
VIEWER'S EMOTIONS ON RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT REPORT BY FOX NEWS AND HINDUSTAN TIMES CHANNEL

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine viewers' emotional responses to the Russia-Ukraine conflict as expressed in YouTube comments on news reports by Fox News and Hindustan Times. Using Martin & White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, specifically the affect subsystem, the study analyzed how viewers expressed emotions such as happiness, unhappiness, security, insecurity, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, inclination, and disinclination. The findings revealed the predominance of negative sentiments, especially unhappiness, reflecting outrage and moral condemnation of Russia's military actions, including the attack on the children's hospital. Support for Ukraine was evident through expressions of solidarity and calls for international intervention. Meanwhile, pro-Russian narratives are often dismissed as propaganda. This research examines how internet debates have become more heated and divided due to global political conflicts. Wars are fought not only on the ground, but also in the hearts and minds of internet users.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media has grown tremendously and become a major channel of information exchange around the world. Over the past decade, these platforms have evolved from rudimentary communication tools to sophisticated ecosystems that have come to influence discourse in a variety of fields, including business, entertainment, science, crisis response, and even the political landscape (Talukder, 2023). This development is driven by the digital revolution, which is transforming the manner in which individuals consume and respond to information. On a global scale, social media has demonstrated its preeminence as the predominant means of communication in the contemporary era. This digital revolution has also transformed traditional news media, with print newspapers transitioning to online formats that can be accessed via smartphones and other devices. People primarily rely on media platforms to access news and information (Nugra Heni & Herry Chandra, n.d.). In contrast to the frequently unverified content that proliferates on social media platforms, reputable news media

maintain their relevance by adhering to objective reporting standards. In a globalized and rapidly evolving online mass media landscape, the role of online mass media in delivering information to the public is increasing, significantly impacting the way people perceive the world around them (Badklang, 2022). Online media has the capacity to democratize information production, thereby expediting the dissemination of news. Online media exerts a significant influence on public opinion regarding global conflicts, exerting both positive and negative effects (Wolfsfeld, 2017). However, this shift also introduces potential risks, including the propagation of misinformation and the exacerbation of bias. To mitigate these challenges, responsible news outlets prioritize factual data that can be independently verified for accuracy, ensuring both speed and reliability in their reporting. Now that the news is public, it has sparked mixed reactions and debates in society (Daniarsa & Mulatsih, 2020). These responses reflect long standing ideological tensions, putting policymakers under pressure to respond to public concerns. Trusted news media strive to maintain objectivity by presenting clear facts. However, when reporting on political issues, their ideological viewpoints can still influence their reporting.

The ideological nature of political news coverage is evident in the manner in which media institutions frame events, reflecting their institutional biases and audience expectations. As time has passed, the relationship between politics, communication, and the media has become increasingly intertwined (Asad et al., 2021). This dynamic has been further amplified by the rapid evolution of digital technologies, which have revolutionized information dissemination. In the contemporary era, mobile devices have become pivotal conduits for the expeditious consumption of news, particularly through social networks. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube have been shown to facilitate expedited and extensive exchanges of information (Chaerunnisah, 2023). With technological advancements, people can access information quickly and easily, making smartphones essential tools for staying informed via social media.

In recent global crises, digital platforms have played a particularly prominent role in shaping access to information. One such example is the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has been a subject of extensive geopolitical debate in contemporary international relations. The Russo-Ukrainian conflict is regarded as one of the most significant and extensively deliberated crises in the domain of international relations in contemporary times. On February 24, 2022, hostilities between the two nations escalated into a full-scale war, triggering intense global scrutiny and widespread public discourse (Syurkani & Muzykant, 2023). The conflict between the two entities commenced in 2015 when Ukraine issued a declaration of its aspiration to accede to the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). The aforementioned statement issued by Ukraine provoked a strong reaction from Vladimir Putin, as the prospect of establishing a NATO base in proximity to Russian borders could potentially compromise the national security interests of Russia (Perbawa, 2022). The tensions mentioned above culminated in the armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia, giving rise to various perspectives that sought to address the underlying causes of the war.

