
Representation of Social Programs in Photojournalism: A Literature Review on Visual Framing in Online Media

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the scholarly landscape of visual framing of social programs in photojournalism by examining publication trends, research themes, and influential institutions. Guided by PRISMA methodology, a structured search was conducted exclusively in the Scopus database, applying filters for peer-reviewed articles published in English up to July 2025. A total of 198 relevant studies were identified and subjected to bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer to visualize research trends, keyword co-occurrences, and collaboration networks. The results reveal a notable increase in publications since 2023, with a primary focus on social sciences, particularly communication and sociology, and significant contributions from leading institutions. Key themes identified include visual narratives, media effects, and digital platforms, underscoring the interdisciplinary nature of the field. The study highlights gaps in understanding how visual framing influences public perception and policy regarding social programs and recommends future research directions such as exploring emerging digital storytelling methods, cross-cultural comparisons, and technological innovations to deepen insights and improve the impact of visual communication in social advocacy.*

INTRODUCTION

Photojournalistic visual framing powerfully affects the social and psychological ways the public comes to understand complex social issues through the use of storytelling and evocative images. Especially, (Greenwood & Thomson, 2020) emphasise the prominent role that visual framing has in the representation of refugees, shaping the public's understandings of flight and persecution. Similarly, (Midberry, Brown, Potter, & Comfort, 2024) report on studies that reveal that the specific visual framing evokes different socio-affective reactions and hence guides the public response to social issues such as drug addiction and homelessness. In addition, the work of (El Damanhoury & Garud-Paktar, 2022) highlights visually storytelling as a key for framing the COVID-19 pandemic, pointing out that how images stimulate empathy and action. These visual

practices are also crucial in mediating overwhelming information, not only for visual presentation of the truth but also for larger narratives of disaster, migration and social justice that eventually drive the society discourse and public policy.

Photojournalism is a key instrument of the creation of public opinion by visual framing, defined as the choices and ways in which images are presented to create a certain storyline. As indicated by (Greenwood & Thomson, 2020) visual media can shape the framing of migration in terms of individuals shown as refugees or victims to steer audience reactions and empathy. Moreover, news images are found to filter out crucial information about societal issues such as heatwaves (O'Neill et al., 2023) promoting a false perspective of urgency and risk involved in them. (E. W. J. Lee & Ho, 2018) agree that images that are combined with words show more effectiveness in gaining the public attention and involving them in complex issues like nuclear energy. This suggests that how visuals are framed plays a huge role in influencing how we perceive and emotionally react to them. (Azevedo, De Beukelaer, Jones, Safra, & Tsakiris, 2021) discuss that visual images serve not only as a means of information, but also to dehumanize victims (and perpetrators) potentially making an important contribution to public attitudes and social responses to marginalized groups such as refugees. The implication is that photovoicing is not a process of documenting reality, but rather contributes to the construction of visual narratives that forms society's interpretation of important topics.

Visual framing is intensified in online media as a result of its wide dissemination channel and the interactive nature of online platforms, offering both opportunities and challenges when describing social interventions. As (Hopke & Hestres, 2018) observe, social media play a significant role in industrializing public discourse, also at critical moments and official scenes, as the Paris Climate Talks, where climate narratives are formed by visual materials. Additionally, visualisation on social media could increase engagement levels and affective feedbacks, as mentioned by (Fathir, Lokman, Kadir, & Sualman, 2023) in which visual framing in social media can incite high emotional level and mobilise political participation. But this also creates problems with the potential for distortion. For example, (Elhosary, 2025) pointed out that the representations of media could be radically different from an outlet to another and affect the public image of cases, such as the survivors of the 2023 Morocco earthquake. Along these lines the framing of humanitarian organizations on social media may either help or harm the causes themselves they seek to represent (Y.-I. Lee et al., 2022). The study serves to show visualization choices can cause large deviations in the level of audience engagement and comprehension. Thus, web-based media offers a powerful means of transmitting visual communications, but also requires thoughtful framing of social programs to avoid promulgating stereotypes or misinformation.

