

# Psycholinguistic patterns in digital discourse on the Israel–Palestine conflict

İsrail-Filistin çatışması üzerine dijital söylemde psikodilbilimsel örüntüler

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## Citation:

Karadağlı, K. & Armağan Boğatekin, M. (2026). Psycholinguistic patterns in digital discourse on the Israel–Palestine conflict. *OPUS– Journal of Society Research*, 23, e1864676. <https://doi.org/10.26466/opusjsr.1864676>

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## Review Note:

Evaluated by Double-Blind Peer Review

## Ethics Reporting:

To report potential ethical concerns, contact: [editorialoffice@opusjournal.net](mailto:editorialoffice@opusjournal.net)

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## Abstract

This study investigated the linguistic construction of the Israel–Palestine conflict on Ekşi Sözlük, one of Türkiye's most prominent online forums. Despite the intense political salience of the conflict, empirical research on how ordinary citizens express their stance, emotion, and national identity in digital environments remained limited. To address this gap, we conducted a computational mixed-methods analysis combining manual stance coding with psycholinguistic tools (LIWC-22) and Narrative Arc modeling. The dataset consisted of 600 manually verified entries collected from three purposively selected threads representing divergent viewpoints. The results revealed distinct psychological profiles. pro-Israel entries exhibited high analytic thinking ( $M = 57.15$ ) but low authenticity ( $M = 43.04$ ). This combination suggested a detached, bureaucratic effort to rationalize state violence through a strategy of "cold cognition." In contrast, pro-Palestinian entries showed lower levels of analytic processing. Furthermore, this group recorded the highest social confidence (Clout) ( $M = 75.32$ ), signaling a strong collective moral stance. Finally, Neutral entries were characterized by the highest authenticity ( $M = 48.52$ ), focusing on economic self-interest as a "secular-nationalist firewall" against the conflict. These findings illustrated how political stance shaped deep cognitive styles in the Turkish digital sphere.

**Keywords:** Israel-Palestine, digital political discourse, LIWC-22, ekşi sözlük, political psychology.

## Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin en önde gelen çevrimiçi forumlarından biri olan Ekşi Sözlük'te İsrail-Filistin çatışmasının dilsel inşasını incelemiştir. Çatışmanın yoğun siyasi belirginliğine rağmen, sıradan vatandaşların dijital ortamlarda duruş, duygu ve ulusal kimliklerini nasıl ifade ettiklerine dair ampirik araştırmalar sınırlı kalmıştır. Bu boşluğu doldurmak amacıyla, manuel duruş kodlamasını psikodilbilimsel araçlar (LIWC-22) ve Anlatı Yayı (Narrative Arc) modellemesiyle birleştiren hesaplamalı bir karma yöntem analizi yürütülmüştür. Veri seti, farklı bakış açılarını temsil eden ve amaçlı örneklem yöntemiyle seçilen üç başlıktan toplanmış, manuel olarak doğrulanmış 600 girdiden oluşmuştur. Sonuçlar, belirgin psikolojik profiller ortaya koymuştur. İsrail yanlısı girdiler yüksek analitik düşünme ( $M = 57.15$ ) sergilerken, düşük otantiklik ( $M = 43.04$ ) göstermiştir. Bu kombinasyon, devlet şiddetini "soğuk biliş" stratejisiyle rasyonalize etmeye yönelik mesafeli ve bürokratik bir çabaya işaret etmiştir. Buna karşılık, Filistin yanlısı girdiler daha düşük analitik işleme sergilemiştir. Ayrıca bu grup, en yüksek sosyal özgüveni (Clout) ( $M = 75.32$ ) kaydederek güçlü bir kolektif ahlaki duruş sergilemiştir. Son olarak, tarafsız girdiler, çatışmaya karşı bir "seküler-milliyetçi güvenlik duvarı" olarak ekonomik kişisel çıkara odaklanan en yüksek otantiklik ( $M = 48.52$ ) düzeyi ile karakterize edilmiştir. Bu bulgular, siyasi duruşun Türk dijital küresinde derin bilişsel stilleri nasıl şekillendirdiğini göstermiştir

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İsrail-Filistin, dijital siyasal söylem, liwc-22, ekşi sözlük, politik psikoloji.

## Introduction

The Israel–Palestine conflict serves as a persistent focal point in global politics. It acts as a proxy for broader debates regarding justice, security, and identity. In Türkiye, this issue holds a unique position. It intersects with Ottoman history, religious solidarity, and modern secular anxieties. While state-level foreign policy is well-documented, the way ordinary Turkish citizens psychologically process this conflict remains under-researched.

