

## The representation of Palestinian children in Indonesian local and international online news: A transitivity analysis

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### Abstract

*This study investigates how Indonesian local and international news outlets represent Palestinian children through language during news coverage of the Palestine and Israel conflict after October 7, 2023, in which more than 14,000 children were affected. Despite the mass coverage of the conflict, there is still very little comparative research that closely examines how different online media contexts portray Palestinian children, especially one that is comparing Indonesian and Western outlets. This study used a qualitative descriptive approach based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), by applying transitivity analysis to analyze process types, participant roles, semantic fields, and circumstantial elements in 289 clauses. The data were taken from six selected news articles published between October 2024 and May 2025. The data were retrieved from two Indonesian outlets (Kompas.com and The Jakarta Post) and two international news outlets (BBC and CNN). The findings show Indonesian news tends to make responsibility more visible by using material processes that clearly link actions to identifiable actors, which directly names Israeli military or state forces. In Indonesian local news more verbal processes are also used to give space to Palestinian voices rather than portraying them solely as voiceless victims. In contrast, international news tends to frame suffering through the dominant use of mental processes by focusing on emotions and internal states of the victims, making responsibility less visible. In semantic field distribution it is found that Indonesian local news uses more displacement-related processes compared to international news showing that western outlets limiting attention to the consequences of the conflict. Even so, both types of media tend to place Palestinian children in passive roles, with over 80% of material processes showing things being done to them rather than actions they take themselves. Overall, these findings reveal that linguistic choices in news reporting media are never neutral. They actively shape how responsibility, suffering, agency, and humanity are constructed in conflict coverage. This study contributes to SFL-based media discourse research and underlining the need for more accountable representation of vulnerable groups like children.*

**Keywords:** Systemic Functional Linguistics; ideology; transitivity; cultural representation

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### Introduction

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict began again. Ever since then, the children of Palestine have always been the topic that is continuously reported. One year of war in the State of Palestine, Israel, and the surrounding region has led to devastating consequences for children and their families, characterized by killing, injury, abduction, displacement, disease, malnutrition, dehydration, and relentless trauma. It is reported that in Gaza, at least 14,000 children have reportedly been killed, injured, or trapped

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under the ruins of their own home, while at least 17,000 are forcibly separated from their parents, family, or caregivers (UNICEF, [2024](#)).

The coverage of this conflict has been extensively published in news media. This coverage mostly covered the suffering of the marginalized population such as children. The choice of language that the media use in the news, even ones they choose not to use, could tell how these media represent the children. This representation then will shape public understanding and also the implicit ideologies of the news platforms. As Ahmed & Zahoor ([2020](#)), Alaqad et al. ([2025](#)), and Xu & Zhang ([2023](#)) argue that the choice of linguistic that the journalist made incorporate ideological view and could shape public perception that can both humanize or dehumanize the subject they are representing.

Tommaso & Zummo ([2025](#)) in their research stated that the coverage of Palestinian children in media, both in international outlet and those in Indonesia, often show how the entity is represented in the narrative focus and framing. Studies show that Palestinian children are frequently described as numbers while emphasizing the scale of tragedy but often diminishing their individual experience. In contrast, Israeli children are often portrayed through personal stories, while maintaining emotional connections with audiences. This is in the same vein as Aqtash et al. (2004) and Caballero ([2010](#)), they stated that the individual experiences of Palestinian children are also underrepresented. While the conflict itself draws global attention, Palestinian children are still rarely seen or heard in mainstream news coverage. due to limited media access and fewer opportunities to speak for themselves.

Beyond being underrepresented the way that the media represent Palestinian children also need a close attention. The western media often present them in within vulnerability and victimhood through both language and heart-breaking visual. The pattern may cause strong emotional responses which result in simplifying the reality on the ground, overlooking the cause of the conflict itself (Alghamdi & Alotaibi, [2024](#)).

International media, especially Western outlets, often situate Palestinian children within broader political contexts. This pattern result in limited children's agency. International media also often mainly present them as victims, which can make their suffering appear less connected to political causes (Alkhaldeh & Alserhan, [2025](#); Haleema, [2025](#)). Indonesian media may reflect similar patterns, influenced by global and cultural factors, although studies on this are still limited (Haleema, [2025](#)).

To examine these patterns of representation systematically, this study uses Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as developed by Halliday and Matthiessen ([2014](#)) to provides the theoretical foundation of this study. The application of the SFL approach, particularly transitivity analysis, is thought to be appropriate for revealing how entities are represented in online news texts. As previously stated, text analysis using transitivity can show ideational meanings that reveal world perceptions and ideological values in the text (Beard, [2000](#); Halliday & Matthiessen, [2014](#)).

