextuality stage is shown in the figure below, which demonstrates a clear dominance of indirect intertextuality with (37) instants and (80.43%) percentage, unlike direct intertextuality, which occurs only (9) times with (19.56%) percentage. This dominance of indirect intertextuality shows a strategic choice of discourse to use indirect referencing instead of direct quotation or attribution. Hence, through paraphrasing, allusion, and vague references to previous statements or events, Western political leaders refer to the combination with external voices while keeping a degree of distance and deniability. Through this discursive way, political leaders try to control the discourse without directly aligning with any side or actor, in order to avoid political accountability in a highly sensitive situation like the Gaza crisis.



3. Macro Level of Analysis (The Explanation Stage)

At this level of analysis, the Western media political interviews on Gaza are seen as an ideological construction in which the power relations and Western perspectives or ideologies are constructed and normalised as rational, humanitarian, and morally authoritative, in which Muslim voices and agency are marginalised. Therefore, the Western political leaders construct discursive power in the sense that they have the power to define how responsibility, legitimacy, and morality are constructed in this conflict. This construction of the Western media political interviews on Gaza influences the public perception and reaction, and simultaneously the alternative discourses, particularly those concerning Palestinian political agency, are backgrounded or silenced. Obviously, in these political interviews, Islamophobia is not constructed in an overt manner, but rather in a subtle and implicit manner, relying on discursive constructions that highlight, exclude, and evaluate, and in which Muslim actors are associated with threat, instability, or security. Thus, the discourse is seen as a means of normalising the power relations between Western actors and Muslims, legitimising dominant ideologies in society, and reinforcing Islamophobic representations in Western media political discourse on Gaza.

Nonverbal features have also an important role in this level of analysis. Facial expressions, tensioning hand movements, changing in intonation that accompanied specific expressions, distributing glances equally to the audience, and especially the pauses and hesitations marks like “*um*, and *uh*” do not weaken Western authority or reflect uncertainty. In contrast, they function discursively to signal carefulness and political sensitivity aligning with strategic avoidance of full commitment. As a result, within Fairclough’s social practice dimension, such discursive and nonverbal strategies contribute to the normalisation of unequal power relations and the subtle

reproduction of Islamophobic discourses. Therefore, Islamophobia activates indirectly, embedded within accepted media norms, rather than through overt hostility, making it appear natural and unquestionable within Western political discourse on Gaza.

3.2 Findings and Discussions

This study adopts the concept of discursive construction to examine how Islamophobia is not explicitly stated, but implicitly produced through lexical choices, legitimisation strategies, and ideological constructions. Accordingly, the findings of the analysed selected interviews show how humanitarian suffering in Gaza is recognised, but systematically distanced from the political responsibility. Western political leaders frequently refer to “*humanitarian aid, civilian protection, and the need for pauses or ceasefires,*” apart from agency, causality, and accountability. Transitivity patterns further support this abstraction by backgrounding material processes related to military actions while foregrounding Western diplomatic or humanitarian aids. Discursively, these strategies allow political leaders to appear compassionate and morally engaged while avoiding explicit critique of allied power structures. Furthermore, this selective humanitarianism reflects a broader ideological pattern in Western political discourse, where concern for civilian suffering exists with the legitimisation of dominant geopolitical interests. Accordingly, Islamophobia is employed in a subtle form, where Muslim actors are recognised primarily as passive victims and humanitarian subjects.

In addition, it is noticeably that Western political leaders employ a number of discursive strategies in order to legitimise their political positions and manage moral accountability to avoid criticism and protect Western actors from direct responsibility. These strategies function as mechanisms of ideological control, where overwording and reformulations draw on familiar political genres and institutional norms that prioritise diplomatic attention and alliance loyalty, presenting Western policies as reasonable, balanced, and unavoidable. Muslim actors/Hamas are related to violence, and treated as clearly condemned. This irregularity in moral evaluation reinforces Islamophobic ideologies through unequal representations within political media discourse.

Fairclough emphasises that discursive practices both shape and are shaped by wider social structures. Therefore, a significant finding that relates to the role of intertextuality in shaping political discourse is noticed in how Western political leaders frequently draw on shared media narratives, institutional language, and previously established frames of security, terrorism, and international responsibility. These intertextual references do not only reflect existing discourse but actively reproduce it. Furthermore, this type of discourses function as sites of ideological circulation rather than neutral media for reporting events. Thus, Islamophobic meanings are circulated through repetition, reinforcement, and re-contextualisation rather than through explicitly aggressive language.

4. Conclusions

The findings demonstrate that Islamophobia in Western political interviews does not appear through explicit anti-Muslim language. Instead, it is constructed implicitly and systematically through selective lexical choices, patterned of transitivity structures, controlled modality, intertextual references, and carefully managed nonverbal cues. All these discursive and semiotic resources frame Muslim actors

mainly within security, threat, and responsibility narratives, while Palestinian agency is marginalised or backgrounded. Furthermore, humanitarian suffering is acknowledged, but it is abstracted from accountability and detached from political causality.