Although photojournalism is well known for its influence on visual framing and its ability to influence public opinion, few books or studies are dedicated to it with relation to social programs. The literature already covers the broader effects of visual mass media on social issues, and is more narrative than analytical in focusing on how photojournalism helps to frame social programs and those they are designed to assist. Such a gap emphasises the importance of further exploratory research into the dynamics of visual story-telling in such contexts, given the persuasive potential of such narratives in shaping policy and public sentiment. Research has demonstrated that visual framing can shape the public's attitudes and behavior, making it important to analyze how these frames are made and understood in the context of social programs.

This study is important because visual and textual frames converge to work in synergy to articulate an overall message, which has been unfortunately neglected and criticized in framing

investigations. The joint impact of visual and textual framing can alter audience interpretation to a significant extent, impacting their belief and attitude formation about social programs and other complex societal issues. Interrogating this dynamic will help elucidate how media shapes stories and influences public opinion, with insights into how visual and textual cues implicitly uphold or subvert established norms and values.

The increasing scholarly attention on the visual framing of social programs in photojournalism calls for a comprehensive understanding of this research landscape, its evolution, and the prevalent themes that dominate academic inquiry. This study also addresses the research questions below:

1. How have publication trends in the visual framing of social programs in photojournalism evolved over time, considering the productivity and collaboration patterns of authors and affiliations?
2. Which subject areas and institutional affiliations are most actively contributing to the research on the visual framing of social programs in photojournalism, as revealed through co-authorship network analysis?
3. Which countries exhibit the strongest intellectual connections in the research on the visual framing of social programs in photojournalism, as determined by bibliographic coupling analysis of publications? In other words, which countries are citing similar bodies of literature, indicating shared research interests or approaches?
4. What are the dominant and emerging keywords in the research on the visual framing of social programs in photojournalism, and how do their co-occurrence patterns reflect the evolving thematic landscape of the field? In essence, what key topics and concepts are central to the discussion, and how are they interrelated?

This study aims to analyze the academic landscape surrounding the visual framing of social programs in photojournalism. To achieve this, it will first examine the evolution of publication trends over time, considering author productivity and collaboration patterns, to understand the historical development and growth of this research area. The study also aims to identify the key subject areas and institutional affiliations that are most actively contributing to this field, utilizing co-authorship network analysis to map collaborative relationships and influential research hubs. Furthermore, a bibliographic coupling analysis will be conducted to determine which countries exhibit the strongest intellectual connections, revealing shared research interests and approaches based on their citation patterns. Finally, the research seeks to uncover the dominant and emerging keywords in this field, analyzing their co-occurrence patterns to reflect the evolving thematic landscape and identify central topics and their interrelationships.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study combines a SLR (Systematic Literature Review), PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021) and a bibliometric analysis by means of VOSviewer (van Eck & Waltman, 2010), to analyse the representation of social programs in photojournalism, enabling both a qualitative assessment of the content of a field of study and a quantitative analysis of its structure and dynamics, providing a comprehensive view of the research landscape (Linnenluecke, Marrone, & Singh, 2020). The SLR element entailed an extensive search of electronic databases such as Scopus, PubMed, PsychInfo, EBSCO, and Web of Science, employing predetermined search terms around visual framing, photojournalism, and social programs, with criteria specified for the inclusion of peer-reviewed studies in English and for the exclusion of document types such as book chapters and editorials (Putland & Brookes, 2024).

After systematic identification and screening for eligibility, data were extracted and synthesised by identifying themes and patterns. At the same time, bibliometric analysis was performed using VOSviewer in order to quantitatively evaluate the scientific production, visualize the trends in research and map networks of co-occurring keywords (Herrera-Franco, Montalván-Burbano, Carrión-Mero, Jaya-Montalvo, & Gurumendi-Noriega, 2021); the data source for these analysis was Scopus, and VOSviewer was also used to create the co-occurrence networks of terms, authors and journals, with a binary counting algorithm and a synonym file used to improve the accuracy of the visual representation of the intellectual structure of the field (Vasconcelos et al., 2024).

