THE REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF DONALD TRUMP AND KAMALA HARRIS IN THE HEADLINES OF *THE GUARDIAN*: A CORPUS-BASED SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This research examines how political ideologies are portrayed in The Guardian's headlines, focusing on two key U.S. political figures: Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. The study seeks to reveal ideological bias in how these two political leaders are depicted by employing a corpus-based sentiment analysis. A focused collection of headlines was gathered from the Guardian's digital publication during a specific timeframe. Employing sentiment analysis methods and linguistic annotation instruments, the emotional tone and ideological context were analyzed. Results indicate that Trump is mainly depicted with unfavorable sentiment, whereas Harris attracts a more favorable portrayal. These findings enhance our understanding of how media framing may mirror and potentially reinforce ideological viewpoints in political journalism.

Keywords: Political ideology, Donald Trump, Kamala Harris, Sentiment Analysis, The Guardian, Corpus.

Introduction

Ideology is a complex and multifaceted concept encompassing a coherent and systematic set of ideas, values, and beliefs that provide a framework for understanding and interpreting the world (Eagleton, 1991). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, ideology can be defined as a system of ideas and ideals, especially one that is formed based on economic

Additionally, in political theory, ideologies are often seen as frameworks that rationalize and justify social and economic structures (Heywood, 2017). Political ideologies are based on how society should function, how people should be treated equally, and how power should be distributed and addressed in the context of social and economic issues. Different types of ideologies include liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, communism, and fascism. Each of these ideologies has different perspectives and ideas that shape people's political thoughts and influence their actions. Similarly, many political leaders worldwide represent different political ideologies, which contribute to shaping national and global policies. Understanding political ideologies is crucial for analyzing political systems and the motivations behind political actions (Heywood, 2017).

Furthermore, Donald Trump's political ideology is sometimes referred to as Trumpism (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). His populist rhetoric, characterized by direct attacks on media and political elites, appealed to disaffected voters who viewed him as a disruptor of traditional political norms (Frum, 2017). It incorporates ideologies such as right-wing populism, national conservatism, and neo-nationalism and features significant illiberal and authoritarian beliefs (Hopkins & Blyth, 2020). Meanwhile, the political ideology of Kamala Harris represents democratic beliefs and values in her political position and ideological stances. Her political ideology upholds equality, liberty, and justice for all human races in the United States (Vibhishana & Maharani, 2023).

However, the political ideologies of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris are based on different perspectives. Their ideologies will be portrayed differently in distinct media platforms. Media consists of traditional forms like newspapers, television, and radio, and other digital

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platforms like social media, websites, and other services. Media outlets, through their framing and editorial choices, play a crucial role in shaping public perception of political figures and their ideologies (Smith, 2020).

Further studies examine how The Guardian framed Kamala Harris after her confirmation as the Democratic Party's vice-presidential nominee. Using media bias analysis, Johansson finds that The Guardian used more positive language when covering Harris, emphasizing her historic achievement as the first female and Black vice president. In contrast, coverage of Donald Trump was often negative, focusing on controversies and policy failures. The study uses media bias charts, such as Ad Fontes Interactive Media Bias, to track sentiment trends. Headlines about Harris often highlighted her qualifications, whereas Trump was frequently portrayed as divisive or controversial (Johansson, 2024).

The findings will help clarify whether mainstream media coverage fosters balanced political debates or maintains ideological divides. Additionally, by exploring the role of language, sentiment, and framing strategies, this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of media influence on political identity construction. Eventually, this study aims to increase our knowledge of the power of language in shaping political identities and influencing public trust in the media.

Problem Statement

In today's news media, newspapers like The Guardian play a significant role in representing and shaping public perception of political figures and their ideologies, despite their prominent contribution to representing and framing public opinion towards the Donald Trump and Kamala Harris political ideologies during the 2024 election. There is still a gap in how their ideologies are portrayed and influence the public's perspective towards them. This can impact their political position and their democratic process. So, in this research, the researcher will conduct a Corpus-Based sentiment analysis of The Guardian headlines. This analysis will determine the sentiments expressed toward Donald Trump's and Kamala Harris's ideologies. This will recognize how their ideologies are framed and represented by media platforms.

Research Questions

1. How are the political ideologies of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris represented in the headlines of the Guardian and the New York Times?
2. What are the dominant sentiments in the headlines of the Guardian and New York Times about the political ideologies of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris?