Representation is a way of forming meaning through language (Hall, [1997](#)). The concept of representation in language can be studied using a variety of approaches, one of which is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). SFL can investigate how clauses can reflect reality through the use of language to see how language represents meaning (Eggins, [2004](#)). Eggins ([2004](#)) also explained further that the formation of meaning can be realized through the configuration of the types of process, the role of the participants, and the circumstances in which these three aspects play a role in forming experiential meaning. The process of determining participants, processes, and circumstances in the clause is called the transitivity system. By analyzing the clause using the transitivity system, how an aspect is represented, which is formed through the use of language in the clause, can be seen (Eggins, [2004](#))

The Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach is further elaborated in Butt et al. (2003) who divides the function of language into three parts called language metafunctions, namely interpersonal metafunction, textual metafunction, and ideational metafunction. The representation itself can be

seen through the ideational metafunction analysis, especially in the experiential meaning sub-function that focuses on the content or idea of a text (Emilia, 2014). In the ideational metafunction, the clause acts as a representation in which the speaker's representation of a particular situation is formed based on the involvement of certain processes and participants (Eggins, 2004; Fontaine et al., 2013). Eggins (2004) further explains that in order to describe clauses as representations, the ones that should be analyzed are not only types of processes but also the differences associated with the functional roles of the participants and the selection of possible circumstances.

In the transitivity system, the process is a central aspect (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). The experiential meaning in a clause is strongly shaped by a sequence of events through the use of process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Eggins (2004) explained that the selection of the type of process is related to certain types of participants. Furthermore, the process is divided into two parts, which are the process of doing and happening as well as the process of being and having. The process of doing and happening includes a concrete process that can be sensed. The process of doing and happening is divided into four types: material process, mental process, behavioural process, and verbal process. The process of being and having is used to express something whose process is not a process that can be seen, heard, or felt. The process of being and having is divided into two types of processes, namely existential process and relational process (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Participants are the main aspect of the transitivity structure because their existence cannot be separated from the process aspect. As explained earlier, the type of the participant is determined by the type of process in a clause. Actor and Goal are participants that follow the material process, Sayer and Phenomenon are participants related to mental processes, Behavior and Behaviour are participants involved with behavioural processes, Sayer and Verbiage are participants related to verbal processes, Existent is a participant involved with the existential process, Carrier and Attribute are participants involved with the relational attributive process, while Token and Value are participants involved with the relational identifying process (Eggins, 2004).

Circumstances in SFL are elements that have semantic meaning but are not included in the process or participants (Bloor & Bloor, 1995, p. 125 as cited in Emilia, 2014). Circumstances are realized through circumstantial adjuncts that describe the background in which the process and situation take place (Thompson, 2014). Types of circumstances according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), as cited in Fontaine et al. (2013), are extent, location, manner, cause, contingency, accompaniment, role, matter, and angle.

To identify these three components in practice, three questions can be used when examining a clause: what is happening?, which identifies the process and its type; who or what is involved?, which identifies the participants and their roles; and what additional information is provided?, which identifies the circumstances. For example, in the clause "Israeli forces [Actor] bombed [Material Process] the hospital [Goal] in northern Gaza [Circumstance: Location]," all three components are simultaneously present and analytically distinguishable. By applying this transitivity framework to media discourse the way media construct the meaning in news text that further disclose ideology can be revealed (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

While this framework has been applied in various media discourse studies, the application of analyzing representation using transitivity analysis on Palestinian Children in the specific context of Israel and Palestinian conflict since October 2023 remains limited. There is still gaps in understanding how the media linguistically represents Palestinian children, especially when comparing Indonesian and international news during the most intense phase of the conflict. Previous studies Khan & Ibrar (2025), Sarwar et al. (2023), Sarwar & Hafiz (2025), and Tommaso & Zummo (2025) mainly focus on general conflict coverage using content analysis, rather than applying a transitivity analysis grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics. Although Indonesian media, which comes from a large Muslim-majority country, has published extensive coverage, there are still limited studies examining how

Palestinian children represented through transitivity analysis. In addition, previous studies have not closely examined how semantic fields, agency, and circumstances vary across local and international news outlets in representing Palestinian children.

This study addresses these gaps by focusing on the period between October 2023 and 2025, when child casualties reached exceptional levels. It directly compares Indonesian local and international online news, which reflect different geopolitical and cultural perspectives, and applies transitivity analysis specifically to reveal the representation of Palestinian children. In doing so, this research contributes to the use of SFL in media discourse analysis and offers a deeper understanding of how the media represents vulnerable groups in humanitarian crises.