Digital platforms have reshaped this discourse, often encouraging emotional intensity and group-based narratives (Brady et al., 2017). This study focuses on Ekşi Sözlük, a collaborative dictionary and forum that functions as a central arena for Turkish public debate. Unlike X, where algorithms create echo chambers, Ekşi Sözlük's structure compels users to encounter opposing viewpoints within the same thread. This makes it an ideal site to observe the active construction of "psychological architecture" and affective polarization. In the Turkish context, Ekşi Sözlük functions not only as a participatory digital culture artifact but also as a prominent public sphere where political polarization and collective memory are constantly negotiated through user entries (Gürocak, 2023; Yücel & Arık, 2020).

Furthermore, the specific case of Türkiye offers a critical vantage point for understanding global polarization. As a NATO member with a majority Muslim population, Türkiye sits at the geopolitical intersection of Western secularism and Middle Eastern religious solidarity (Kirişçi, 2017; Yanık, 2011). Consequently, the digital discourse in Türkiye does not merely mirror global trends. Instead, it acts as a unique litmus test for how conflicting civilizational narratives—liberal democracy versus religious fraternalism—are negotiated in real-time (Hintz, 2018; Somer, 2019). By decoding the psychological architecture of this specific discourse, we can gain insight into how non-Western digital publics process complex humanitarian crises. This approach might move the field beyond its traditional focus on US-centric data, offering a more pluralistic understanding of digital political psychology.

Existing literature relies heavily on qualitative analysis of digital discourse (e.g., Kuntsman & Stein, 2015; Siapera et al., 2015). This study contributes to the field by applying computational methods, namely Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) and Narrative Arc analysis. We aim to empirically measure the emotional and cognitive signatures of Pro-Palestinian, pro-Israel, and Neutral stances. To address this gap, this study poses the primary research question of how ideological stances regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict manifest in the cognitive, emotional, and narrative structures of Turkish digital discourse. Based on this inquiry, we test three specific predictions. First, we hypothesized that pro-Israel discourse would be characterized by a detached, high-analytic cognitive style and security-focused language. Conversely, we expected pro-Palestinian discourse to exhibit higher emotional intensity, marked by sadness and moral outrage, alongside social confidence. Finally, we anticipated that the Neutral/Türkiye-first discourse would display higher authenticity, but a negative emotional tone directed at domestic issues, specifically economic anxiety.

## Literature Review

### Digital Polarization and Affect

Online political discourse is increasingly defined by affective polarization (Törnberg, 2022; Yarchi et al., 2021). This concept refers to the tendency to view opposing groups with emotional hostility rather than mere disagreement (Iyengar et al., 2019). This phenomenon is not unique to the Middle East. Similar dynamics have been extensively documented regarding the rise of right-wing populism in the EU and the US. In these contexts, digital ecosystems amplify "us vs. them" narratives and emotional volatility (Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Wodak, 2015). Digital affordances encourage "participatory moralization," in which global events are framed in existential or identity-based terms. While computational studies have examined conflict dynamics in Western contexts, such as the weaponization of

social media in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Zeit-zoff, 2017), the specific psycholinguistic landscape of Turkish forums remains underexplored. In the Turkish context, this often manifests as a clash between humanitarian narratives, which emphasize victimhood, and security narratives, which emphasize threat.

### The Turkish Context

Türkiye's hybrid political identity creates a complex discursive environment. The Israel-Palestine conflict serves as a primary marker in Turkish political discourse. As observed in global trends, political actors often frame international conflicts through distinct moral lenses (Wodak, 2015). In Türkiye, the traditional conservative/Islamist block has historically championed the Palestinian cause as a core component of national identity. This stance positions Türkiye as a central defender of the oppressed against Western imperialism (Yabancı, 2018). Consequently, this narrative frames the conflict not merely as a geopolitical dispute but as a religious and moral obligation, reflecting a genuine solidarity with the region.

Conversely, a growing secular-nationalist segment approaches the issue through a reactive lens (Aytürk & Esen, 2022; Uzer, 2016). Recent scholarship on Turkish identity indicates a shift toward "defensive nationalism," triggered by the refugee crisis and economic instability (Hintz, 2018). This demographic, often represented by the "Türkiye-first" discourse, exhibits skepticism toward both Israeli policies and Arab political actors. Unlike the solidarity found in the Islamist bloc, this group views the conflict through the lens of *realpolitik* (a pragmatic approach prioritizing power and material factors over ethical premises) and isolationism. They reject entanglements in Middle Eastern affairs to prioritize national interests (Kalaycıoğlu & Çarkoğlu, 2021; Kirişçi, 2017). Understanding these nuances requires moving beyond simple "pro vs. anti" dichotomies to analyze the deeper motivations, such as moral outrage or defensive nationalism, that underlie these stances.