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the political ideologies of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris represented in the headlines of The Guardian.
2. To examine the dominant sentiments in the headlines of the Guardian and about the political ideologies of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to determine how Donald Trump's and Kamala Harris's political ideologies are represented in the Guardian's headlines and what sentiments are expressed toward them. Additionally, this study provides valuable implications for political communication, helping policymakers, journalists, and readers better understand the role of emotional framing in shaping public perception and political discourse. Finally, this research can help media consumers become more critically aware of how political figures are represented in the press, encouraging more informed and analytical engagement with news content.

Literature review

Media representation plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and political ideologies. The media center's role in determining public information justifies increased

attention to how the media shapes public knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (Basely & Burgees, 2002). For instance, studies have demonstrated that headlines influence how audiences interpret and remember news, even if they do not read the full article (Ecker et al.,2014).

According to research, media sources often reflect and reinforce the ideological preferences of their audiences, leading to distinct differences in the news consumed by liberals and conservatives (Pew Research Center, 2014). Previous research has been done on newspaper headlines representing Syrian refugees. Understanding the impact of media coverage on political ideologies is essential for fostering a more informed and cohesive public discourse (Stroud, 2011). The effect of media coverage on political ideologies is crucial in promoting a more informed and cohesive public discourse (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). Newspapers not only provide readers with a wide range of news and information but also offer in-depth analysis and investigative reporting that is crucial for an informed citizenry (Lacy & Rosenstein, 2015).

Comparative analysis of media representation focuses on how different newspapers, with varying political leanings, portray the same political figures. Conservative and liberal media outlets tend to highlight the various attributes of political candidates, leading to changing public perceptions (Druckman & Parkin, 2005). For instance, The Guardian, known for its left-leaning stance, and The New York Times, often viewed as having a liberal bias, provide a rich context for examining these differences (Garcia, 2020).

The press often personalizes politics, and editorials regularly appraise the actions of political parties in terms of the performance of their leaders (Conboy, 2006). Donald Trump and Kamala Harris are two prominent political figures with varying ideologies.

Trump's portrayal often emphasizes his populist and nationalist rhetoric, while Kamala Harris is often highlighted for her progressive policies and advocacy for social justice (Clark, 2020). Previous studies have shown that media outlets often frame political ideologies according to their editorial stance (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). These representations can differ significantly between media outlets, reflecting their editorial biases and framing techniques (Taylor & Francis, 2018). Media coverage of politics is a fundamental matter for democracy. Some political elites would have more media coverage than others, depending on their political orientations and the ideological affinities of journalists (van Dalen & van Aslet, 2013). The impact of media framing on political discourse is crucial to understanding the complex relationships between media, public opinion, and political power. Media framing shapes public opinion by reinforcing or challenging pre-existing attitudes. Audiences often adopt the frames presented by media outlets, influencing their views on political figures and policies (Iyengar, 1991).

Corpus-based sentiment analysis is a powerful tool for analyzing a large text dataset to find out the sentiments expressed behind words. Sentiment analysis helps quantify the emotional tone behind words, providing a more objective measure of media bias and representation (Liu, 2012). By analyzing the sentiment and language used in headlines, a corpus-based sentiment analysis approach can tell us about the tones, emotions, and biases present in media coverage of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris.

While significant research has been conducted on how the media represent the different political ideologies of political figures, more comprehensive studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods, such as corpus-based sentiment analysis, are needed. Comparative studies focusing on how the newspaper represents Donald Trump and Kamala Harris's political ideologies remain underexplored. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing a detailed analysis of the representation of their political ideologies in The Guardian.

Methodology Overview

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to examine the representation of political ideology and emotional tone in *The Guardian* headlines concerning Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. It describes the research design, corpus collection, and analytical tools employed for sentiment, emotion, and thematic analysis. Sentiment analysis was conducted using the VADER tool in Orange software, while emotional categorization was based on Robert Plutchik's wheel of emotions. The chapter also explains how thematic analysis was applied to interpret the ideological implications of the identified sentiments and emotions.

Research Design

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitatively, VADER was used to classify headlines as positive, negative, or neutral. Qualitatively, thematic analysis was applied to selected headlines to explore ideological framing and emotional meaning, enabling a comprehensive examination of linguistic patterns and media discourse.

Corpus Collection

A corpus of 772 headlines was collected from *The Guardian* between 1 October and 30 October 2024, focusing on coverage of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris during the election period. Headlines were retrieved from the newspaper's official website using relevant keyword searches. The data were preprocessed by removing punctuation, stop words, and special characters, followed by lemmatization to enhance analytical accuracy. The cleaned dataset was then imported into Orange for analysis.