YouTube, as one of the most popular social media platforms with a vast volume of daily uploads, allows users to express diverse opinions. YouTube users are free to comment

and discuss various videos posted through the comment column. A wide variety of YouTube channels address a range of issues, including scientific topics, educational material, and entertainment. Notably, political issues have emerged as a particularly popular topic (Lubis et al., 2021). For instance, the Fox News YouTube channel published a video titled "Russian missile hits children's hospital in Ukraine," prompting substantial global commentary. Similarly, the Hindustan Times posted a video report titled "Russia's biggest attack on Ukraine in months; 40 different missiles fired, child hospital damaged." which also attracted considerable attention from viewers around the world.

On YouTube, the comment section serves as a global platform where users exchange opinions on news videos, creating a dynamic space for public discussion. Researchers can leverage these comment sections as valuable datasets, applying sentiment analysis frameworks to assess diverse viewpoints. By systematically evaluating both positive and negative reactions, scholars and analysts gain deeper insights into how the public perceives critical issues, revealing broader patterns in digital news consumption and audience engagement. This approach not only measures sentiment but also highlights the evolving role of social media as a barometer of public opinion in the digital age.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

In this part, the researcher will explain the theory used to analyze the content of the youtube comment section entitled "Russian Missiles Hit a Children's Hospital in Ukraine," by Fox News YouTube channel and the Hindustan Times' YouTube channel presented a report titled "Russia's Biggest Attack on Ukraine in Months: 40 Missiles Fired, Child Hospital Damaged." as research data. The purpose of this section is to explain the theory to prevent misunderstanding. The theory used in this research is Martin & White (2005) Appraisal theory and several other supporting studies. The main focus of this study is the subsystem of the appraisal theory itself, namely attitude.

1.1.1. Appraisal Theory

Martin and White's Appraisal Theory is part of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework that focuses on language evaluation, specifically how attitudes, emotions and values are expressed in texts. According to Martin & White (2005) appraisal theory focuses on the relationship between language use and interpersonal communication, particularly in expressing and interpreting feelings. Appraisal theory focuses on the relationship between language use and interpersonal communication, particularly in expressing and interpreting feelings. Appraisal theory can be classified into three interrelated categories: attitude, engagement, and graduation. The first category is that of attitude, which including affect, judgments, and appreciation. This analysis will focus on the affect dimension, which is related to the expression of emotions and feelings.

1.1.2. Affect

Affect is a core subsystem within Attitude (alongside *Judgment* and *Appreciation*) that focuses the emotional region that deals with the expression of feelings, opinions, and emotions. According to Martin, J.R. & White (2005) affect is quality, mental, and behavioral processes, modal adjuncts, and nominalizations. Affect can be categorized into four distinct classifications: dis/inclination, un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. "Dis/inclination" is defined as the degree to which the speaker is inclined or disinclined towards something. "Un/happiness" is characterized by feelings of happiness or sadness. "In/security" is associated with feelings of peace and anxiety. Finally, "dis/satisfaction" is associated with feelings of accomplishment and disappointment concerning the activities in which people are engaged. It examines how language expresses emotional responses, whether positive or negative, and how these emotions influence interpersonal dynamics in discourse. Affect helps people to understand how emotions influence communication and interpersonal dynamics in both spoken and written discourse. Figure 1 shows the details of the affect system with its categories.

