ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF THE 2019 LEBANESE PROTESTS AND THE 2020 BEIRUT EXPLOSION ON TIKTOK

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the coverage of the Lebanese protests from October 2019 until the aftermath of the explosion in October 2020 on the storytelling platform TikTok. The aim of this study is to analyze the framing of the Lebanese protests and explosion with reference to the protest paradigm, narrative analysis and the four satirical techniques. Purposeful sampling method was used to collect 40 TikToks and a qualitative content analysis was conducted to analyze the videos. Findings showed vast percentages in the creation of humorous content regarding the socio-economic and political aspects, as well as the increased usage of the narratives in the videos, and the most prominent type of satirical devices used being incongruity, followed by parody.

Keywords: TikTok, Lebanon, Explosion, Lebanese protest, Protest paradigm, Lebanese Politicians, Lebanese crisis, Beirut explosion, Satire.

INTRODUCTION

With social media's massive presence and the continuous rise of new platforms entering the market, TikTok is a relatively new Chinese-based social media platform that has gained tremendous popularity around 2018, becoming the most downloaded video application globally ("What is TikTok?", 2020). The application now has over 500 million active users as of today. Despite the rapid global popularity of TikTok, it helps emphasize the importance of particular events through providing users with content that may concern conflicts in their region and focuses on supplying personalized content thanks to its recommendation algorithm. Having this personalized and localized content feature has helped popularize

events happening in their users' regions, giving them insights on recent events and changes happening around ("What is TikTok?", 2020). In addition, TikTok tries to dedicate an area in its platform to raise awareness and discuss important social and political issues through its "TikTok for Good" campaign, which may result in user-based activism for good causes, advocating consumers to create content that is constructive in shedding light on crucial events ("Our Idea," 2020). However, there still may be some regions, including the Levant region, that do not get enough exposure regarding the crises that happen and end up not receiving the same amount of attention and contribution for the Eastern community on TikTok in comparison to the Western.

On October 17, 2019, protestors took to Lebanon's streets after the government announced a proposed tax payment of $6 monthly on WhatsApp voice-over calls. The protest was then locally known as the October Revolution. The "irresponsible fiscal policy" initiated rage and anger amongst the country's citizens as the economic crisis threatened their access to food or healthcare. Also, the crisis has led many families to cross the poverty line (Page & Majzoub, 2020). The protests gathered hundreds and thousands of Lebanese in the capital, Beirut, and other big cities as well, "for the first time ever there is real unity in the country and not a fake one like we've seen before," said a 29-year-old protestor, Christian Manachi (Patience, 2019). As a result of the protests, prime minister Saad al Hariri resigned from his position, causing relief to Lebanon's citizens.

The heat of the protests began to dim around the end of February of 2020. Lebanon's victory did not last long as they faced another crisis on August 4, 2020, when a damaging explosion hit Beirut due to an ammonium nitrate defect in a Beirut port (Al Arabiya English, 2020). The explosion caused yet another wave of protests to rise again due to citizens' demand to understand how the explosion took place and the government's negligence to provide clear data on the explosion. The explosion caused a lot of damage to the land, both economically and socially (Al Arabiya English, 2020). To add on, the prime minister Saad Al Hariri returned to his position on October 22, 2020, leading to an uproar in the online community on multiple platforms, including TikTok (Rayess, 2020).

Thus, this study plans to analyze the content created on the social platform TikTok in regards to the events that took place in Lebanon, and how both citizens and non-citizens reacted to what went down, considering TikTok has become a 'safe haven' for users to speak their mind and vent about such conflicts.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to analyze how the rising social video-sharing service TikTok is presenting the reaction of the public, including the Lebanese, to the unstable events occurring in Lebanon, starting from the October 2019 protests till the aftermath of the Beirut Explosion

in October 2020. The study aims to critically examine the format and analyze the discourse used in the Lebanese-specific TikTok video as it is one of the most prominent platforms with the highest rates of reach. The analysis will be discussing both the social and political aspects presented on the platform in regards to the Lebanese incidents.

Research Questions

Main Research Question:

- How were the Lebanese crises presented from the initiation of the Lebanese protests to the aftermath of the Beirut explosion on the social media platform TikTok?

Sub-questions:

- What type of format was used (e.g: dancing, singing, telling a story) in the content provided on TikTok?

- Does the discourse, verbal and visual, presented within the TikTok videos, delegitimize, marginalize, or demonize protesters within the protest paradigm?