### Theoretical Frameworks: Social Identity and Moral Foundations

To interpret the linguistic patterns of polarization, this study draws on two primary theoretical frameworks: Social Identity Theory and Moral Foundations Theory. Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from perceived membership in relevant social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the digital realm, this manifests as "cyber-balkanization," a phenomenon in which the internet fractures into isolated, ideologically homogeneous subgroups that actively avoid exposure to dissenting views (Van Alstyne & Brynjolfsson, 2005). Here, users do not simply exchange information but actively perform their group identity to signal loyalty to the "ingroup" and hostility toward the "outgroup." This performance is often regulated by the "Online Disinhibition Effect" (Suler, 2004). The anonymity and invisibility of digital platforms lower the psychological cost of aggression. This allows users to express hostile sentiments—such as the dehumanization of political opponents—that they would typically suppress in face-to-face interactions.

Complementing this is Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), which argues that political ideology is driven by intuitive, pre-cognitive moral matrices (Haidt, 2012). Research suggests that different political tribes rely on distinct moral languages. For instance, progressive narratives often prioritize the "Care/Harm" foundation, focusing on victims and suffering. In contrast, conservative or nationalist narratives tend to prioritize "Authority/Subversion" and "Loyalty/Betrayal," focusing on security, borders, and state integrity. By mapping these theoretical foundations onto the LIWC-22 dictionary, we can empirically test whether linguistic divergences in the Turkish context stem from deep-seated psychological differences.

## Computational Approaches to Political Psychology

The LIWC-22 framework (Boyd et al., 2022) has been widely used to quantitatively link word usage to psychological states. When integrated with Moral Foundations Theory, this computational approach helps identify the distinct linguistic footprints of different political orientations. For instance, studies show that conservative discourse often relies on language related to "security," "authority," and the "ingroup," while liberal discourse frequently highlights "harm," "care," and "fairness" (Haidt, 2012; Sterling et al., 2020). Therefore, linguistic analysis serves as a valuable tool for reflecting, rather than definitively explaining the underlying moral concerns, such as threat sensitivity versus empathy, associated with these stances. By applying this framework to Turkish text (Çarkoğlu & Yıldırım, 2024), we aim to uncover whether these universal ideological divides manifest in distinct cognitive and narrative structures within the specific context of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

## Methods

### Platform Description

Ekşi Sözlük (Sour Dictionary) is a collaborative hypertext dictionary founded in 1999. It serves as a living archive of Turkish internet culture and political thought. Functionally, it resembles Reddit, relying on user-generated content and community moderation. However, unlike Reddit's fragmented subreddit structure, Ekşi Sözlük features a unified interface where all users interact within a single topic thread. Users, referred to as authors, contribute definitions to topics, creating long-form threads that allow for a deeper linguistic analysis of argumentation and narrative structure compared to micro-blogging platforms. While Ekşi Sözlük represents a specific demographic (predominantly younger, urban, and digitally literate), it functions as an influential 'opinion-making' platform in Türkiye. Therefore, this study does not claim to represent

the entire Turkish population; rather, it aims to decode the psychological constructs of highly active digital publics who shape online political discourse.

### Data Collection and Sampling Strategy

Unlike automated scraping methods that may capture irrelevant noise, this study employed a purposive manual sampling strategy. The initial data pool consisted of 1,726 entries drawn from three high-traffic threads. To ensure clear ideological framing, we selected threads based on their explicit titles.

The threads were purposely selected from distinct time periods (2014, 2021, and 2024) to capture the "peak salience" of each specific ideological stance. Since the Israel-Palestine conflict is cyclical, different facets of Turkish public opinion crystallized at different historical junctures. The pro-Israel security narrative was most distinct and vocal during the 2014–2017 period (Operation Protective Edge and its aftermath). The "Türkiye-first" isolationist stance surged in 2021, coinciding with Türkiye's domestic refugee crisis. Finally, the humanitarian/pro-Palestinian discourse reached its highest intensity during the 2024 escalation. Therefore, rather than restricting the data to a single timeframe, which might dilute the representation of specific stances, we prioritized ideological purity by sampling the timeframe where each discourse was most dominant.

The inclusion of data from 2014, 2021, and 2024 does not aim to track a linear evolution of the conflict. The aim is to capture the consistent psycholinguistic architecture of ideological stances during peak crisis moments. By aggregating these periods, the study prioritizes the 'ideological signature' over specific historical variables, ensuring a robust sample size for each stance across recurring patterns of conflict.