This study explores four related research questions. First, what process types dominate in local and international news representing Palestinian children? Second, what semantic fields dominate material processes associated with Palestinian children? Third, what is the distribution of agency through participant roles in Indonesian local and international news about Palestinian children? Fourth, what circumstantial elements dominate in local and international news representing Palestinian children? Together, these questions aim to show how patterns of language use can either reinforce or challenge certain ways of representing Palestinian children.

## Method

The study employed a qualitative descriptive analysis using Systemic functional linguistics as its main analytical framework. The study compared news from Indonesian local news and international news platform. Using transitivity analysis of systemic functional linguistics, this study analyzed the Palestinian children representation across both platforms. This analysis revealed language pattern, underlying ideologies, and how meaning construct in news text.

The data of this study consisted of six news articles selected through purposive sampling from four major online platforms: *kompas.com* and *The Jakarta Post* as Indonesian local news sources, and *BBC* and *CNN* as international news sources. The purposive sampling method was used because it allows the study to select the data that is relevant to the study focus (Creswell, 2014). In choosing the data there were two main criteria; discussing Palestinian children's experiences and published between October 2024 and May 2025. This period was chosen because it reflects key development of the Palestine and Israel conflict. October 2024 marked the one-year anniversary of the conflict which increased media attention, early 2025 as the winter begin, news reports highlighted hypothermia and malnutrition due to limited aid during winter. By April the large scale of displacement was occurring adding to the Palestinian children's suffering by making them away from healthcare access (ACLED, 2025) In May, UN agencies gave a warn of famine, with children among the victims (UN, 2025). *BBC* and *CNN* were selected as international sources because they can reach wider audience and influence (Safa & Barati, 2024), while *Kompas.com* and *The Jakarta Post* were chosen to represent Indonesian perspectives (Firdausi & Sahayu, 2022).

The data collected by choosing relevant article through keyword searches such as "Palestinian children," "Gaza children," "child casualties," and "humanitarian crisis Palestine" across the selected platforms. The articles were read several times to provide best understanding of the content and context. The data in the form of text were then segmented into clauses, this result in 289 clauses for analysis. The elements of transitivity found in these texts were distributed according to processes, participants, and circumstances. The types of processes, participants, and circumstances were classified into categories for each element. Then, descriptive mapping was carried out to see trends in representation that included trends in the use of processes, semantic field of the dominant process, participants, and circumstances. The data obtained were then interpreted to draw conclusions.

## Results and Discussion

## Results

This section presents the findings and interpretations of how Palestinian children are represented linguistically in Indonesian local and international online news, using transitivity analysis. The study analyzed 289 clauses taken from six news articles published by Kompas.com, The Jakarta Post, BBC, and CNN between October 2024 and May 2025. The analysis shows how different linguistic choices shape the way children represented which reflecting both cultural and ideological differences across Indonesian local news and international news.

### Process type distribution in local and international news

[Table 1](#) presents the distribution of process type in local and international news coverage of Palestinian children.

Table 1.

Process Types Distribution in Local and International News

Process type	Local news (n%)	International news (n%)
Material	67 (56%)	80 (51%)
Mental	6 (5%)	34 (22%)
Relational	15 (13%)	28 (18%)
Verbal	26 (22%)	13 (8%)
Existential	2 (2%)	7 (4%)
Behavioral	4 (3%)	7 (4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>120 (100%)</b>	<b>169 (100%)</b>

Material processes were the most dominant in both local and international news (56% and 51%), which indicated that children were mostly represented through physical actions and events that happened around them. However, there was a clear difference in how mental processes were used. International news used them much more often (22%) than local news (5%). This showed that international news is more interested in focusing on emotional aspect through what the children think, feel, and go through mentally. Local news, on the other hand, did not usually talk about these internal states as much.

The verbal process distribution shows different pattern. Verbal processes were more common in local news (22%) than in international news (8%). This suggested that Indonesian local news media were more likely to show children or people related to them speaking or saying something. This could mean that there was more of a focus on giving them voice or communicative presence.

The relational process distribution was slightly more common in international news rather than in local news (18% and 13%). This pattern revealed that international news more frequently described or gave characteristic or assigned qualities or condition to children. Overall, both local and international outlets represented Palestinian children in distinct way.

### Semantic fields of material processes

Material processes were used to represent Palestinian children in both Indonesian local and international news, these material processes were examined more closely to see what kinds of actions

and events were used to represent Palestinian children. To do this, the material verbs were put into different semantic categories based their semantic meaning. This arrangement made it easier to see which parts of children's experiences were highlighted in each media context. Some patterns started to show what kinds of situations or actions got more attention. [Table 2](#) shows how these material processes were distributed over eight semantic fields in both Indonesian local and international news.