- Which of the four satirical techniques, as in exaggeration, reversal, incongruity, and/or parody did the TikTok videos convey in support of the events in Lebanon?

- What attitude was relayed in the content provided on TikTok towards the explosion and the protests occuring in Lebanon?

- How much interaction did these videos receive on the TikTok platform through views, likes, comments, and shares? Did the TikTok videos manage to raise attention towards the issues in the country?

- How was the representation of the government and the politicians presented in relation to the protests and explosions? Was it relayed in a positive or negative light?

- What social aspects were relayed through the content provided?

Significance of the Study

The study's significance originates from the lack of existing research on the topic. While the Lebanon crisis has been thoroughly described, the relation of TikTok's representation of the events has not been analyzed in-depth and remains a gap in the field. This study aims to discover how the public took matters into raising awareness regarding the crisis using different techniques suited to attract an audience, including satire and sarcasm. The study will dive into analyses to understand how the youth contributes to such sudden changes in countries through social platforms. TikTok is mainly examined because of its recent

popularity, which brings an innovative tool into the discussion. The study also emphasizes the power of underground creators' publications, as there is a rare focus on their contribution to social phenomenons.

Limitations

A few limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. One being the lack of prior and relevant research studies on the topic of TikTok generated content with regards to its recency in the field, followed by the lack of existing discourse analysis and representation of short satirical content on the platform TikTok. Finally, while the sample of the TikTok analyzed is timely relative to the occurrence of the Lebanese events, the sample is relatively limited time-wise and content-wise, as it is restricted to one social media platform, TikTok, rather than several. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to represent the entire Lebanese community. These aspects must be considered in future research papers as they will allow researchers to develop their understanding of the topic as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Firstly, the study reviewed multiple resources that can aid in this content analysis and discovered where the gap lies. This literature review looks into the academic journals and identifies the multiple aspects that will be further interpreted in this study, including the theoretical frameworks, protest paradigm, narrative analysis, etc.

The study "It's time to TikTok - Exploring generation Z's motivations to participate in #challenges," written by Ahlse, Nilsson, and Sandström, aims to analyze the motives behind Gen Z's partaking in creating viral and trending TikTok content through the application of the user gratification model. The 2020 paper is both qualitative and quantitative as it examines methods, including both primary data in the form of interviews of Gen Z's and secondary in the study's content analysis. The findings present the primary motivation behind TikTok users' usage of the platform being entertainment as they sought "fun" and "entertaining" content. It is then followed by "convenience," increased "socializing," and the establishing of a "personal identity" and finally "information seeking" and "status." As such, this research paper concludes the required elements needed to motivate other younger generations to take part in challenges on the platform. The study is essential as it explains the motives behind youth using TikTok as an expressive app, which correlates directly to this content analysis.

Bresnic's "Intensified Play: Cinematic Study of TikTok mobile app," published in 2019, delves into understanding and analyzing the mobile app from a cinematic perspective. The report addresses TikTok's role in creating a "virtual playground" for users by identifying standard

features between the mobile app and the intensified play features. The study provides TikTok's cinematic application findings by discussing its multiple features, including its virtually constructed environment, development and creativity, and narrative structure. It uses prior research and specific analysis of the content as a whole to produce the outcomes. The report further discusses the worries surrounding TikTok as a virtual playground, especially for the younger generation. It concludes with identifying TikTok as a virtual playground, specifying its features to enhance intensified play, and ends by stating that less panic will accompany the TikTok platform as the younger generation gets older. The article suits this content analysis through the methods it pursues in identifying the narrative performance of TikTok, yet lacks the specificity of the content that the study aims to follow.

The 2020 UNICEF study "Digital civic engagement by young people" focuses on tackling teenagers and adolescents' engagement patterns on social media, defines the term "civic engagement," and analyzes the dominant platforms and the key enablers of engagement. The content analysis's methods include using the two analytical frameworks: "building a vocabulary" and "voice/instrumental or thick/thin," where context is applied within four different axes and dimensions. The article uses "snapshots" or examples of content created by teens on platforms such as TikTok to analyze adolescent participation as well as pre-existing research and data. The findings in the study vary as information was extracted from numerous sources. Nonetheless, a focal finding includes UNICEF defining civic engagement as "individual or collective actions in which people participate to improve the well-being of communities or society in general." The report also defines TikTok as a dominant app used by teens to report their political views humorously. A gap in the literature was pointed out in Cho, Byrne & Pelter's study regarding unanswered questions about understanding the platforms young people use to understand the nature and impact of their engagement. The research is empirical as its examples are directly related to the usage of TikTok as a platform for expressing political matters, an issue this research tackles.