This systematic literature review was based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines and a predefined search string applied in the Scopus database to identify articles concerning the representation of social programs within photojournalism. An original search (July 24, 2025) with "visual AND framing" in the article title, abstract, or keyword sections, identified 2,284 articles. This primary set was further narrowed by zooming in on the key term "visual framing", resulting in 290 documents. Restricting the search still further by the "Social Science" subject area returned 255 records that included 214 articles, 28 book chapters, 7 reviews, 2 errata, 2 books, 1 editorial, and 1 conference proceeding. The language filter was then used, which resulted in 198 in English, 9 in Spanish, 2 in German, and 1 in Russian, Portuguese, Polish, Malaysian, Hungarian, and Bosnian. Using the PRISMA flow diagram, the search was meticulously screened for peer-reviewed English language articles, resulting in 28 studies that were eligible for data extraction and synthesis, guaranteeing a robust and transparent approach to identifying common themes and patterns in the literature.

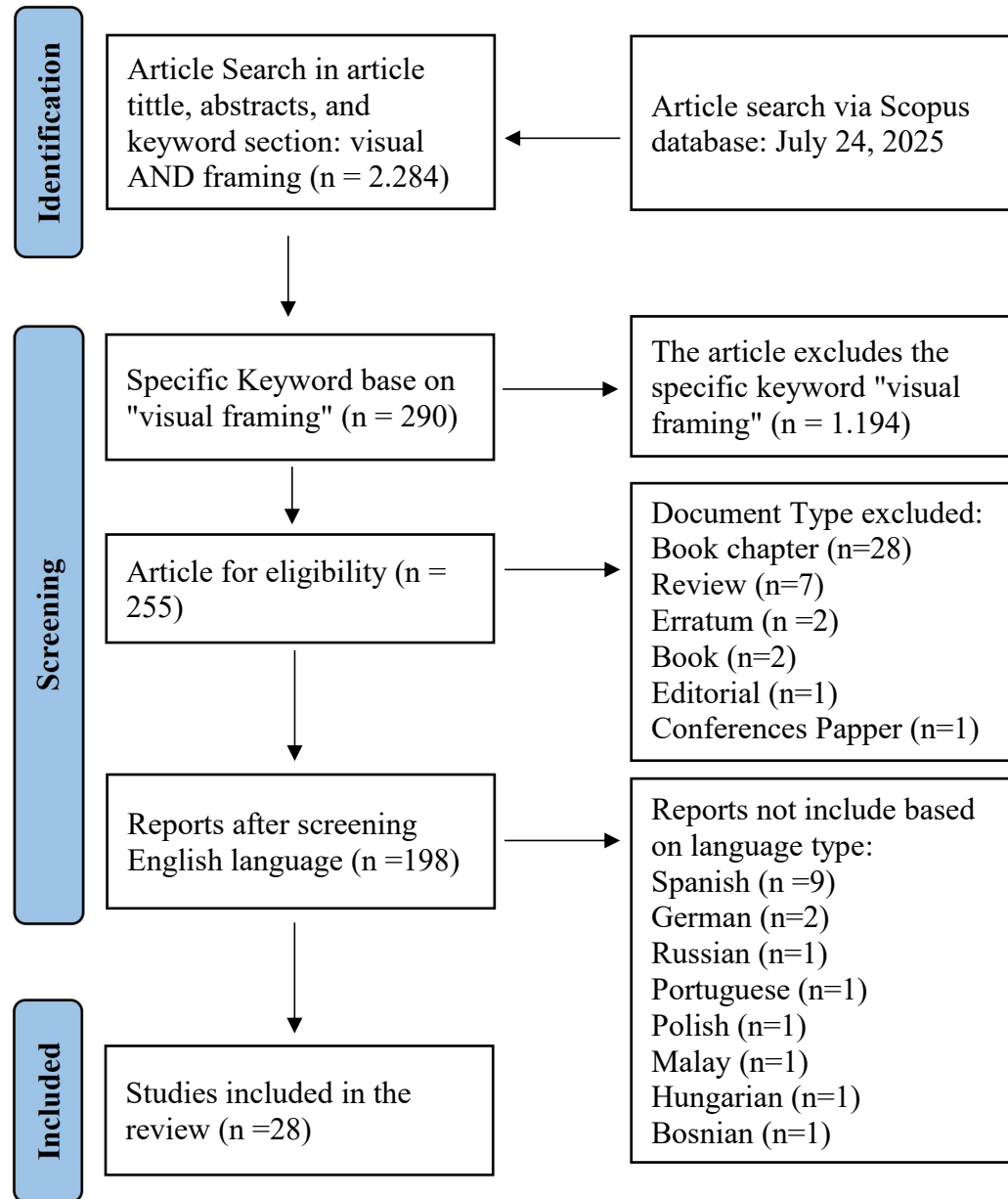


Figure 1. Filtering and data Selection Process by PRISMA.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Publication Trends in Visual Framing of Social Programs in Photojournalism

The publication trends in the visual framing area, especially of social programs and how they are framed in photojournalism, have witnessed a significant growth in academic interest in the past few decades, reflecting an increasing recognition of the influence and power of the visual

media in establishing public attitudes and opinions about social problems. This increase in interest mirrors wider developments within Media Studies and Sociology, where the framing of social issues has emerged as a key focus of academic research. The growing attention that the issue is receiving in research, points to the relevance of the issue and indicates the need for a differentiated discussion of the ethical and societal implications about the visual representation of vulnerable groups.