Table 2.  
Semantic fields of material processes

Semantic Field	Local News (n/%)	International News (n/%)	Example Verbs (with counts)
Death and Fatal Violence	7 (18%)	11 (14%)	<b>Local:</b> killed (2), massacred (1), menewaskan (1), tewas (3) <b>International:</b> die (5), kill (3), stroked (1), cause [death] (2)
Physical Injury and Harm	3 (8%)	6 (8%)	<b>Local:</b> melukai (1), injured (1), amputated (1) <b>International:</b> wound (3), break (1), lose [limb] (1), destroy [body] (1)
Displacement and Forced Movement	11 (29%)	5 (6%)	<b>Local:</b> displaced (1), mengevakuasi (1), pengungsi (1), forced (1), separated (1), moved (1), taken (1), dibawa (1), reinforced (1), stir (1), drive (1) <b>International:</b> enter (3), evacuate (1), push (1)
Survival and Continuity of Life	2 (5%)	8 (10%)	<b>Local:</b> survived (1), live (1) <b>International:</b> live (3), survive (2), continue (1), grow (1), develop (1)
Medical Care and Humanitarian Response	2 (5%)	13 (16%)	<b>Local:</b> provided (1), needed (1) <b>International:</b> discharge (2), recover (2), wait (2), receive (2), provide (2), console (1), bring (2)
Military Operations and State Violence	4 (11%)	11 (14%)	<b>Local:</b> operasi (1), menghancurkan (1), struck (1), sparked (1) <b>International:</b> launch (2), destroy (2), cause (2), push (1), pull (1), prevent (1), build [military] (1), spawn (1)
Agency and Normal Activities	6 (16%)	15 (19%)	<b>Local:</b> go (1), put (2), get (1), faced (2) <b>International:</b> play (2), call (1), focus (1), gather (1), follow (1), drink (1), appear (1), fight (1), film (1), reach (1), raise (1), offer (1), make (1)
Passive Experience and Reception	3 (8%)	11 (14%)	<b>Local:</b> placed (1), act (1), terjadi (1) <b>International:</b> find (3), show (2), send (2), return (2), cover (1), release (1), carry (1), allow (1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>38 (100%)</b>	<b>80 (100%)</b>	

The most distinct pattern was how displacement was represented. In local news, most of the actions are related to displacement (29%). This was almost a third of all material processes. In international news, only 5 (6%) of the actions were related to displacement. The biggest difference between the two

platform was the gap (29% vs. 6%). This suggested that forced movement or displacement was a big part of local news but served much less attention in international news.

Death and fatal violence were dominant in both contexts, although the proportions were relatively comparable (18% in local news and 14% in international news). There was also a difference in how people talked about medical care and humanitarian response. These were more likely appeared to be in international news (16%) than in local news (5%). This showed that international news focused more on medical and aid-related aspect.

At the same time, both types of media presented limited attention to children's own action or everyday normal activities in the categories of agency and normal activities; only about 16–19% of material processes showed this. This suggested that in both local and international news outlets, more than 80% of material processes were used to show action done to children. This pattern portrayed the Palestinian children as passive agent of action. This pattern also supported by the findings of participant role that will be present below.

### Agency Distribution Through Participant Roles

The distribution of actor roles in material processes showed who is represented as the main agent doing things in news about Palestinian children. It helped to reveal who is in charge and responsible in the events. [Table 3](#) shows how these actor roles are divided up in both local and international news. It shows that there were clear differences in how each context used language to build agency and assign responsibility.

Table 3.

Actor distribution in material processes

Actor Category	Local News (n/%)	International News (n/%)	Example Actors (with counts)
Israeli Military and State Actors	12 (48%)	3 (6%)	<b>Local:</b> Israel (5), the military/militer Israel/military (3), IDF (2), the agency/UNICEF (UN body) (2)* <b>International:</b> Israel (3)
Palestinian Children as Actors	2 (8%)	5 (10%)	<b>Local:</b> the girl (anak perempuan) (1), the one million children (1) <b>International:</b> children (3), Siwar (1), he (1)
Medical and Humanitarian Personnel	0 (0%)	3 (6%)	<b>Local:</b> - <b>International:</b> doctors (3)
International Organizations and UN Bodies	7 (28%)	7 (14%)	<b>Local:</b> the agency/UNICEF (UN body) (2), authorities (2), Adraee (2), the United Nations/PBB (UN) (2), Elder (2), <b>civilians/warga (citizens) (1)*</b> <b>International:</b> families (3), Hamas (2), we (3), Najwa (3), the army (2), the Israeli bombs (2), medics (2)
Palestinian Family and Community Members	1 (4%)	6 (12%)	<b>Local:</b> civilians/warga (citizens) (1) <b>International:</b> families (3), Siwar (1), she (1), they (1)