Geha's "Politics of a garbage crisis: Social networks, narratives, and frames of Lebanon's 2015 protests and their aftermath" puts great focus on the Lebanese 2015 protests due to the overload garbage crisis, also known as the "hirak." The 2018 article highlights how social networks allowed the demonstrations to continue by creating narrative formats under the abeyance frame. The research mainly emphasizes how narrative usage through the abeyance frame impacted Lebanon's social movements and its effect on the Arab uprisings. The report breaks down the movement's conceptualization, analyzing local content provided on the networks, some of which include Lebanese slang to explain the narrative behind this content. The study categorizes the social networks to further interpret their role in the framework and even provided counter-narratives to proceed with the argument. The paper discovers that the mobilization of the "hirak" movement through the abeyance frame presents a continuity of the networks and the content throughout the movement and allows

for more public display of emotion and views. The paper also concludes that such studies could recreate frames through the narratives and even help reproduce frames in abeyance, as while the movements can survive through such frames, they cannot recreate them. The article aids this content analysis in terms of the methods used to break down the content present in the networks and correlate with the frame and its discussion to the 2015 Lebanon protests, which will help in the format of this study on the analysis of the 2019-2020 Lebanese protests.

"Fake News Vs. Satire" by Golbeck et al. is a 2018 content analysis that aims at analyzing a dataset of 2016 fake news and satirical articles and examines the discourse with particular attention to hyperbolic support or condemnation of a figure, conspiracy theories, racist themes, and discrediting of reliable sources. Their methods include dividing the dataset into 283 fake news articles and 203 satirical stories into categories and coding them based on themes by classifying their word vector "with a class of Fake or Satire." The presented themes include hyperbolic position against one person or group, hyperbolic position in favor of one person or group, discredit a normally credible source, sensationalist crimes, violence, racist messaging, paranormal, and conspiracy theories. The study's findings demonstrate high accuracy in many of the satirical themes. The most common theme was hyperbolic criticism of a person - usually Trump, Obama, or Clinton - appearing in more than 2/3rds of articles analyzed. While this article analyzes a previously existing gap in the field, its benefit to this aimed research paper is limited as the satirical frameworks are the only applicable aspect.

The 2018 comparative study "Framing The Egyptian Uprising By Pan Arab News Networks: Tracing The Protest Paradigm In Al-Jazeera And Al-Arabiya's Coverage Of Egyptian Protests From June 2013 To June 2014" by Jarrar and Akter highlights the difference in portrayals of the Egyptian protests on the two pan-Arab news websites Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya. The study aims to analyze the implementation and constancy of the protest paradigm by the two channels when discussing the Egyptian conflicts from June 2013 to June 2014 and interpret the significant frames used by the two websites during their coverage. Further on, the article plans to identify whether the paradigm shifts between each coverage. The article discusses the protests paradigm in specifics, proceeding to conduct the study by using the stratified sampling method and the constructed-week technique. The study collects the data produced from Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya's websites during the specified time frame of 4 weeks. It organizes the data into a table to clarify the number of news items used, then uses various thematic codes and frameworks to analyze the data's content and its adoption of the protest paradigm regarding the Egyptian conflicts. The findings were presented statistically to show that the six particular frame indicators used, including delegitimization, sympathy, and injustice, were all shown in both news websites, with slight differences in the amount presented. The report also finds a shift in the portrayal of the protest paradigm between the

four weeks, with Al-Arabiya adopting the paradigm from the second week onward following its values, while Al-Jazeera was adopting at the beginning to later shift in its frames. The study identifies that such shifts occurred to either news' websites' due to different outlooks on Egyptian conflicts. It points out how both news platforms have interestingly deviated from relaying "political influence," albeit having government-sponsored outlets. It concludes by presenting the formats both news websites have now adapted as Pan-Arab media, including their implementation of the paradigm. The article supports its usage of the Protest Paradigm and its frameworks, which this study plans to aid the analysis with and the methods used to analyze the framework, the gaps being that the analysis adds other frameworks, including the narrative frameworks to support the aims. Not to mention that this study takes a different route by analyzing Lebanese content on TikTok.