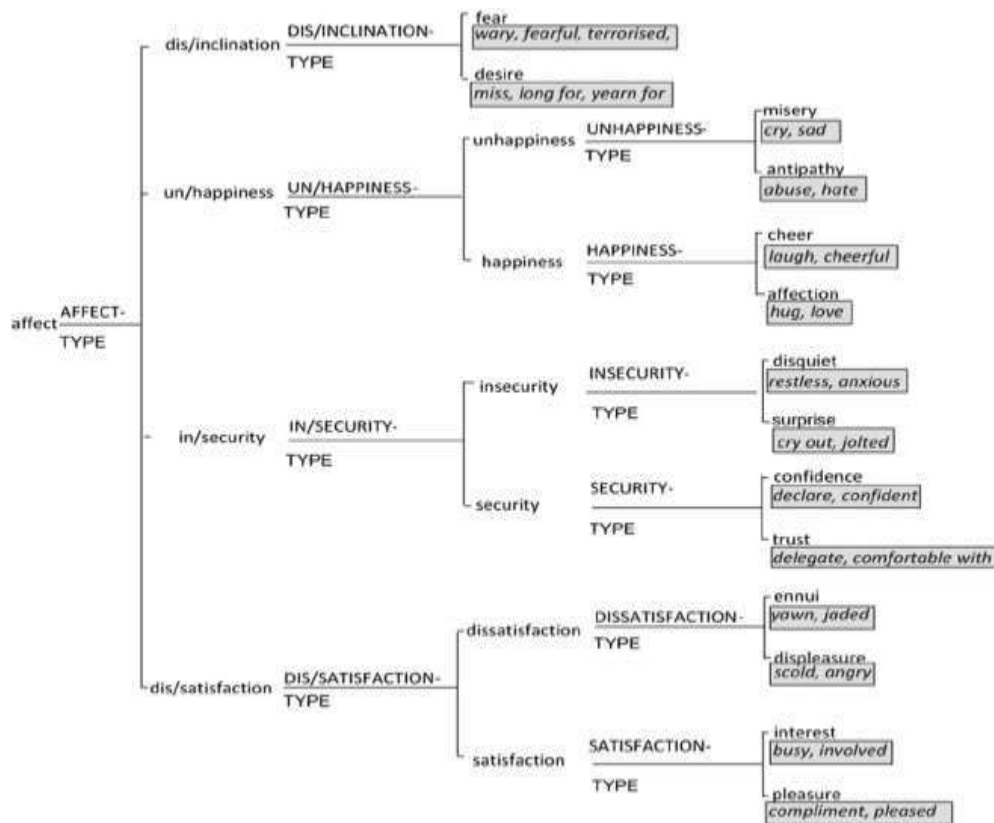


Figure 1. Affect system (Martin & White, 2005:48-51)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Appraisal Theory, developed by Martin, J.R. & White (2005) within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, provides a comprehensive model for analyzing evaluative language in discourse. This theory examines how speakers and writers express attitudes, negotiate interpersonal meanings, and position themselves ideologically through language. The Appraisal framework consists of three main subsystems: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, each offering nuanced tools for discourse analysis. The Attitude system, which forms the focus of this study, comprises three domains: Affect (emotional responses), Judgment (evaluations of character and behavior), and Appreciation (assessments of objects and phenomena). Within Affect, Martin and White identify four key dimensions: un/happiness (feelings of joy/sadness), in/security (anxiety/confidence), dis/satisfaction (fulfillment/frustration), and dis/inclination (desire/reluctance). This subsystem proves particularly valuable for analyzing emotional responses in public discourse, as it captures the spectrum of human affective reactions to events and issues.

Several studies have examined appraisal systems, with some analyzing the entire framework and others focusing on specific components. However, this research only focuses on Youtube videos (Chaerunnisah, 2023), (Alkhayat & Al-Aadili, 2023), interviews (Aljuraywi & Alyousef, 2022), speech acts (Ngoan & Loc, 2020), novels (Sodiq et al., 2022), play performance class (Pasaribu, 2020), debate verbal (Natalia Tarigan et al., 2022), movie (Gong, 2020) and beauty advertisement (Tiani et al., 2017). Research regarding Appraisal language, especially in the YouTube comments column, was also carried out (Lubis et al., 2021) and (Talukder, 2023). Studies on Appraisal framework in discourse analysis have extended to online news platforms, as examined by multiple language researchers such as (Lestari et al., 2023), (Risdianto et al., 2022), (Asril et al., n.d.), and (Fani Prastikawati, 2021). All discussed Appraisals from various newspapers and online topics. This research builds on previous studies of the Attitude system, using existing findings to explore related issues in greater depth. Drawing on earlier work allows the study to explore these issues with greater depth and insight.