Abstract and Systemic Actors	3 (12%)	11 (22%)	<b>Local:</b> violence (as abstract actor) (1), deprivation (as abstract actor) (1), saksi mata (eyewitness) (1) <b>International:</b> the war (1), the immune system (1), the baby (1), the rockets (1), flies (1), Abdelrahman (1), I (1), life (1), he (4), she (6), they (4)
Media and Documentation Actors	0 (0%)	3 (6%)	<b>Local:</b> - <b>International:</b> we (3)
Non-state Armed Groups	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	<b>Local:</b> - <b>International:</b> Hamas (2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 (100%)</b>	<b>49 (100%)</b>	

Local news more often presented Israeli military and state actors as the main agents, with 12 (48%) of the cases naming Israel, the IDF, or military forces as those who done action to the children. International news, on the other hand, only had three examples (6%) mentioning Israeli state actors, and these were not specifically identified as military. This pattern showed how responsibility is assigned across Indonesian local news and international news.

International organizations appeared frequently to be the second largest group of actors in local news (7, 28%), which suggested that institutional voices were highly valued. At the same time, Palestinian children had very little power in both local and international news, and they were only mentioned as actors in about 8–10% of cases.

Another distinct pattern was that international news often uses abstract or systemic actors (11, 22%). This pattern made agency less personal and more general. Resulting in hindering who was responsible. Medical professionals were used only in international news (3, 6%), indicating a pronounced emphasis on medical or humanitarian framing.

### Circumstantial framing of Palestinian children's experiences

Circumstantial elements offered the contextual details that helped to explain actions within a clause, including the location, time, manner, reason, and participants involved (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In this way, they were very important in determining how people understood events and experiences. It was possible to see how local and international news framed Palestinian children's experiences in different ways by looking at how different types of situations were spread out. These differences showed in how each context stressed things like time, place, cause, and relationships. [Table 4](#) shows how these types of situations were distributed in both local and international news.

Table 4.

#### Circumstance distribution of Palestinian children's experiences

Circumstance Type	Local News (n/%)	International News (n/%)	Example Phrases (with counts) - Sample
Location (Place / Spatial)	22 (31.4%)	41 (26.1%)	<b>Local:</b> di Gaza (6), in Gaza (6), di rumah (in home) (2) <b>International:</b> in Gaza (6), at the hospital (4), in Rafah (3)

Temporal (Time / Duration / Frequency)	13 (18.6%)	29 (18.5%)	<b>Local:</b> pada (on) Tuesday (1), hingga laporan ini disusun (until this report) (1), di waktu yang hampir bersamaan (at almost the same time) (1) <b>International:</b> now (4), today (3), during the war (2)
Cause (Reason / Purpose / Behalf)	8 (11.4%)	23 (14.6%)	<b>Local:</b> demi keselamatan (for safety) (1), setelah serangan (after the attack) (1), karena rabuk (because of rubble) (1) <b>International:</b> because of the war (3), due to lack of food (2), for treatment (2)
Manner (Means / Quality / Comparison / Degree)	7 (10.0%)	18 (11.5%)	<b>Local:</b> dengan kekuatan (with force) (1), melalui X (through X account) (1), untuk menghancurkan infrastruktur (to destroy infrastructure) (1) <b>International:</b> by an ambulance (2), with fear (2), in silence (2)
Quantity / Extent (Degree / Duration / Frequency)	5 (7.1%)	10 (6.4%)	<b>Local:</b> lebih dari 42,400 (more than 42,400) (1), around 35-40 (1), every day (1) <b>International:</b> for three days (2), all day (2), every week (1)
Beneficiary	4 (5.7%)	0 (0%)	<b>Local:</b> kepada warga (to citizens) (1), for its one million children (1), for thousands of children (1) <b>International:</b> -
Accompaniment / Association	3 (4.3%)	11 (7.0%)	<b>Local:</b> dengan keluarga dengan yang lebih sejuta (with families with more than a million) (1), with 15 relatives (1) <b>International:</b> with her mother (2), with her baby (2), with doctors (1)
Angle (Source / Viewpoint / Perspective)	3 (4.3%)	3 (1.9%)	<b>Local:</b> menurut AFP (according to AFP) (1), according to Dr. Al-Bursh (1), according to UN (1) <b>International:</b> according to doctors (1), according to the UN (1), as reported by CNN (1)
Condition / Contingency / Concession	3 (4.3%)	4 (2.5%)	<b>Local:</b> ketika dimulai konfrontasi (when confrontation began) (1), meski malnutrisi (despite malnutrition) (1) <b>International:</b> even when it rains (1), although it's dangerous (1), if they survive (1)
Matter (About / Concerning)	0 (0%)	8 (5.1%)	<b>Local:</b> - <b>International:</b> about his condition (2), about delivery (1), about her health (1)
Role / Function	0 (0%)	6 (3.8%)	<b>Local:</b> - <b>International:</b> as a doctor (2), as refugees (1), as a mother (1)
Comparative	2 (2.9%)	0 (0%)	<b>Local:</b> juga (also) (1), as well as (1) <b>International:</b> -
<b>Total</b>	<b>70 (100%)</b>	<b>157 (100%)</b>	