Kahne and Bowyers' 2018 paper analyzes panel data from two waves of the Youth Participatory Politics Survey, a nationally representative sample of young people in the U.S. The study sheds light on the influence of Friendship-Driven (FD) and Interest- Driven (ID) online activity on online participatory politics and offline forms of political action. The report's methods include using a cross-lagged design to investigate the extent to which pathways are created between online and offline forms of political activity and common forms of online activity. The survey includes multiple political engagement measures and online activity, and the findings revealed that FD and ID activity relate to political engagement but in different ways. Also, the findings indicate that the size of young people's social networks interacts with both FD and ID online activity to promote political activity. It indicates that higher levels of political engagement are promoted through having exposure to "weak-ties" (caused by large social networks). Though quite paramount to fill a gap in the field, the context of the research and its representative sample remain far-fetched to include in this research study.

"The Impact of Social Media on the Political Interests of the Youth in Lebanon at the Wake of the Arab Spring" by Maamari and El Zain, published in 2018, targets the influence of access to web-based communication tools on the Lebanese youths' voting preferences taking into consideration the events of the Arab Spring in 2011. The method involved constructing a questionnaire into three parts, and through which results were rated based on a Likert-type scale from Strongly disagree = 1 to Strongly agree = 5. The 3,789 participants, which were collected from different subgroups of the Lebanese community using data collection from 12 different regions, were run through an SPSS system. The research paper covers various significant findings; the most vital was the negative correlation in the significant interest from the youth with politicians and that interest not being reciprocated into material voting at the polls. 68.1% of young people below the age of 21 were unwilling to vote despite being legally able to. The study proves vital to this content analysis as it handles a similar aspect of representation of the Lebanese communities in response to a significant event on social

media platforms.

The 2017 article "Looping out loud: A multimodal analysis of humour on Vine" by Marone aims to examine how different individuals construct humor on Vine by organizing various modes of expression and understanding how users utilize the particular frameworks provided by the platform. The study uses a multimodal analysis that includes various semiotic domains, including gaze, speech, and gesture, to focus and analyze the jokes that Vine users make in comparison to comic scenes taken from movies or TV shows. The article collects the videos through the hashtag #prejudice, and uses five different modes of meaning-making that include linguists, visual, audio, spatial, and gestural to interpret the Vines collected. The findings proclaim that Vine users use the platform as a "humorous confessional" and explore the possibility of hand-held media by depending on the expression of "one hand and face." Furthermore, they use slang words and emojis as well as hashtags as a complementary tool to communicate humor on the platform. The report aids in its methods of analyzing the Vines collected, as this content analysis interprets the TikTok videos similarly, as well as its portrayal of humor, will also support in this analysis of the satirical and humorous frameworks presented on TikTok. The gap present would be the study's generalization, as while it focuses on prejudice, it does not specify a specific region or conflict, rather the whole platform.

Mcleod's 2007 report discusses the basic concepts and frames related to the protest paradigm. The research paper also analyzes several examples of the protest paradigm, including discourse analysis of the day without immigrants demonstrations of 2006 as well as the Los Angeles coverage of "the day without immigrants demonstrations." The study takes a closer look at the protest paradigm frameworks, including story frames, reliance on official sources, the invocation of public opinion, delegitimization, and demonization. The report concludes with an explanation of why, in some instances, the protests did not apply directly to the protest paradigm theory. This is very handy as the same protest paradigm frameworks are applicable to the TikToks. The report helps in discussing the various frameworks that accompany the protest paradigm, as it enters into each frame solely and analyzes them individually. While the article might be a bit general in regards to talking about Social Protests as a whole, it adds a lot to this analysis of the Lebanese conflicts' interpretation.

The 2018 article "Images of protest in social media: Struggle over visibility and visual narratives" by Neumayer and Rossi emphasizes and analyzes the visual representation of social movements and political protests on social media, in specific, how the platform Twitter portrayed Blockupy protests initiated against the opening of the European Central Bank headquarters in Frankfurt on March 2015. Also, it argues on the visible effects of these visuals on the community and whether it challenges or supports the movements in action.

The article combines quantitative analysis, content analysis of the Twitter feed, and narrative identification to understand how the images and videos were portrayed. The methods applied include the collection of Twitter data through using specific hashtags, and later on using coding frames to support the analysis of the content. The article identifies users' preferences by coding the pictures, observing the accounts, and viewing the uploaded content. The report categorizes the findings into three significant aspects, including the reinforcement of existing hierarchies through the content, the differences in portraying violence between activists and media platforms, and the unusually negative portrayal of activists on Twitter, highlighting the control authorities have on the production of content on social media, ending by relaying the continuous struggle of activists in such protests to produce visible content to the community and not be bashed for it. The article supports the methods it uses to analyze the content on Twitter, as while they analyze the protests on a different platform, the frames were quite similar, the only differences being that this analysis covers a different time frame on another platform and analyzes the protests and events in Lebanon rather than Germany.