The final dataset comprises three distinct threads selected to represent the primary ideological fault lines. For the pro-Palestinian/Humanitarian perspective, we analyzed the thread titled "Filistin'de yaşananların kimseyi çıldırtmıyor oluşu" (The fact that what is happening in Palestine drives

no one crazy), originating from June 2024. This specific title was chosen as it explicitly signals the high level of emotional distress and moral outrage characteristic of this group. To capture the pro-Israel/Security perspective, we selected the thread "İsrail'in haklı olduğu gerçeği" (The fact that Israel is right), covering the 2014–2017 period. Unlike the emotional appeal of the former, this title frames the discourse through a lens of rational justification and truth-claiming. Finally, representing the Neutral/Türkiye-first stance, the sample includes "Filistin benim meselem değil" (Palestine is not my issue) from May 2021. This title serves as a definitive marker of the isolationist "firewall," explicitly delineating a boundary of disengagement from Middle Eastern affairs.

From this pool, we selected the first 200 entries from each thread, in chronological order, to prevent selection bias. We implemented a manual stance verification process. Digital threads often contain counter-arguments; therefore, entries were not automatically assigned based on the thread title alone. Instead, each entry was individually read and categorized into the appropriate stance corpus to ensure dataset purity. Regarding validity, Ekşi Sözlük's rigorous "author approval queue" (the "çaylak" system) serves as a structural barrier against automated bot activity. Additionally, the manual reading process acted as a final qualitative filter, ensuring that all 600 analyzed entries were coherent, human-generated narratives.

Following the collection, the translation was conducted using an AI-assisted framework powered by GPT-4 to maintain the semantic integrity of the source text. To ensure accuracy, the first author performed a manual post-editing line by line. This "human-in-the-loop" approach ensured that culturally specific idioms were accurately mapped to the psychometric categories of the LIWC-22 English dictionary without semantic loss.

## Measures

We employed the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC-22) software for psychometric analy-

sis. Originally developed by Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan, and Blackburn (2015), this tool is widely recognized as a gold standard in computational linguistics for linking word usage to psychological states (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). We specifically analyzed the four "summary variables" to capture the overarching psychological profile. Analytic Thinking assesses the degree of formal, logical, and hierarchical processing versus intuitive thinking. Clout measures relative social status, confidence, and leadership. Authenticity reflects the level of honest, personal disclosure and vulnerability. Emotional Tone provides a sentiment metric ranging from highly negative (0) to highly positive (100). In addition to these summary variables, we analyzed specific categories for Affect (Anger, Anxiety, Sadness) and Personal Concerns (Money, Work) to detect thematic priorities. Furthermore, we used Narrative Arc Analysis to map the emotional progression of the entries, and Word Frequency Analysis to identify unique lexical markers for each group.

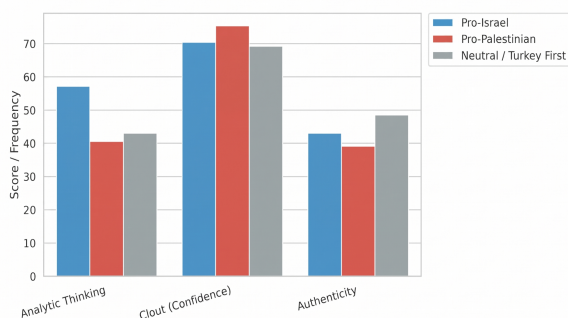
## Findings

The computational analysis revealed distinct psycholinguistic profiles across the three stance groups. This supports the hypothesis that ideology shapes cognitive and emotional processing.

## Psychometric Summary Variables (The "Big Four")

Consistent with the LIWC-22 framework, we analyzed the four standardized summary variables to capture the overarching psychological fingerprints of the groups. To ensure clarity, we define these measures as follows: Analytic Thinking reflects the spectrum from narrative, experiential thinking (low scores) to formal, logical restructuring of information (high scores). Clout measures relative social status, ranging from tentative, humble language to high confidence and leadership. Authenticity captures the level of honest, personal disclosure, distinguishing between guarded expression and unfiltered vulnerability. Finally, Emotional Tone provides a sentiment metric, where scores below

50 indicate increasingly negative affect. While formal statistical significance testing was not applicable due to the aggregated nature of the corpus analysis, the magnitude of the differences reveals distinct linguistic architectures, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Comparison of Cognitive and Social Processing Styles (Analytic Thinking, Clout, Authenticity) Across Stance Groups.**

**Analytic Thinking:** As predicted, it was shown that the group supporting Israel had the highest scores in Analytic Thinking ( $M = 57.15$ ), which differed from that of the pro-Palestinian group ( $M = 40.56$ ), implying that there is an operative need in pro-Israel rhetoric to formally and logically restructure information in a way that uses historical explanations and security procedures, whereas in the pro-Palestinian group there is an additive effect indicating an experiential cognitive method that concentrates on the “here-and-now” of the humanitarian situation, rather than using abstract definitions of policy.