Previous studies have demonstrated the framework's effectiveness in examining how speakers and writers express emotions, judgments, and evaluations across various discourse contexts. Such as the study conducted by Cavasso & Taboada (2021) in his research entitled a corpus analysis of online news comments using the appraisal framework. Researchers used appraisal analysis to analyse a corpus of online news comments from the website of the Canadian English-language newspaper The Globe and Mail. The results showed that of the thousand comments, most of the comments were negative and the highly opinionated language to express emotional reactions was judgement and appreciation compared to affect.

In addition, appraisal theory is also used by researchers in assessing political discourse. Like the study conducted by Aljuraywi & Alyousef (2022) in four political

interviews on 60 minutes of Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Leslie Stahl, and Norah O'Donnell during the 2020 presidential election. Researchers use mixed methods in the form of affect, judgement and appreciation. As a result, the researcher revealed that each participant strategised and postured to achieve a specific argumentative goal. Furthermore, on social media Twitter, researcher Yuliyanti (2023) in her article entitled "Rating System on Twitter: Analysis of Attitudes Towards the Case of Alleged Blasphemy of Islam by M Kece" analyses the attitude towards the alleged blasphemy of Islam by M. Kece dominantly expressing Affect. The study concluded that Twitter users expressed their evaluation of M. Kece's actions, particularly his YouTube content, which resulted in him being reported and jailed for blasphemy. This study provides a new perspective by using netizen evaluations as the main source of analysis. Unlike previous studies that generally center on formal narratives (such as mainstream media, political campaigns, or statements from public figures), this study prioritizes a variety of spontaneous responses from netizens as the main focus.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing words and language to analyze and interpret phenomena. Qualitative research seeks to deeply understand the experiences of research subjects such as their behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions through detailed descriptions in a natural context. By employing various naturalistic methods, this approach captures the richness of human experiences, including community life, historical events, behavioral patterns, social dynamics, and relational structures. Rather than relying on numerical data, qualitative research emphasizes narrative expression, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of complex social realities. Data consists of 500 user comments sampled from two news videos published in July 2024, one from Fox News and another from Hindustan Times. This section serves as the primary data source.

This study analyzes the public discourse surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict by examining YouTube viewers' comments on news reports from two media outlets: On July 8, 2024, Fox News published a report on a "Russian Missile Strikes Hits Children's Hospital in Ukraine" while on July 9, 2024, the Hindustan Times published a report on a "Russia's Biggest Attack on Ukraine in Months; 40 Missiles Fired, Child Hospital Damaged". The data was collected by reading and noting the comments that contained aspects of affect and then copying and pasting them. In order to expedite and streamline the analysis process for researchers, the Antcont application was employed to facilitate data analysis. The data was subsequently categorized in accordance with the Appraisal System theory (Martin & White, 2005). The final step in the data analysis process involves the disaggregation of the data into its respective affect sub-categories.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.Total Affect in Hindustan Times Channel

Affect								Total
Un/happiness (+/-)		In/security (+/-)		Dis/satisfaction (+/-)		Dis/inclination (+/-)		
4	42	5	18	17	12	31	19	148

A close examination of the affective language present in YouTube comments pertaining to the Russia-Ukraine conflict reveals a preponderance of negative sentiments, with unhappiness emerging as the predominant theme. The comments section is rife with expressions of profound dismay and ethical distress, as evidenced by statements such as "the attack on the children's hospital was barbaric" and "this is unforgivable genocide." These remarks offer a glimpse into the intense emotional responses evoked by the observed civilian suffering. This research aims to contribute to the extant body of knowledge by examining extreme dissent within comment sections, such as "Zelensky is a puppet of the West" to "Putin is a cruel dictator." Positive sentiments, such as hope for peace or appreciation for humanitarian aid, appear occasionally and are overshadowed by the more dominant negative narratives.