Rill and Cardiel's "Funny, Ha-Ha: The Impact of User-Generated Political Satire on Political Attitudes" analyzes the aftermath of the political-satirical content available on social media and in particular, the video-sharing platform YouTube, and how they alter and impact the public's political views. The method used in the 2013 study consists of an experimental design where 321 participants took part in pre and post-test questionnaires to measure any changes in the viewers' political inclinations. Findings have proven a lack of significant changes in the individuals' level of political cynicism. As a result, the primary contribution illustrates that user-generated political satire may not be a useful political campaign communication tool when influencing viewers' normative democratic attitudes. The study is beneficial as the frameworks used to analyze satire in the videos apply to the political satire and cynicism present in TikToks.

Shahin et al.'s 2016 study evaluates the reach and applicability of the protest paradigm theory in a "non-Western" context by analyzing the news coverage of Brazilian, Chinese, and Indian protests in their respective media. The analysis method was comparative, i.e., it is called the "different systems," where a comparison of the similarities in coverage across different media systems to discern structural factors is used and would account for how the protest paradigm is being used. The results varied depending on the country; nonetheless, it was evident that the Indian media is the least likely to follow the protest paradigm, "while Brazilian and Chinese media conform to it in moderate levels." Other findings show that news organizations' ideological affiliation with the government makes it relatively more likely to adhere to the protest paradigm. Marginalization devices such as circus, appearance, and eyewitness accounts are infrequently utilized in these nations. The research paper presents the frameworks of the protest paradigm in application to news reports from various

countries, making the shift of the media content, from news to TikToks, easy to switch.

In this research paper by Chiaoning Su, the aim is to analyze and study the media coverage of the '921' Earthquake in Taiwan during its ten year anniversary in 2009 during two periods as the original quake occurred in September of 1999. The 2012 research paper compares the coverage of the quake to a similar and recent disaster, the Typhoon Morakot, that happened just before the tenth anniversary of the earthquake. The method used to go about this research paper is narrative analysis, as the data analyzed is collected over 250 news articles from four Taiwanese newspapers, including 41 from the Apple Daily, 50 from the Liberty Times, 79 from the China Times, and 82 from the United Daily. The narrative analysis focuses on the "language, structure, repetition, binary opposition, themes and temporal patterns of journalistic narratives, as well as the associated symbolism in sampled news stories on the 921 Earthquake." The journal is divided into two periods, the first in which journalists respond with an historical precedent to an event by using the 921 Earthquake as a benchmark, 'villain', and moral allegory. In the second period, the study demonstrates how regular commemorative features are used to describe the 921 Earthquake and its relation to survivor testimony and present commemorative events. By portraying two interpretations of a single past event back to back, this study demonstrates how news media selectively employ the 'usable past,' and the implications of this for the formation of collective memories of past events. The findings of the study show how representations of the past in the news media are arbitrary and correspond to present needs. As well as "that 921 Earthquake stories closely fit the first two typologies," historical analogy and commemoration, "while the third was noticeably missing." The findings of this article further demonstrate how representations of the past in the news media are arbitrary and correspond to present needs. The narrative analysis supports this research paper due to similar concepts interpreted, the only difference lying in the conflicts analyzed.

"The Rise of Mobile and Social Short-Form Video: An In-depth Measurement Study of Vine" provides a detailed analysis of Vine, the mobile application used for creating short 6-second videos. The 2014 study aims to understand the amount of recognition Vine videos receive on other platforms, including its own, and its popularity and usage amongst the community. The study conducts various methods to support their aims, including the in-depth analysis of Vine videos' characteristics and investigating a dataset of 851,039 tweets on Twitter that contain a Vine URL in them amongst multiple more. The findings show that relatively one hashtag is found in 34% of the videos created on Vine. Furthermore, it is paid attention to that when a Vine video is spread repeatedly on Twitter, a short period after it has been created tends to gain more attention on the Vine application after one week, unlike a video that has not been shared. However, there was no clarified relation between the number of times the video has been reshared and its result in fame. Thus, the study concludes that a Vine video receives user recognition when shared on Twitter shortly after it is posted.