Location circumstances were the most common type appeared in both local and international news (31.4% and 26.1%). This showed that children were often represented in specific places, like Gaza and other conflict zones. Temporal circumstances were distributed at comparable frequencies (18.6% in local news and 18.5% in international news), shaping the contextualization of children's experiences within specific moments of the crisis.

There was a difference in accompaniment circumstances, which were more common in international news (7.0%) than in local news (4.3%). This suggested that international news put more emphasis on relationships, like having family nearby or getting medical help. Beneficiary circumstances, however, only showed up in local news (5.7%), which showed that the focus was on groups of people getting help or actions.

The distinct pattern found in international news that exclusively used matter and role circumstance (5.1% and 3.8%). This matter and role circumstance mentioned children within the institutional role rather than humanizing them as human with identities and experience.

## Discussion

### Ideological orientations in process type selection

Through the different distribution of process types in representing Palestinian children, the underlying ideologies of both local and international news can be revealed. Local news used more material processes (56%), which placed stronger emphasis on concrete events such as violence, displacement, and death. This aligned with Halliday & Matthiessen's (2014) idea of the experiential function of language, where focus was placed on observable actions and real-world consequences.

The findings showed dominant use of material process (56% and 51%) in Indonesian local and international news to represent action. This was consistent with Halliday & Matthiessen's (2014) characterization of material process as expressing observable action and event (Eggins, 2004). This finding was in line with Suwarno & Sahayu (2020) analysis on local news and international news in which both outlets dominated with the use of verbal process and material process to show dominance in speech and action.

The findings that had significant differences was in the distribution of mental process, with only 5% in local news compared to 22% in international news. At first glance, the dominant used of mental process in international news was seen as a way of humanizing the victim by voicing the children's feelings and thoughts. However, Tommaso & Zummo (2025) suggested that focusing on mental process can sometime individualize experiences which result in shifting the focus away from the actual humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict. On the other hand, the limited use of mental process in local news might represent stronger emphasis on mass suffering rather than individual psychological states which might get the reader focused more on the conflict and the crisis.

Another important difference appears in verbal processes. Local news used them much more frequently (22%) than international news (8%). This suggested that Indonesian media were more likely to include the voices of Palestinian children and related actors. In doing so, they might offer a more participatory form of representation by giving them voices. On the other hand, the lower distribution of verbal process in international news suggested that the platform limited the representation of Palestinian children as speaker who owned their own voices. This finding was in the same vein with Al Zo'by & Ben Labidi's (2025) argument about epistemic injustice, where certain groups were denied credibility as speakers, as well as Heni & Chandra's (2022) observation who argued that Indonesian media tended to humanize Palestinian victims through direct testimony.

This pattern paralleled with Damanhoury et al. (2025) comparative discourse analysis of Al Jazeera English and BBC. The study revealed that BBC presented significantly narrower sourcing patterns by

concentrating primarily on Israeli-linked voices, whereas outlets aligned with non-Western geopolitical perspectives intensified a wider array of Palestinian viewpoints. International news often constructed narratives about Palestinians rather than conveying them through Palestinian voices. This phenomenon was also reflected in Matar (2025), who characterized it as discursive epistemic violence; Western legacy media that negated Palestinian agency by relying on and filtering their experiences through institutionally sanctioned intermediaries in framing and interpreting events in the conflict zone instead of presenting direct testimony.

#### Ideological implications of semantic field distributions

The semantic field distributions showed the difference in how displacement is represented. It stood out as the most ideologically meaningful finding. In local news, 29% of material processes related to displacement and forced movement, compared to only 6% in international news. This suggested that Indonesian media focused more in emphasizing the consequences of the conflict on Palestinian, especially the vulnerable group; Palestinian children. Material process that related to displacement in Indonesian local news put much stronger emphasis on Palestinian children's experiences on forced migration. In this context the forced migration was seen as injustice following the mass killing by the Israeli force that disclose in Indonesian local news as collective awareness.

In contrast, the limited attention to displacement in international news might diminish the systematic nature of population movement as a consequence of military actions. This also suggested that international news put limited attention to the injustice happening in Palestine. As stated by Heni & Chandra (2022), Western media tended to focus their narrative more on immediate casualties which might shift the focus on structural issues such as displacement or land loss.