**Clout (Social Status/Confidence):** The pro-Palestinian entries had the highest Clout ( $M = 75.32$ ), exceeding those of the pro-Israel ( $M = 70.39$ ) and Neutral ( $M = 69.21$ ) groups. A high Clout value often correlates with feelings of confidence and social superiority. In this scenario, it is an indicator that pro-Palestinian page fans communicate from a stance of “moral authority” and unity despite being on the side of the suffering populace.

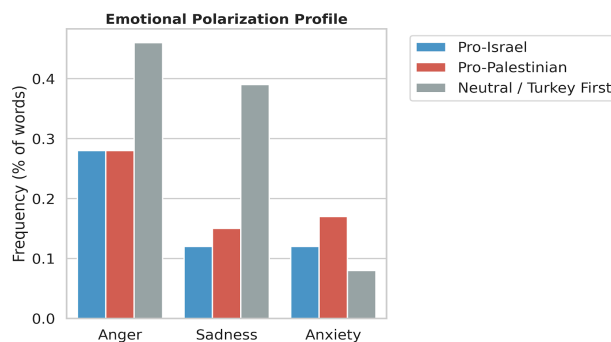
**Authenticity:** The Neutral/Türkiye-first group had the highest mean score in Authenticity ( $M = 48.52$ ), while the pro-Palestinian group had the lowest

mean score ( $M = 39.13$ ). It suggests that neutral consumers are more inclined to share their raw experiences, which include gripes about the economy. Perhaps polarized groups consume more scripted political discourse.

**Emotional Tone:** Each of these groups had substantially low scores on Emotional Tone (Range: 3.58 – 6.10 on a scale of 100). As classified in LIWC, low Tone scores do not indicate low arousal, but rather high levels of negative emotion. Scores below 50 indicate a negative emotional tone, and single-digit scores highlight the extreme intensity of this negativity in Turkish cyberspace. This further implies that across all analyzed stances—whether pro-Palestinian, pro-Israel, or Neutral—the digital discourse surrounding this conflict in Türkiye overflows with intense negativity.

### Emotional Profiling (Affective Polarization)

Beyond general tone, specific emotional categories revealed divergences.



**Figure 2. Emotional Polarization Profile: Frequency of Anger, Sadness, and Anxiety Terms by Group.**

**Pro-Palestinian:** This group had particular vulnerabilities: levels of Sadness were at ( $M = 0.15$ ), and those of Anxiety were at ( $M = 0.17$ ). While sadness was expressed, it was often experienced alongside high levels of moral outrage.

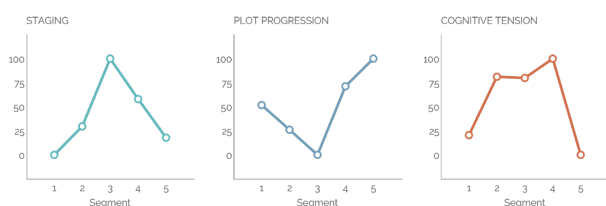
**Pro-Israel:** In this corner, pro-Israel postings showed higher levels of Anger ( $M = 0.28$ ). Again, this is consistent with pro-Palestinian levels of anger but with an opposite orientation. A “security”

narrative is at play here, where affect is fueled by response to threats.

**Neutral/Türkiye-First:** Although this group expressed less intense emotions for the conflict per se, their Negative Emotion indicators were high ( $M = 0.71$ ). From the personal concern analysis, one finds the reason for the negative feeling. In the Neutral/Türkiye-First group, words like Money ( $M = 1.20$ ) and Work ( $M = 2.02$ ) have been used more frequently than in other groups. The implication here is that their frustrated emotions might have been channeled into their economic and domestic life.

### Narrative Arc and Structure

The Narrative Arc analysis uncovered distinct storytelling structures that differentiate how groups frame the conflict over time. Rather than presenting separate, isolated graphs for each stance group, Figure 3 provides a composite visual that juxtaposes the primary narrative trajectories of all three groups. This comparative layout was specifically selected to prevent redundancy and to facilitate a direct visual contrast, allowing readers to clearly observe how the groups' emotional progressions uniquely diverge across the five narrative segments.