However, user attention remains stable after the creation and not stopping completely. Vandersmissen et al.'s research is useful to this analysis as it provides an understanding of the contextual analysis of online platforms such as Vine and its level of recognition and interaction, which provides a valid framework in this analysis to the TikTok platform as a whole.

Vincent's 2000 article is a narrative analysis of US press coverage of Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbs in Kosovo. This exploratory analysis tackles the linguistic treatment of the Kosovo bombing and its related events depending on how they were reported in major US media. The study's methodology focuses on national news reported by nine different news media for the timeframe of one week, from 22–28 April 1999. Computer-assisted content analysis is conducted to cover a larger reach. The examined themes included terrorism, fear, Serbs as 'evil,' Milosevic as 'dictator' and/or Crazy and irresponsible, vicious and calculated behavior. Other themes include press freedom and criticism of NATO and US involvement. The findings present the rhetorical emphases indicating they are found in large percentages, and the researchers themselves were not surprised. The results show the news as being "pro-US and pro-western point of view with heavy reliance on government and military officials from those countries." The strategies applied for the report's narrative analysis would aid in this study, the differences lying in the content analyzed.

The 2020 study "Understanding Young Adults' TikTok Usage" aims to create a "general map" on the concepts understood from the short videos the platform provides and the creative processes that users undergo when using the platform. Yang's paper uses both textual analysis and the "walkthrough method" to justify the research findings. The unstructured interviews were conducted using the snowball method. In contrast, the walkthrough method included an analysis of the "design mechanisms and embedded cultural references" within the app to understand the techniques used to guide user motivation and experiences. The walkthrough findings focus on the features of the application itself and what limitations it may contain. At the same time, the interviews conducted led to results presenting prime times for usage, user satisfaction depending on the genre of the content presented on feed/For You page including the type of content chosen to recreate and the motives behind it with the most relatable to this content analysis being to express one's true self. While the research paper is rudimental and lacking in certain aspects, it does serve its purpose to support this research paper in fulfilling its objectives.

While all studies reviewed provide necessary intel on the discussion planned to be created in this content analysis, a huge gap lies in both the scarcity of research regarding the newly populated platform TikTok. In addition to the specificity of an analysis of the unstable events occurring in Lebanon and how they have been taken to the platform to express different reactions. That is why this study takes on a new page in analyzing the content posted on the

TikTok platform in regards to both political and social aspects, enveloping within the protest paradigm amongst multiple other frames.

METHODOLOGY

The research used in this content analysis was based entirely on primary data collected through the social media platform TikTok.

Sampling method and data collection

The study's sampling method is a purposeful sampling technique, where this content analysis includes specific videos related to the conflicts in Lebanon from the 2019 protests in October till the aftermath of the explosion in October 2020. 16 videos portray the socio-economic reaction of the events, while another 18 take on the political interpretation, and 6 represent both. The videos examined will not exceed 60 seconds, as that is TikTok's limit to record in the application. The data was collected using particular hashtags relating to the matter, including #PrayForLebanon, #PrayForBeirut, #Beirut, #Lebanon, #LebaneseProtests, #LebanonExplosion, #LebanonPort, and #LebanonGovernment.

Table 1: Sampling Methods

Category of TikTok videos	Socio-economic	Political	Both
Amount of videos analyzed	16	18	6
Max. Time in Videos	60 seconds		
Total:	40 videos		

Method of data analysis

The method of the study conducted is a qualitative content analysis, where this article interprets each video's content to deduct this purpose. The study uses content analysis procedures that focus on a set of thematic codes for frames that are derived from:

Theoretical Frameworks:

Table 2 : Theoretical Frameworks

Frame Labels	Attributes and Specification
TikTok-Context	- User: The user who posted it - Date: When the TikTok was posted - Topic: What the TikTok is about - Reach: How many people viewed, liked, commented and shared the TikTok - Hashtags: User-generated labels included within the TikTok to recognize it
Narrative Analysis	- Identifying the characters presented in the video and their position in the events. - Interpreting the captions and context provided in the video - Examining the actions and images provided in the video - Expounding what is verbally said in the video regarding the events - Understanding the influence of the creator on the platform

Protest Paradigm	- Analyzing the content provided on TikTok through the Protest Paradigm
	- Identifying which category the representation of the Lebanese protesters fall in:
	   - Delegitimizing the protestors
	   - Marginalizing the protesters
	   - Demonizing the protesters
	- Identifying the Accountability portrayed in regards to the government
	- Observing the presence of Injustice towards Protesters