Corpus Analysis

Sentiment analysis was performed in Orange using the VADER tool, categorizing each headline as positive, negative, or neutral. Emotional analysis was conducted using Plutchik's eight primary emotions: joy, trust, fear, sadness, anticipation, anger, surprise, and disgust. Emotional distributions were visualized through box plots to identify dominant emotional patterns. Keyword extraction and word clouds were used to highlight recurring terms and framing strategies.

To add interpretive depth, thematic analysis was applied across sentiment and emotion categories, revealing recurring themes such as conflict, hope, instability, and public approval. By integrating computational analysis with qualitative interpretation, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how political ideology is emotionally framed in media discourse.

Results and discussion

This chapter presents the results of the sentiment and emotion analysis of *The Guardian* headlines. It outlines overall corpus trends, dominant sentiment categories identified through VADER, and emotional patterns based on Plutchik's emotion wheel. The findings reveal how political ideologies and leadership narratives surrounding Donald Trump and Kamala Harris are framed in media discourse.

Analysis of *The Guardian* Corpus

The corpus consists of 772 headlines published between 1 and 30 October 2024, focusing on Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. Keyword analysis using Orange identified frequent terms such as *Trump, Harris, US, Election, Rally,* and *Voters*, highlighting the media's emphasis on electoral politics and leadership during this period.

Figure 1: Data Table of the Guardian Corpus

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265

JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL (JALT)
Vol.8.No.4 2025

JOURNAL OF APPLIED
LINGUISTICS AND
TESOL
JALT

Figure 2: Data Table of the Guardian Corpus

Dominant sentiments in the Guardian's corpus

The sentiment analysis was conducted using the VADER tool in Orange. The dominant sentiments are shown in the Orange dataset after the study. The highest positive sentiment score observed was (0.519) in the headline "*birth at 20: Jonathan Glazer's magnificent, misunderstood masterpiece*", while the most negative score was (0.572) in the headline "*First thing: Death toll climbs as Florida grieves hurricane Milton's destruction*". Neutral sentiments dominated articles that were more reportive than opinionated.

2. Table for sentiment scores of headlines

Headlines	positive	negative	neutral
Birth at 20: Jonathan Glazer's magnificent, misunderstood masterpiece	0.519	0.156	0.325
First thing: the death toll climbs as Florida grieves Hurricane Milton's destruction	0.00	0.572	0.428
Tim Walz's Midwestern charm boosts Harris- can he help sell her economic vision?	0.519	0.00	0.481

Table 2 presents sentiment scores for selected headlines, revealing varying degrees of positive, negative, and neutral sentiment.

Positive sentiments. The 772 headlines had positive sentiments; approximately 50-100 headlines reflected positive sentiment. Below is the screenshot highlighting some of the headlines with high positive sentiments.
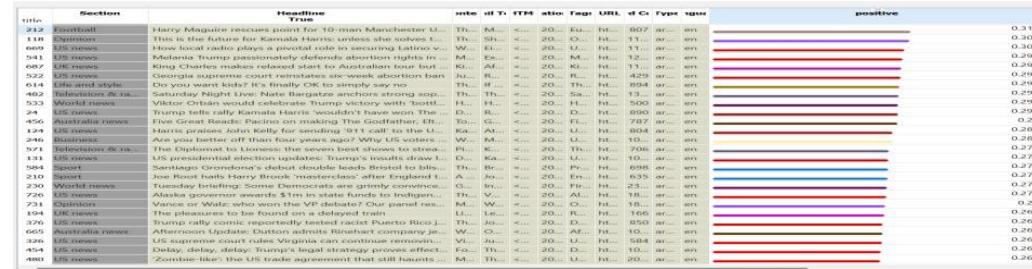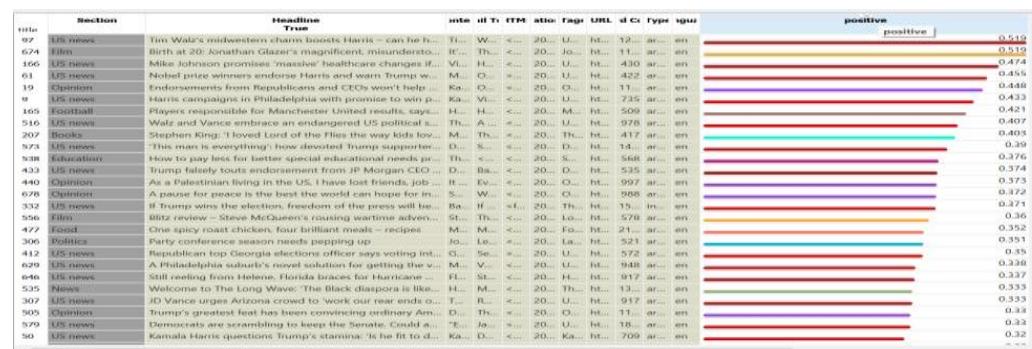
Positive sentiment themes