This pattern suggested that the situation lived by the Palestinian children as merely humanitarian crisis that only required medical aid rather than represented the situation as the result of political conflict. This pattern might hinder the cause of the conflict and the party that should be held accountable. These findings suggested the same pattern as Amer (2022) who found that BBC and The New York Times coverage of the 2021 Gaza conflict represented the war between Israel and Palestine as a result of Hamas's action, rather than as military aggression against a civilian population. It also suggested that this pattern of framing overlooked the structural issue of Palestinian suffering like displacement and land occupation. As a result, the absence of deeper context were normalized in the war coverage, creating a sense that the displacement was only an unfortunate effect rather than something that was deliberately initiated by Israel military.

The different focus of international and national news presented another important point. The focus on medical care and humanitarian response in international news and the way it presents Palestinian children within aid system might appear sympathetic. However, Sarwar et al. (2023) claimed that the way international news frame Palestinian children around medical and humanitarian aspect could shift the attention away from the cause of violence and its consequences, diminishing the crisis and obscuring responsibility. On the other hand, the fewer emphasis on medical processes in local news helped in maintaining readers' attention on violence, displacement and injustice as the main issues.

At the same time, both local and international news shared a similar limitation in how they represented children's agency. Only about 16–19% of material processes represented children as active participants doing everyday activities, while more than 80% represented actions done to them. This pattern was in line in what Al Zo'by & Ben Labidi (2025) described as a form of representational erasure. The study found the absence of everyday activities done by Palestinian children in western news covering the conflict. As a result, Palestinian children were mostly portrayed as victims of events rather than as individuals with their own actions, voices, and experiences. Unlike news coverage on

Israeli children which humanized the Israeli by offering insight of their live and experience alongside with the suffering to frame them as ideal victim.

### Ideological construction of agency and responsibility

The distribution of Actors showed clear differences in how each type of news constructed agency and responsibility. Indonesian local news more often presented Israeli military and state forces as the main actors (48%), directly naming Israel, the IDF, and other military institutions as those affecting children.

This finding challenged what Farooq (2021) calls “agent deletion,” where accountability is hidden. Indonesian local news in present study deliberately mentioned the accountable agent. In contrast, international news had limited distribution of actor roles (6%) of Israeli state even rarely mentioned them as military. This finding was in line with what Farooq (2021) described as “agent deletion” in which case the responsibility of Israeli state and military towards the conflict were hindered. The minimal use of Israeli military actors caused the pattern of violence in international news hidden. Sarwar et al. (2023) and Khan & Ibrar (2025) argued that western media frequently naming Israeli military as the agent of responsibility in the conflict. This successfully named the Palestinian children as the victim but failed to acknowledge the accountable parties.

Damanhoury et al. (2025) found the same pattern in their analysis of Al Jazeera English and BBC reporting on the 2023 Gaza war. The study found that BBC news outlets avoid to associate civilian casualties to Israeli military. Therefore, it was argued that this news outlet constructed death in Palestine as merely separate events rather than linking the event to specific Israeli military operations. This also suggested journalism pattern that addresses responsible agent with vague language. Damanhoury et al. (2025) pointed out that this method was a form of strategic ambiguity that hinder favored state actors from being directly accused in discourse.

The way that international news often portrayed abstract actor (22%) like “the war,” “the immune system,” or “the rockets,” reflected in Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) that talked about nominalization, in which actions were turned into abstract things. This hindered human responsibility and made violence and suffering seemed natural or unavoidable.

At the same time, Palestinian children were rarely shown as actors in either context (8–10%). This represented the aggregation and anonymization pattern portrayed by Tommaso & Zummo (2025), in which children were portrayed as passive entities. When children were not represented as actors that act, speak, or respond, the discourse rendered them as passive entities. Al Zo’by & Ben Labidi (2025) corroborated that this lack of power was a form of dehumanization through representational erasure.

### Ideological functions of circumstantial framing

The use of circumstantial aspect revealed clear patterns in the framing of Palestinian children's experiences by both types of news outlets. In both local and international news outlets circumstantial location was the most dominant (31.4% in local news and 26.1% in international news). The news connected children's life to conflict zones by representing them with places like “Gaza,” “Rafah,” hospitals, and displacement site. While this reflected the real condition there, it also limited how people saw children, mostly in war zones and not so much in normal places like homes or schools. According to Al Zo’by & Ben Labidi (2025), this form of portrayal denied children from being able to use ordinary social and developmental spaces.