Modes and Functions of Humor	- Understanding humor among youth
	- Applying the Satire as a thematic code to the content analyzed
	- Identifying the functions of the humor in describing and reacting to the events.
	- Examining how Satire is used to represent the events in Lebanon through the 4 satirical techniques:
	   - Exaggeration: expressing something beyond natural and normal limits to portray its ridiculousness and its faulty.
	   - Reversal: expressing something that is the opposite of normal bounds.
	   - Parody: imitating and copying particular techniques of a person, object, or place to express the original's ridiculousness.
	   - Incongruity: Presenting things that are out of the ordinary place or are strange compared to their surroundings. It includes the use of irony, metaphor, and oxymoron.
	- Identifying which technique presented the most reach and which were used most often.

FINDINGS

The detailed qualitative content analysis of each video, which led to the findings, is listed separately in appendix one. The findings are divided into three as the first table divides the context of the TikToks regarding their orientation, either socio-economic or political. The second table presents percentages of the content discussed in the videos themselves and whether or not they discussed the protest or the explosion. The third and final table discusses the presence or absence of frameworks within the 40 TikToks.

Table 3: Category of videos

Category	Number of Videos	Percentages
socio-economic	18	45%
Political	16	40%
socio-economic and political	6	15%

Table 4: Content Discussed in Videos

Aspects	Numbers Videos	Percentages
Protest	7	17.5%
Explosion	11	27.5%
Protests and Explosion	1	2.5%
Neither	21	52.5%

Table 5: Framework Findings

Aspects	Numbers of Videos	Percentages
Protest Paradigm	4	10%
Political Backlash (Accountability and Injustice frames)	23	57.5%
Forms of Humor: Exaggeration	12	30%
Forms of Humor: Incongruity	16	40%
Forms of Humor: Reversal	3	7.5%
Forms of Humor: Parody	14	35%
No Humor	9	22.5%

Findings discover that out of the 40 videos, 45% discussed socio-economic conflicts, 40% discussed political conflicts, and 15% discussed both. Amidst these concepts, 17.5% highlighted the protest issues, 27.5% emphasized the explosion effects, 52.5% discussed neither, although interpreting both the protests and explosion without referring to them directly through the socio-economic and political contexts.

Findings also discover that political backlash was covered the most in the content analyzed, with 57.5% of videos portraying the accountability and injustice frames. On the other hand, the protest paradigm usage was infrequent, with only 10% covering the subject. As for the four functions of satire, Incongruity stood out the most, with 40% of videos using the technique, parody following behind with 35%, then exaggeration at 30%, and finally Reversal with the lowest percentage of 7.5%. However, some videos had no humor at all, with 22.5% of videos discussing the conflicts more seriously, focusing on raising awareness through conveying grief amongst other emotions.

DISCUSSIONS

The study discovers a good balance between content production regarding the explosion and the protests; however, when interpreting the TikToks, creators were more inclined to discuss the protests humorously, creating content that takes the matter lightly. While videos and content curated regarding the explosion were presented in a serious, solemn tone, mostly raising awareness to aid the Lebanese cause or expressing their grief over the matter. There was an immense usage of narratives as well, as there were multiple accounts of creators relaying the conflicts through a story-telling manner, including the characters and the other parties in the video, all of which were mostly played by one creator, with few accounts of dancing and singing. The study concludes that more interaction was provided to either big influencers on the platform or videos that included forms of humor, thus interpreting that the platform's viewing trends are more inclined to observe comedy than serious content. The study also finds a high exposure of the citizen's reaction to the political state in the country, as users did not refrain from speaking out on the politicians' roles and actions in the country, through either pointing out the irony regarding their 'protection' of the country through asking for more money from the citizens, and reprimanding politicians for Lebanon's corruption. In addition, creators did not hold back in the discussion regarding their ongoing struggles from a socio-economic aspect, referencing the lack of available resources and scarcity, and providing insight on the aftermath of the ongoing events. Against this research's initial assumption, most of the content did not adhere to the protest paradigm, thus creating an opposite reaction with more inclination to oppose the paradigm as a whole. Rather than delegitimizing, marginalizing, and demonizing the protestors, the

TikToks were pro-protestors and anti the misrepresentation of their case. Nonetheless, there was various evidence of the application of the accountability and injustice frames, with the majority of the socio-economic and political videos placing the blame on the government for the conflicts in the country, and exposing the injustice embedded in the country through discussing the social and economic issues. Overall, the study discovers that the community discussing the Lebanese protests and explosions all followed similar ideologies, including the politicians' lack of adequately serving the country, the severeness of the country's events, and the unhappiness that the citizens are undergoing. The Lebanese community on TikTok did not present a divided outlook. There were no two opposing sides, but rather all shared similar opinions on the country's unstable events.