This section presents the results of the data discussion. The data classified from the affective aspects of netizen comments on the youtube channel Hindustan Times are mentioned below.

Excerpt 1

"Happy to hear May almighty God help Russian army i pray in the name of lord jesus Christ Amen hallelujah praise the Lord"

The comment shows the category of happiness through the clear expression of positive emotions. The phrase "Happy to hear" expresses happiness, while religious exclamations such as "hallelujah" reflect joy and gratitude. Prayers for Russian soldiers also express optimistic hope and support. In contrast to the majority of conflict comments, which are dominated by anger, these comments express support for Russia in a positive spirit. The use of religious language reinforced these expressions of happy emotions, creating an interesting contrast to the generally negative tone of the discussion.

Excerpt 2

"Going after children's hospital truly despicable. The Russian evilness is beyond any believes."

The comment can be classified as an expression of affective unhappiness in accordance with Martin & White's theoretical framework. It is replete with indicators of adverse emotions, including but not limited to moral outrage and emotional distress, both of which are commonly associated with the subject's sentiments towards Russia's actions. The employment of the term "Russian evil" to denote the entire Russian entity as inherently malevolent can be regarded as a form of dehumanization.

Excerpt 3

"Nothing says confidence like a little dictator with a comb-over and platform shoes."

This comment falls under security category of affect because it mocks Putin's false sense of confidence. By sarcastically mentioning his "comb-over and platform shoes," the speaker implies that his strongman image is just an act, revealing deep insecurity. Instead of appearing powerful, the description makes him seem vain and weak, undermining his authority. The humor here exposes the gap between Putin's projected confidence and the reality of his insecurities.

Excerpt 4

"Zelensky the coward hides in Poland"

This comment clearly falls into the category of affect insecurity based on Martin & White's theory. It uses the negative label "coward" which not only intends to demean but also creates a narrative of distrust and instability towards the leader. The claim that Zelensky "hides in Poland" further reinforces the impression of insecurity by implying that the president is avoiding responsibility in the midst of a crisis. In the context of war, such comments reflect covert anxiety about the reliability of leadership and the uncertain security situation.

Excerpt 5

"Well done Ukraine! Success is coming"

This comment belongs to the affect satisfaction category as it expresses appreciation and positive expectations. The phrase "Well done" shows direct praise for Ukraine's efforts, while "Success is coming" reflects confidence in future good outcomes. In contrast to the negative tone of most war comments, this phrase is supportive and motivating, making it a clear example of language that exudes satisfaction and optimism.

Excerpt 6

"Zelensky must protect the financial interests of BlackRock."

This comment falls under Dissatisfaction in Affect because it expresses frustration and criticism. By saying Zelensky "must protect the financial interests of BlackRock," the speaker implies he prioritizes corporate gains over his people's welfare. The tone suggests distrust and disappointment, framing Ukraine's leadership as corrupt or misaligned with public needs. Unlike supportive comments, this one uses skepticism to undermine confidence in Zelensky's decisions, highlighting perceived failures rather than successes.

Excerpt 7

"We must stand with Ukraine!". The phrase *"We must stand with Ukraine!".*

This comment shows an urgent call to support Ukraine, using words like "must" and "stand with" to push for collective involvement. Unlike neutral statements, this has an emotional drive it's not just an opinion, but a rallying cry that inspires others to take Ukraine's side.

The tone is proactive and persuasive, making it clear the speaker wants people to commit, not just observe.

Excerpt 8

"The world must stop Putin."

This comment falls under Disinclination in Affect because it expresses strong opposition and a demand for action against Putin. The phrase *"The world must stop Putin"* uses the word *"must"* to show urgency and rejection of Putin's actions, rather than just stating an opinion. Unlike neutral comments, this one pushes for direct intervention it's not just criticism, but a call to actively resist or halt Putin's influence.