Theme 1: Empowered leadership and campaign optimism. Headlines like *"Harris campaigns in Philadelphia with promises to win the presidential election"* present confidence and energy for Kamala Harris. The language here conveys ambition, voter engagement, and grassroots momentum, significantly among key Democratic constituencies; this keeps an image of electoral optimism and determination.

Theme 2: Pledges for reforms, future optimism. Headlines such as "*Mike Johnson promises massive healthcare changes if Trump wins"* reflect positive sentiment through future-oriented reform narratives. Framing political discourse policy change and voter hope, healthcare is positioned as a key issue in shaping public confidence and influencing electoral choice.

Theme 3: Scientific and Economic leadership. Harris is constructed in most headlines, including *"Nobel prize winners endorse Harris and warn Trump would endanger the future of science,"* as a legitimate and pro-science leader. Expert endorsements build her credibility and tie her campaign to themes of innovation, economic security, and evidence-based governance.

Theme 4: Progressive Healthcare and Social Support. The headline *"Harris announces plan for Medicare to cover long-term care at home"* frames Harris as compassionate and reformist. The focus on dignity, caregiving, and social welfare reinforces such an image of policymaking that is inclusive and people-centered.

Theme 5: Crisis Leadership and Public Welfare. Headlines like *"Harris says federal aid for hurricane Helene relief is here for the long term"* depict Harris as a reliable, compassionate crisis manager. Emphasizing long-term federal support and cooperation with local authorities acts to reinforce impressions of responsible leadership. Negative feelings: several headlines in the Guardian show negative feelings. The screenshot of the dominant negative sentiments will be found below.

Negative sentiments. Several headlines in the Guardian show the negative sentiments. Below is the screenshot of the dominant negative sentiments.
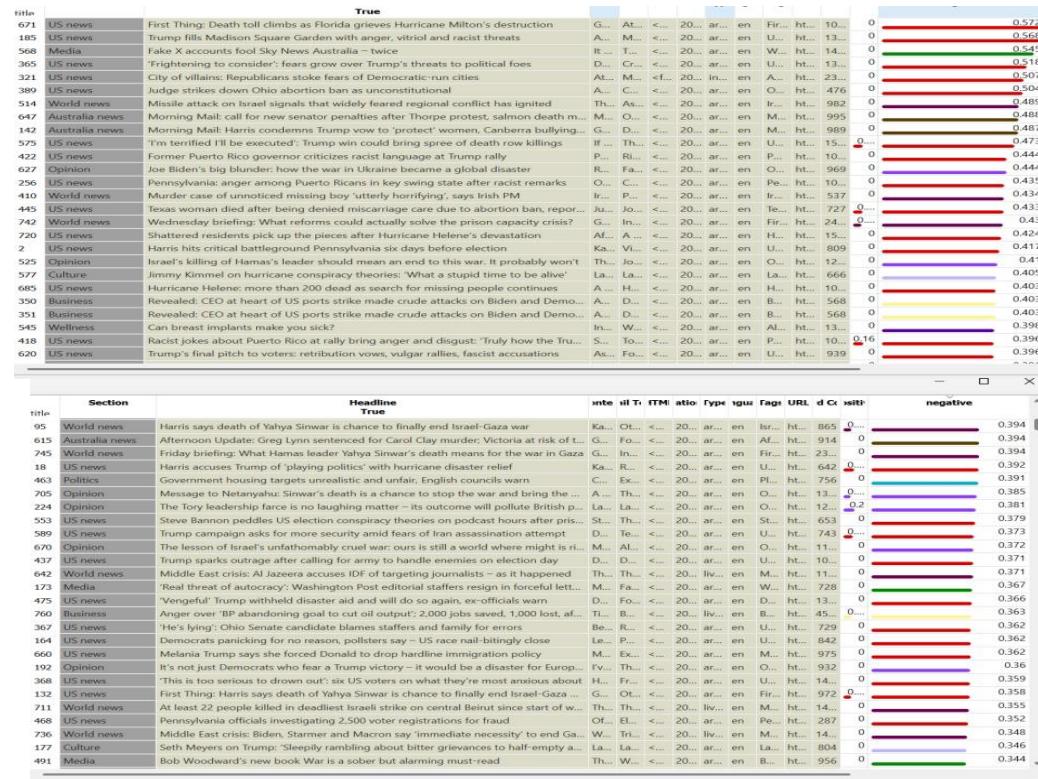
Negative Sentiment Themes