The research finds similarities in the embedding of the hyperbolic position through satirical frameworks, concluded in the 2018 content analysis "Fake News Vs. Satire" by Golbeck et al., in which while different conflicts were analyzed, the content on TikTok provides hyperbolic criticism from the creators towards the politicians, specifically towards their actions in the country, using multiple functions of satire. Comparing this research to the 2018 research by Jarrar and Akter, this study found that similarly, both reports highlight the usage of the accountability and injustice frame by citizens towards their country's government; however, while the report emphasizes the adherence of the networks towards the paradigm, this analysis discovers that the content on TikTok regarding the unstable Lebanese conflicts did not adhere to the paradigm. Regarding the TikTok platform itself, the 2020 UNICEF study states that the platform was dominant in allowing teens to create content representing their political views humorously. However, this analysis discovers that not only teens used the platform frequently, but adults as well. Multiple accounts of serious content were created and aimed at raising awareness towards specific conflict, in this report's case, the Lebanese crisis, concluding that TikTok does not only produce humorous content for teens. Another point to discuss includes the similarity to Geha's 2018 study of interpreting the 2015 Lebanese protests, in which similar to their conclusion, this paper finds a strong influence of narratives provided on the platform discussing the conflicts, and that the narrative played a significant role in portraying opinions and views on the matter. In another perspective, this report also contrasts the usage of narratives on the platform in terms of creating heroic and villainous characters, in which similar to Vincent's 2000 study, there was a significant presence of characters portraying good and 'evil' within the content on TikTok. When looking back at the 2018 article by Neumayer and Rossi, while the report discusses the undermining of activists on the Twitter platform and their inability to speak out on matters without being criticized, this report finds that creators were given a vast opportunity to spread their messages, and were not seen in a negative light. Instead, there was more interaction on the platform supporting the content created, noticeable mainly through the

views and likes, concluding that there has been a development in users' open-mindedness on social media platforms.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study analyzes the content on the story-telling platform TikTok regarding the unstable Lebanese conflict between the time frame of the protests in October 2019 till the aftermath of the explosion in October 2020. The study uses purposeful sampling to organize the content into various categories, then followed by a video by video analysis, in which the frames' presence were discussed separately in appendix one. Concluding the findings and discussion, this study finds that there was more inclination to produce videos regarding the explosion due to its recency, in addition to the continuous use of satire to criticize the politician's role in the society. This study realizes that while the platform might have been intended for the creation of humorous content, there is a big contribution of serious videos relaying awareness to the conflicts in Lebanon on the platform, highlighting the diversity of the content on the platform. The content analysis also discovers the immense usage of narrative to portray conflicts, relay events, or even use satire when discussing the conflicts in Lebanon, which identifies the huge role of narratives in allowing creators to speak about certain conflicts in their own creative manner. The paper also highlights the continuous production of videos adhering to the functions of satire, emphasizing the satirical frames' significant role in presenting the conflicts in Lebanon.

Due to this research focusing on the analysis of the content on the story-telling platform TikTok, it is recommended to conduct further research analyzing the platform as a whole, as well as delving into its mechanics, design, and algorithm of the app, including the control and production of the "for you page," designated as a form of personalization towards consumers. Another recommendation would be to increase the literature regarding the viewer's likes, comments, and shares on the platform, in addition to empirical research on the motives behind creating content that appeals to the platform as well as analyzing the reasons behind the algorithm promoting more certain videos on TikTok to gain more recognition than others. This can be achieved by analyzing the cognitive paradigm and understanding the psychological motives behind the platform's interaction techniques. The study also recommends the production of a report that analyzes TikTok's current trends and slang and discusses the evolution of these trends on the platform. The researchers also notice a gap in the literature concerning the Lebanese protests and the aftermath of the explosion, or the Lebanese cause as a whole; as such, it also recommended to interpret the various media outlets that produced content related to the matter, including news articles, Instagram posts, tweets, etc.

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