Table 2. Total Affect in Fox News Channel

Affect								Total
Un/happiness (+/-)		In/security (+/-)		Dis/satisfaction (+/-)		Dis/inclination (+/-)		
13	52	13	32	5	30	16	24	185

Using Martin and White's theoretical approach to analyze the comments revealed a strong dominance of negative emotions in various aspects. Unhappiness was the predominant response, reflecting frustration and cynicism regarding the discussed issues. Feelings of insecurity were also prevalent, indicating deep concern over perceived threats. Dissatisfaction was nearly universal, suggesting significant disappointment in various parties. The tendency to reject was more prevalent than the tendency to support. This emotional polarization reveals a discussion landscape dominated by tension and confrontation with little room for positive or neutral expressions. These findings underscore how controversial issues tend to trigger intense, negative emotional responses in public discussion spaces.

Excerpt 1

"UAIL Slava Ukraini! Glory to the heroes!"

The comment *"UAIL Slava Ukraini! Glory to the Heroes!"* belongs to the affect category. It expresses strong positive emotions through passionate and proud language, which is why it belongs to the Happiness category. *"Slava Ukraini"* (meaning "Long live Ukraine") is a national slogan with heroic and patriotic connotations. *"Glory to the heroes"* expresses appreciation and happiness for their bravery. Using the flag emoji (UAIL) further reinforces a sense of solidarity and enthusiastic support. This comment conveys support and celebrates the spirit of resistance with an inspiring and uplifting tone, clearly reflecting happiness and other positive emotions.



Excerpt 2

"Russia can't even conquer the territories it claimed it annexed."

This comment clearly reflects unhappiness within the framework of Martin and White's theory as it contains a strong negative emotional charge. The phrase not only conveys facts, but also implies frustration and mockery of Russia's failure through sarcastic word choice, such as the use of the phrase "can't even" which suggests both disbelief and condescension. By emphasizing the contradiction between Russia's annexation claims and its inability to actually take control of the territory, this comment serves as an expression of disappointment and cynicism towards Russia's actions.

Excerpt 3

"Ukraine needs weapons to protect its people."

This comment shows the category of Affect: Security as it expresses a fundamental need for protection and security. It does not simply state a fact, but implicitly acknowledges the threats facing the Ukrainian people while offering solutions to address these vulnerabilities. The use of the word "needs" indicates urgency and a normative imperative, while the phrase "to protect its people" emphasizes the noble purpose of the arms request. In contrast to expressions of insecurity that have a panicked or desperate tone, this comment is constructive by emphasizing active efforts to create security. In the context of the Ukrainian war, this narrative is often used to justify international military assistance, while projecting an image of Ukraine as a party that deserves protection.

Excerpt 4

"If NATO expands, Russia will be destroyed"

this comment falls under affect insecurity because it expresses a deep fear of an existential threat. Using predictive and deterministic language, it describes a worst-case scenario in which NATO expansion is perceived as a direct threat to Russia's survival. The hyperbolic and absolute use of the word "destroyed" demonstrates the intensity of the irrational fear and reflects a worldview of vulnerability and helplessness.

Excerpt 5

"Finally, NATO is united against Russian aggression!"

This comment falls under the category of affect because it expresses satisfaction and relief at the achievement of a long-awaited goal. According to Martin & White's framework, because it conveys satisfaction and relief at achieving a long-awaited goal. The word "Finally" indicates the release of tension after a long process, and the phrase "is united" emphasizes the realization of NATO solidarity. Using positive words such as "united" and exclamation points (!) reinforces the enthusiastic tone and validates this achievement. In the context of the Ukraine–Russia conflict, this comment reflects political satisfaction that NATO has taken a decisive stand. This is in contrast to dissatisfaction when the alliance is perceived as slow to act. Thus, this statement focuses more on satisfaction with the fulfillment of expectations than on general happiness or security, making it a typical example of satisfaction in appraisal analysis.