**Figure 3. Comparative Narrative Arc Trajectories of the Three Stance Groups.** This composite figure illustrates the distinct emotional progression for each group across five segments to enable direct visual comparison. (Left panel/Green line = pro-Israel [Justification/Resolution Arc]; Middle panel/Blue line = pro-Palestinian [Tragedy/Crisis Arc]; Right panel/Orange line = Neutral/Türkiye-first [Resignation Arc]).

**The "Justification" Arc (Pro-Israel):** These narratives typically exhibit a "problem-solution" structure. They often begin with a negative event (the

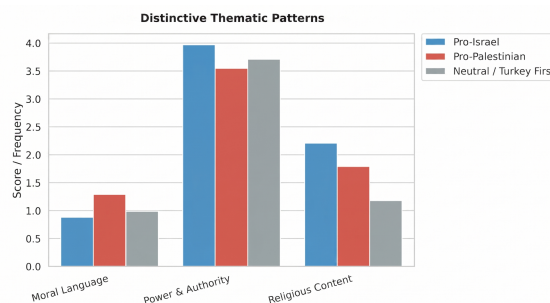
initial attack) but move toward a more positive or neutral resolution (e.g., the narrative moves from the perception of a threat, to the taking of action, and concludes with the restoration of security). This reflects a cognitive effort to rationalize the conflict and restore a sense of order.

**The "Tragedy" Arc (Pro-Palestinian):** Corresponding to the emotional arcs modeled in computational sentiment analysis (Reagan et al., 2016), these entries typically follow a steady emotional decline without recovery. The sentiment starts negative and deepens, reflecting a continuous witnessing of trauma (Crisis without Resolution). Unlike the pro-Israel narrative arc, this trajectory lacks a positive resolution or a return to systemic equilibrium. Instead, the narrative serves as a testament to ongoing suffering.

**The "Resignation" Flatline (Neutral):** The narrative arc for the neutral group is notably flatter, indicating a lack of dramatic engagement. The story is not about the conflict's progression but rather a static stance of rejection. This might indicate an emotional firewall against the events.

### Lexical and Thematic Patterns

Word frequency analysis highlights the divergent framing of the conflict. However, a cross-category comparison reveals a shared discursive reliance on Power and Authority vocabulary across all groups, overshadowing purely Moral terminology.



**Figure 4. Distinctive Thematic Frames: Usage of Moral, Power-related, and Religious Vocabulary.**

Frequency analysis ensures that there is a universal predominance of Power discourse, in that all groups score very highly on 'Power' words than

'Moral' words. This implies that, in the Turkish context, a conflict is essentially understood as an ideological struggle for dominance, domination, and authority. In particular, the entries under the thread "İsrail'in haklı olduğu gerçeği" (The fact that Israel is right), which prioritize security narratives, have the highest Power word density ( $M = 3.97$ ), frequently utilizing terms such as 'terror,' 'Hamas,' and 'control.

Furthermore, despite the high frequency of religious terms, our qualitative observations of the dataset suggest they do not reflect genuine religious devotion. Instead, words like 'Islamist,' 'Sharia,' and 'Jihad' may function as analytic identity markers to frame the conflict as a global war. On the other hand, regarding the pro-Palestinian group, which addresses victimhood as opposed to oppression, even though that group also has the highest score in Moral vocabulary with words such as 'massacre' and 'baby,' it is still less emphasized than their Power vocabulary. This might imply that their discourse is double-layered. The group might have employed moral words to appeal to conscience and primarily leveraged powerful words to point out power imbalances, or what is referred to as 'oppressor.'

The last is the Neutral group, which is economically realistic and is characterized by self-referential or economic words (such as 'refugee,' 'economy,' and 'interest'). For them, 'Power' might not be a referent to warfare but to national strength and economic existence.

### General Lexical Trends

A general lexical analysis of the corpus reveals that the discourse across all groups is heavily anchored by proper nouns identifying the primary actors (Israel, Palestine, Türkiye, Jews, Arabs) and conflict-related terms (War, Land, State). Additionally, the high frequency of the term "Children" highlights the humanitarian dimension present in the general consciousness. This might suggest that, while the framing differs across groups, the core vocabulary remains centered on these key actors, creating a shared yet contested linguistic ground.

### Discussion

This study demonstrates that the Israel-Palestine conflict in the Turkish digital sphere is not merely a political debate regarding foreign policy. Rather, it represents a collision of distinct psychological realities. Our findings indicate that ideological stance may fundamentally alter how people process information, construct narratives, and experience emotions.