At the discursive and social practice levels, the analysis demonstrates that Western political interviews reproduce dominant ideologies. Therefore, through institutional media platforms and professional performance styles, political leaders are positioned as legitimate moral authorities, while alternative interpretations of the conflict remain constrained. This discursive pattern reflects broader power relations in which Western ideologies are normalised, and Muslim voices are selectively represented or silenced.

This study highlights the value of Fairclough's framework in capturing the interaction among textual features, media practices, and wider socio-political contexts in addition to the semiotics sources. Thus, verbal and nonverbal features of discourse are integrated to demonstrate the importance of analysing live media interactions as complex multimodal sites of ideological production.

In conclusion, this study proves that the phenomenon of Islamophobia, as represented by the Western media political interviews on the Gaza crisis, is not an unintentional and isolated phenomenon. It is considered as a product of a specific set of discursively structured, ideological practices that, serve to enhance the dynamics of the unequal balance of power, and influence in shaping the way people perceive this crisis, in order to support and reinforce the dominant Western ideologies.

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Appendix 1






Table of Kier Starmer's interviews

Report No.	The Occasion and the Source	The Date	QR Code (Source Link)
1.	A live interview with Nick Ferrari on LBC channel.	11 October 2023	
2.	A street interview with a reporter on LBC channel	22 October 2023	
3.	An interview with Joseph Timan on the digital platform of Manchester Evening News	12 January 2024	
4.	PMQs; in the Prime Minister and Labour's leader discusses, with Mr Ayoub Khan	13 November 2024	
5.	An interview with a reporter from the Middle East Eye, while visiting a school in Harlow, England, on the Sky News.	5 June 2025	
6.	An interview with Mishal Hussain, on	13 June 2025	

	Bloomberg Television		
7.	An interview with Nick Ferrari on LBC channel.	1 October 2025	
8.	A doorstep interview with a reporter for the Breaking News on the Sky News channel.	13 October 2025	

Appendix 2

Table of Justin Trudeau's interviews

Report No.	The Occasion and the source	The Date	QR Code (Source Link)
1.	An interview in a press conference, on the Global NEWS.	9 October 2023	
2.	PMQs; in a Prime Minister and Parliament discussion, with Pierre Poilievre (P.M.).	24 October 2023	
3.	An interview with a reporter in a press conference, on the Global News	14 November 2023	
4.	A doorstep interview with a reporter on Parliament Hill ahead of the weekly Liberal caucus meeting, on Cpac channel.	22 November 2023	
5.	An interview with a reporter in a press conference, on the EU Debates TV.	25 November 2023	

6.	An interview with a reporter in a press conference in Vancouver, on the Global NEWS.	16 December 2023	
7.	An interview on the VNN .	20 January 2024	
8.	An interview with a reporter from CBC channel, in a press conference (in the street), on CTV News.	2 April 2024	

تتناول هذه الدراسة البناء الخطابي لظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا (رهاب الاسلام) في المقابلات السياسية التي تجريها وسائل الإعلام الغربية حول غزة، مع التركيز على كيفية تمثيل المسلمين خلال فترة الصراع. كما تهدف إلى الكشف عن الكيفية التي تُبنى بها الدلالات الإسلاموفوبية (المعادية للاسلام)، واضفاء الشرعية عليها، وتطبيعها من خلال الممارسات اللفظية وغير اللفظية في المقابلات الإعلامية السياسية.

وباتباع إطار Norman Fairclough ثلاثي الأبعاد ضمن منهج تحليل الخطاب النقدي، تُحلل هذه الدراسة ست عشرة مقابلة سياسية غربية مختارة أجريت خلال أزمة غزة في المدة من 2023 إلى 2025، مع كل من Keir Starmer رئيس وزراء المملكة المتحدة و Justin Trudeau رئيس وزراء كندا.

ويجمع التحليل بين مستويات الممارسة النصية، والممارسة الخطابية، والممارسة الاجتماعية، مع إيلاء اهتمام خاص بالاختيارات المعجمية، والعمليات الانتقالية (التعدية)، والنمطية (المودالية)، والتناص، والأيدولوجيا، فضلاً عن التواصل غير اللفظي (كلما حمل دلالات أيديولوجية ذات أهمية).

وبناء على ذلك تُظهر النتائج أن الإسلاموفوبيا في خطابات القادة السياسيين الغربيين تُبنى خطابياً من خلال اختيارات معجمية انتقائية وليست عشوائية، بل تُوظف لتأطير الصراع ضمن سرديات التهديد والأمن. وعلى الرغم من إقرار السياسيين الغرب بالمعاناة الإنسانية في غزة، ولكنها غالباً ما تُطرح بصورة مجردة ومنفصلة عن تحديد المسؤولية.

وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الإسلاموفوبيا تؤدي وظيفة خطابية بطرق ضمنية وغير مباشرة، مما يسهم في تطبيع علاقات القوة غير المتكافئة، وتعزيز الخطابات الأيدولوجية الغربية المهيمنة.