Circumstantial of type also played a strong role (around 18% in both cases). Words like “now,” “today,” and “during the war” represent children in a state of crisis all the time. This created the perspective that their lives were only defined by the ongoing conflict; that their lives were always in a dangerous situation without a chance for future beyond the fight. This temporal limitation aligned with Matar (2025) assertion that Western media portrayal of the Palestinian conflict continuously depicted

Palestinian existence as perpetually crisis-ridden, created a sense that structurally normal life was impossible for Palestinian children. This kind of time framing, when paired with the dominant spatial anchoring in places of destruction, made it so that Palestinian children's childhood was always defined by emergency instead of the normal rhythms and experiences of childhood in other places and time frames.

In both local and international news, the circumstantial accompaniment aspects appeared in low distribution (4.3% and 7.0%). Accompaniment such as "with her mother", "with relatives" could deliberately show interpersonal relationship which could be aided to humanize the Palestinian children. However, both local and international news outlet rarely used this circumstantial aspect. The minimal use of showing interpersonal relationship could be seen as strategy to dehumanize Palestinian children. This viewpoint was in line with Al Zo'by & Ben Labidi (2025) who argued that the exclusion of Palestinian children from universal humanist discourse and their defamation in media representations should not be regarded merely as acts of exclusion and biased perceptions; rather, they should be viewed as components of a deliberate strategy to regulate and influence their portrayal in global public opinion.

Local news, on the other hand, assigned beneficiary roles to Palestinian children (5.7%), as seen in phrases like "for thousands of children," which emphasized collective suffering. Beneficiary roles referred to entities for whom something was done or to whom something was given (Eggins, 2004). Thus, refereeing them with number can be seen as dehumanization of the entities. This also reflected in patterns noted by Tommaso & Zummo (2025) that Palestinian children were more frequently represented as group or numbers which made them less humane. In contrast, international news did not employ beneficiary roles for Palestinian children, neither as individuals nor as a group. The absence of beneficiary roles in international news contributed to the dehumanization of Palestinian children by excluding them from representations as recipients of care and social responsibility, thus reducing them to abstract victims rather than human subjects. This also corresponded with Al Zo'by & Ben Labidi (2025) argument about the exclusion of Palestinian children from humanist discourse as deliberate strategy to dehumanize them.

International news exclusively employed matter and role circumstance in 5.1% and 3.8% of cases. This matter and role circumstance portrayed children as the object of the event rather than humanizing them as human with identities and experience. This pattern was similar to what Matar (2025) found that BBC news construction of the conflict often represented Palestinians within institutionalized roles. They mentioned the Palestinian children as "person under 18" instead of using the term "children" that was more humane. The word choice redirected the readers to miss the emotional and ethical aspect of the suffering. Amer (2022) similarly found that The New York Times and BBC's coverage of the 2021 Gaza conflict categorized Palestinian casualties demographic classifications using mere numbers rather than using individualized narrative details. This was seen as the way to keep the abstraction of Palestinian children in the news coverage to make them less humane.

## Conclusion

This present study investigates the representation of Palestinian Children in Indonesian local and international news using transitivity analysis of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The study found that Indonesian local news tended to use material process in constructing the news about Palestinian children. The semantic field distribution of material process also showed that Indonesian news often used material process that was related to violence, displacement, and injustice were dominantly distributed in Indonesian local news. This pattern put Palestinian children as part of a larger, ongoing, and systemic pattern of violence and injustice caused by the conflict itself. This pattern suggested that Indonesian local news was actively naming the cause of their suffering, identifying responsible actors

such as Israeli military forces, and framing children's experiences as consequences of a political and military conflict rather than as isolated tragic events.

While International news also used material process, the semantic field distribution found that international news tended to focus on the process of normal activity, only limited attention to the words like displacement. This pattern hindered the suffering of Palestinian children. The use of mental process in international news also became the highlight of the findings. It was found that international news uses more mental process to highlight the suffering of Palestinian children. While this might seem empathetic, it often redirected focus away from the cause of the violence itself and the parties that should be held accountable. Despite these differences, Indonesian local news and international news shared the same consistent pattern. In both news outlet Palestinian children were overwhelmingly represented as passive recipient of events and action rather than as individuals with voices, perspective, and identities thus create a sense of dehumanization. This suggested that even the sympathetic news construction could unintentionally frame marginalization by representing the children as a passive agent.

This study provided a perspective on how Indonesian local news and international news media construct a discourse during an international conflict of Palestine and Israel. The analysis of process, participant and circumstances type can reveal underlying ideological pattern of media discourse that might be overlooked. These findings provided practical implication for journalism that suggested the need for more responsible reporting practices that not only reporting the suffering but also contextualize it by clearly representing causality, responsibility, and the lived experiences of affected individuals. Further research could expand this work by analyzing larger dataset from more diverse media outlets like social media with a multimodal representation to better understand how these outlets shape readers' perspective.

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