The inherent polarization within the selected thread titles may reflect the pre-existing fractured nature of the discourse. However, our findings go beyond simple negativity by revealing the distinctive cognitive styles (e.g., Analytic vs. Authentic) that differentiate these groups. Our findings suggest that even within a polarized environment, psychological motivations may remain ideologically unique.

### Cognitive Architectures: System Justification vs. Moral Outrage

Instead of a unified public sphere, our findings reveal three divergent psychological architectures that align with established frameworks in political psychology.

First, the pro-Israel group relies heavily on "cold cognition," evidenced by their high Analytic scores ( $M = 57.15$ ). This finding aligns closely with Moral Foundations Theory, suggesting a prioritization of "authority" and "in-group" loyalty to maintain social order, rather than focusing on the "harm/care" foundation. Rather than engaging with the visceral reality of human suffering, this group employs a bureaucratic, security-focused language. This might reflect a psychological strategy of suppressing empathy for the out-group, a dynamic consistent with Social Identity Theory. By focusing on "state security," "borders," and "protocols," they reinforce rigid intergroup boundaries and effectively dehumanize the victims. This cognitive distance allows them to prioritize geopolitical order over humanitarian concerns, framing the conflict as a necessary, albeit unfortunate, restoration of stability.

In contrast, the pro-Palestinian stance is defined by Moral Agency and Collective Solidarity. The high Clout score ( $M = 75.32$ ) might suggest that this stance is primarily about power. Unlike the passive victimhood often associated with humanitarian appeals, these users are more likely to position themselves as active defenders of the oppressed. This might construct a collective identity rooted in ethical superiority. The lower analytic scores here point to a "hot cognition" style where narrative and emotion take precedence over formal logic. This mirrors findings in moral psychology where "care/harm" foundations trigger immediate, visceral reactions that bypass bureaucratic reasoning.

The notably high Clout score within the pro-Palestinian discourse ( $M = 75.32$ ) requires theoretical nuance. Although Clout typically indicates social dominance, its elevation in this dataset should not be mistaken for tangible structural power. Instead, the specific linguistic patterns inflating this metric—such as the heavy reliance on collective first-person pronouns, forceful declarations, and direct confrontation of opponents—align perfectly with the rhetoric of moral advocacy and witnessing. Recognizing this divergence between positional authority and linguistic assertiveness is essential when applying the Clout metric to politically unbalanced contexts.

### **The "Secular-Nationalist Firewall": A New Form of Isolationism**

A novel contribution of this study is the identification of the distinct Neutral/Türkiye-first profile. The literature on political neutrality often characterizes it as passive disengagement or a lack of interest. However, our results contradict this. This group exhibits a highly active, albeit exclusionary, psychological stance.

The profile, characterized by high Authenticity ( $M = 48.52$ ) coupled with high Negative Emotion, reveals a stance of "reactive nationalism." Their negativity is not directed at the war itself but at the perceived imposition of the conflict on their own

lives. The strong association between conflict-related terms and economic vocabulary (e.g., "economy," "refugee," "money") suggests the construction of a "nationalist firewall."

This nationalist firewall operates as a psychological defense mechanism. In a period of domestic economic instability, the trauma of the "Other" (Palestinians or Israelis) is perceived not as a tragedy to be mourned, but as a threat to the resources of the "Self" (the Turkish nation). By reframing the conflict as a burden, these users might have psychologically insulated themselves from the moral trauma of the region. This suggests that in the Turkish context, isolationism is not driven by geopolitical strategy, but by "affective fatigue" and domestic anxiety.

### **Comparative Implications for Digital Polarization**

These findings offer a nuanced perspective on digital polarization that differs from Western contexts. In the US and EU, polarization is often modeled as a binary clash (Liberal vs. Conservative) over shared topics. In Türkiye, however, we observe a phenomenon of "cognitive incommensurability" (drawing upon Kuhn, 1962; Haidt, 2012). By this concept, we refer to a profound communicative breakdown in which opposing groups do not merely disagree over specific facts or policies, but rather process reality through fundamentally incompatible psychological architectures. Because they lack a shared cognitive ground for debate, their discourses cannot meaningfully intersect. Specifically, one group operates through 'cold cognition' (an analytical, logic-driven framework focused on geopolitical security (Fiske & Taylor, 2013) and strategic calculation, akin to *Logos*). In contrast, the other group relies on 'hot cognition' (an emotionally aroused, intuition-driven framework focused on moral outrage and human suffering (Lodge & Taber, 2013), akin to *Pathos*). Consequently, these two distinct psychological architectures cannot be evaluated against the same standard.