Theme 1: Incitement and Hostile Rhetoric. Media headlines like *"Trump fills Madison Square Garden with anger, vitriol, and racist threats"* show Trump as a leader inciting his supporters with hostility. Inciting rhetoric is evident in this theme with emphasis on emotionally charged words like nativism, exclusion, and fear-based nationalism.

Theme 2: Threats to Democratic Stability.

The headline "*Frightening to consider: fears grow over Trump threats to political foes"* positions Trump as a menace to democracy. The underlying fear is that by talking about striking back, using military action on political adversaries, and disregarding election results, Trump is acquitting himself on behalf of a would-be authoritarian.

Theme 3: Discussion of racially insensitive language. "*Former Puerto Rico Governor Bashes 'Offensive Language Used at Trump Rally,'* Critics Say" is an example of headlines featuring racially insensitive language. This theme communicates Trump's campaign as excluding minorities by comparing it to Harris's inclusive campaigning.

Theme 4: Authoritarian and Divisive Communication. In the article *"Trump's final pitch to voters: retribution vows, vulgar rallies, fascist accusations,"* the former President appears as irrational and extremist. Words such as retribution, vulgar, and fascist are lexical selections that portray Trump as a revenge-driven leader and a radical.

Theme 5: Fear and Extreme Policy Outcomes. The title "*'I'm terrified I'll be executed: Trump win could bring a spree of law, death, killing'*" connects Trump to harsh and unfair policies and practices, including the federal death penalty. These stories use fear-saturated narratives to construct Trump's presidency as an issue for human rights and justice.

After examining the article, a consistent theme is apparent regarding how political leaders are portrayed: Donald Trump is presented largely negatively, and Kamala Harris is presented more positively. Trump is often linked to misinformation, political maneuvering, and decision-making that negatively impacts public well-being, particularly in relation to disaster

relief, child labor, and immigration. Harris is also often depicted as a principled leader who fights for the well-being of the needy and maintains democratic ideals.

Dominant Emotions in the Corpus of The Guardian

This section explores the emotional framing of the headlines in the Guardian corpus by using Robert Plutchik's wheel of emotions. Plutchik proposes eight primary emotions: joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, anger, and anticipation, each with different intensities. These emotions help shape the reader's perception and reflect the newspaper's ideological stances.

Figure 3: Frequency of emotions
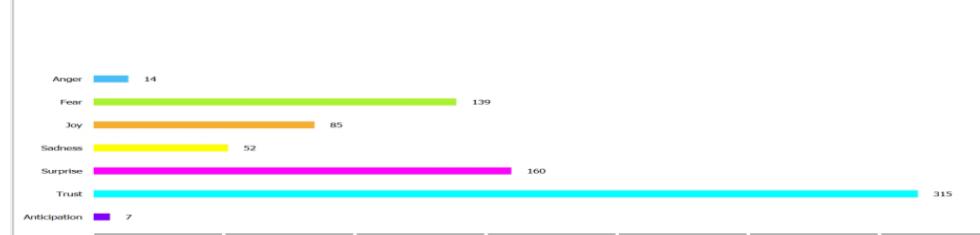
Emotion: Trust

Theme: "Restoring and Reimagining American Leadership." The overriding feeling here is Trust. Kamala Harris is presented as a trustworthy and forward-thinking leader who is dedicated to the rebuilding and rejuvenation of democracy. The headlines include issues like transparency, experience, the safeguarding of rights (including the "right to choice," abortions), and the opposition to authoritarianism.

Examples

"Kamala Harris calls for 'new generation of leadership' in Washington speech"
"Harris labels Trump a 'petty tyrant' in final pitch to voters"

Emotion: Surprise

Theme: Disrupting Expectation Politics of Uncertainty. Surprise draws attention to the unexpected developments and shifts regarding voting patterns and unconventional events during the Harris campaign. Media framing surrounds how the candidate and the political atmosphere display elements of unpredictability and unconventionality.