Excerpt 6

"How is bombing a children's hospital ever justified?"

This comment falls under the category of dissatisfaction in the Affect theory framework (Martin & White) because it expresses a strong emotional rejection of an action. This rhetorical question is not intended to seek an answer, but rather to emphasize that the act of bombing a children's hospital is morally unacceptable. The use of the phrase "children's hospital" highlights the innocent victims, which triggers affective responses such as anger and empathy, while the words "ever justified" indicate absolute rejection-no reason can justify the action. In addition to conveying personal dissatisfaction, this comment also functions as a social critique by implying condemnation of the responsible party, while inviting the audience to feel similar emotions. As such, this comment not only reflects individual dissatisfaction, but also expands it into a collective judgment of injustice.

Excerpt 7

"I agree let's stop Russia and Hamas"

This comment falls under the category of affect inclination as it clearly expresses emotional support and a strong desire to take action. The phrase "I agree" shows unequivocal agreement, while "let's stop" implies a proactive collective call, reflecting an inclination to act against both parties. Unlike dissatisfaction, which focuses on dissatisfaction or protest, this comment emphasizes the urge for positive change. By using the pronoun "let's", the speaker is not only stating a personal position but also trying to rally collective support, turning negative emotions (such as anger towards Russia and Hamas) into a call for action.

Excerpt 8

"Russian bot. Not even trying."

This comment falls under the Affect (Dissinclination) category as it expresses rejection and emotional discomfort towards the commented party. This expression contains a tone of contempt through the use of the term "Russian bot" which is implicitly demeaning by accusing the other party of being a non-genuine account or part of propaganda. The phrase "Not even trying" reinforces the negative emotion dimension by implying frustration and mockery of a perceived non-serious or lazy effort. Such comments often appear in the context of political debates to discredit views perceived as pro-Russian, thus reflecting rejection, discomfort and anger as manifestations of dissinclination.

An analysis of comments utilizing Martin & White's Affect Theory framework reveals that emotional responses to the Russia-Ukraine conflict exhibit pronounced polarization. Expressions of support for Ukraine, such as "Slava Ukraini!" and commendations for NATO unity, are indicative of positive sentiments, including happiness and satisfaction, suggesting a robust endorsement for Ukraine. Conversely, expressions of discontent and rejection emerged in criticisms of Russia, including references to military failures and moral condemnations of attacks on civilians. The comments that have been made in response to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the ongoing conflict in Palestine demonstrate an inclination to take action. The use of the term "Russian bots" can be

interpreted as a manifestation of rejection and distrust of the pro-Russian narrative. This emotional polarization is indicative of profound divisions of opinion and underscores the role that language plays in shaping perceptions, mobilizing support, and discrediting opponents in the context of this intricate geopolitical conflict. This analysis demonstrates that public discourse on war encompasses not only military facts, but also profound emotional dimensions.

5. CONCLUSION

The research revealed that people's emotional responses to the Russia-Ukraine conflict were dominated by negative sentiments, primarily unhappiness, insecurity, and discontent, reflecting anger, fear, and rejection of Russia's actions. The preponderance of commentary from both Fox News and Hindustan Times demonstrated a robust expression of solidarity with Ukraine, characterized by expressions such as "Slava Ukraini!" and a pronounced condemnation of the Russian attacks, particularly the incident at the children's hospital, which was regarded as barbaric. Conversely, pro-Russian narratives are typically in the minority and are frequently discredited as propaganda, as evidenced by remarks attributing the activity to "Russian bots." This phenomenon exemplifies the notion that warfare is not solely confined to physical battlefields; it also manifests in the digital realm, where public sentiment is influenced by media coverage and interactions within the virtual sphere of YouTube comment sections. The findings indicate that geopolitical conflicts are not only strategically valued by the global community, but also morally and emotionally.

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