The stark difference in cognitive styles, specifically between the Analytic processing of pro-Israel

groups and the Narrative processing of pro-Palestinian groups, implies that these factions lack a shared cognitive ground. They are primarily processing reality through fundamentally different mechanisms. One group speaks the language of Geopolitics and Security (Logos), while the other speaks the language of Justice and Victimhood (Pathos).

Additionally, the low Emotional Tone plays a critical role in cementing this divide. In psycholinguistics, extremely low tone scores indicate a saturation of negative affect, such as hostility and despair, and a complete absence of buffering positive emotions. This creates a toxic discursive environment where mutual defensiveness prevails. Consequently, these diverging emotional trajectories structurally hinder cross-group empathy. The high negativity might prevent any constructive emotional engagement, tending to lock factions into their respective echo chambers where they reinforce their own cognitive styles rather than meaningfully engaging with the 'Other'.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Even though this research is rich in its findings, it has several limitations. First, Ekşi Sözlük, despite its popularity, is widely recognized as attracting a predominantly urban and educated demographic, which may not fully reflect the broader socio-cultural diversity of the Turkish population. Future research studies can use the same algorithms on a larger platform, such as X (Twitter) or Facebook.

Second, our dataset is based on text analysis. Though LIWC-22 is a robust analysis method, it fails to accurately identify sarcasm or ironic comments, a common feature of Turkish internet humor. Future studies might incorporate algorithms for ironic discourse in Turkish-language sentiment analysis.

Third, a methodological limitation involves the use of AI-assisted translation (via GPT-4) prior to LIWC-22 analysis. While LIWC-22's English dictionary is widely considered the gold standard for psycholinguistic evaluation, translating socio-cultural

nuances from Turkish to English may introduce minor semantic shifts. To mitigate this risk, a manual verification process was conducted by the researchers to ensure that the emotional and cognitive valence of the original Turkish entries was preserved in the translated outputs.

Fourth, the adversarial nature of digital forums poses a challenge to ideological categorization. While entries were drawn from explicitly titled threads, users on Ekşi Sözlük frequently engage in "flame wars," posting reactive, sarcastic, or contrarian counter-arguments under opposing titles out of anger. Although a manual verification process was employed in this study to filter out such noise and ensure corpus purity, the highly interactive and emotionally charged nature of the platform means that absolute ideological homogeneity within any single thread is difficult to perfectly guarantee.

Lastly, because the data reflect discussions collected within a specific time frame (focusing on "peak" points in the ongoing crisis), the findings should be interpreted as context-specific rather than stable over time. Nevertheless, the value of this computational psycholinguistic approach lies in its ability to make the otherwise invisible psychological mechanisms of political discourse visible.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to unravel the "psychological architecture" of the discourse conflict surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Türkiye. Using purposive sampling and AI-assisted translation (via OpenAI's ChatGPT), followed by manual verification by the researchers, we conducted a high-fidelity content analysis of the respective ideological strands on Ekşi Sözlük. The findings outline three different kinds of "psychological realities." First, in the "pro-Israel group," there is "cold rationality"; second, in the "pro-Palestinian group," there is "moral witness"; and, finally, in the "Neutral/Türkiye-first group," there is "genuine, economic isolationism."

The implications of such findings are immense in the realm of political polarization in the era of the

digital age. The differences in the narratives indicate that the dialogue between the two groups is hampered by incompatibilities in how they construct reality. This study highlights the importance of computational psycholinguistics in political science and psychology. This study should be pursued in the future with larger longitudinal datasets to understand changes in these profiles during the de-escalation stages of the conflict.

## Declarations

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval:** This study does not require ethics committee approval.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization: Author 1 (30%), Author 2 (70%); Data curation: Author 1 (100%), Author 2 (0%); Investigation/Analysis/Validation: Author 1 (80%), Author 2 (20%); Writing—original draft: Author 1 (90%), Author 2 (10%); Writing—review and editing: Author 1 (10%), Author 2 (90%).

**AI Disclosure:** During the preparation of this work, the author utilized OpenAI's ChatGPT (GPT-4) for two specific purposes. First, the tool was used to translate the Turkish entries into English, ensuring compatibility with the LIWC-22 psychometric dictionary. Second, it assisted in language editing to improve the grammatical clarity and academic flow of the manuscript. After using this tool, the author performed a manual review and edited the content as needed. The author takes full responsibility for the content of the publication. The LIWC-22 software was employed solely as a quantitative analysis instrument.

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