Examples

"Harris hits critical battleground Pennsylvania six days before election"
"Giggling Elon Musk revisits 'joke' about Kamala Harris assassination

Emotion: Fear

Theme: Governing on the Edge in a Divided America. Alarmist headlines convey the seriousness of the election, which involves close contests and divided citizens, injecting democracy with worry and trepidation. Harris is situated within a theme of turbulence in politics focusing on the politics of loss, social divisions, and the danger of the opposition.

Examples

'They will vote against Harris': Arab Americans in Michigan desert Democrats over Gaza"
"Harris is panicking over the Black male vote – but polls don't show the full picture"

Emotion: Joy

Theme: "The Joy of Progress and Political Possibility". Joy is presented as a symbol of progress and collective optimism. The media representation of Harris emphasizes her policy success, celebrity support, grassroots excitement, and political engagement, thereby projecting hope, success, and optimism around her political campaign.

Examples

"Biden-Harris administration announces $4.5bn in additional student debt relief"
"Obamas to bring star power to campaign appearances alongside Kamala Harris"

Emotion: Sadness

Theme: Politics of Disappointment and Emotional Load. Sadness is associated with loss, rejection, and collective disillusionment with politics and worldly crises. Harris is located in a politics of disappointment and emotional investment, with a view to encouraging an emotional investment in her experience.

Examples

"Fundamentally saddened': Washington Post readers on failure to endorse Harris"
"The Los Angeles Times sees resignations and loss of subscriptions after the owner blocks.

Emotion: Anger

Theme: Politics of Confrontation and Resistance. Anger-focused headlines convey the politics of conflict, attack, and opposition. Harris is portrayed as bold and resistant within the toxic political context to emphasize conflict as an important part of the campaign.

Examples

"Kamala Harris delivers 'closing argument' in Washington – as it happened"
"First Thing: Trump fills Madison Square Garden with anger and vitriol"

Emotion: Anticipation

Theme: Looking Ahead: Political Momentum and Unfolding Futures. Anticipation emphasizes unresolved outcomes, future actions, and election uncertainty. While not extensive, these articles establish Harris within a proactive thematic framework of possibility, uncertainty, and political intrigue.

Examples

"This swing county saw a job boom due to Biden. Yet, many union members still back Trump."
"Pennsylvania swing county to keep ballot drop boxes after controversy"

Conclusion

This research examined the representation of Donald Trump's and Kamala Harris's political ideologies in The Guardian's headlines. Using a corpus-based sentiment analysis approach, the study aimed to uncover the ideological bias and framing patterns used by the news media. By analyzing the emotional tone, sentiment polarity, and recurring themes in headlines, the research aimed to find out how their ideologies are framed in the headlines and which dominant sentiments are expressed in their ideologies.

The findings revealed clear emotional and ideological distinctions in how each figure was portrayed. The sentiment analysis was done, which showed that Donald Trump was framed more negatively with emotions such as anger, disgust, and fear. In contrast, Kamala Harris received more positive coverage, with emotions such as trust, joy, and anticipation.

However, headlines related to Donald Trump are associated with negative emotions, such as anger and fear, often reflecting a theme of conflict, division, and populism. Those headlines referencing Kamala Harris were frequently associated with joy, trust, and anticipation, reflecting a theme of progress, hopeful leadership, and social justice. At the same time, she was also linked with emotions like fear and sadness, particularly about electoral risks, policy challenges, or external criticism.

Additionally, the thematic interpretation added depth by analyzing the emotional expressions in headlines to find out the ideological narratives. This interpretation showed how the readers perceive political leaders and their ideologies.

This research demonstrates how a single newspaper, *The Guardian*, constructs ideological positions through emotionally framed headlines. It applies an integrated methodology framework, combining computational sentiment analysis with qualitative thematic interpretation to reveal deeper ideological meaning. It highlights how effective language serves as a tool for ideological representation, especially in high-stakes political contexts.

Moreover, the use of corpus-based sentiment analysis has proven effective in uncovering media biases and sentiment expressions that might not be immediately evident through qualitative analysis alone. Through keyword extractions, sentiment scoring, and frequency distribution, linguistic choices revealed reinforce ideological positioning. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of critical media literacy in navigating political information and understanding how language reflects and shapes ideological discourse.

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