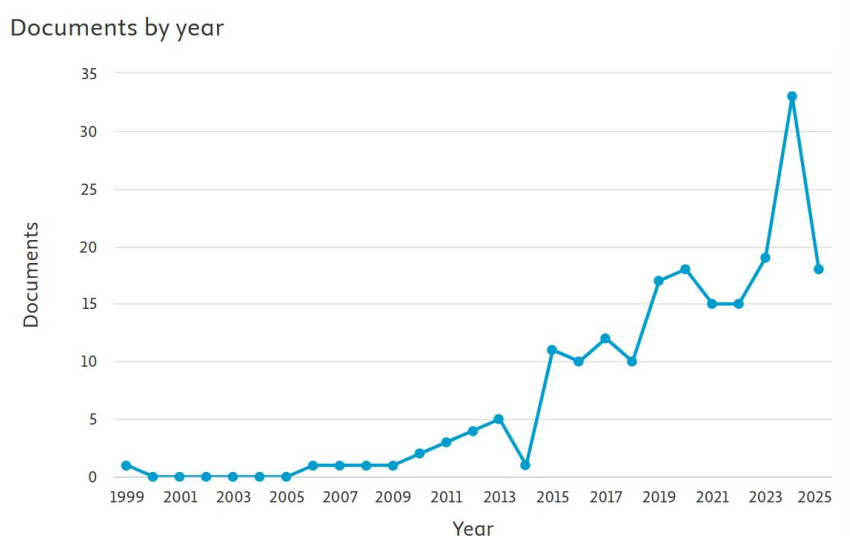


Figure 2. Flowchart of the Publication trend by year.

Scholarly terrain related to the visual framing of social programs in photojournalism was previously underexamined, and academic attention on this topic was scarce. Since 1999, a year when only one single paper was published, the stage entered into a substantial dry spell and it would take several years (no new papers being produced between 2000 and 2005) before the birth of any new publication. This era indicates that the field had not yet been identified as a specific area of scientific interest, or that it struggled to conform to mainstream research paradigms. After this period of hibernation, the period between 2006 and 2014 witnessed only a modest rise in nursing literature. The range of documents per year in this decade was usually between one to five documents, reflecting the sporadic and disconnected research interests, not an urgent or increasing academic attention. For example, despite an apparently small rise to 11 documents in 2015, the number unexpectedly fell back to one document in 2014, suggesting an unstable and nascent character of the research field at this early stage. This long period of little publication indicates that this was an early state of the field, with books and academic recognition still far behind.

It was around 2015 that a noticeable trend toward academic involvement started to emerge, and the field has enjoyed slow-yet-infinitesimally-steady growth since then. Between 2015 to 2020, the yearly cap of publications generally experienced an increase, with between 10 and 18 documents per year. The sustained (if modest) increase indicates that topic was growing in importance to researchers, with more and more studies in progress and reaching completion. The result is stable output during these years which should signal an acknowledgement of the relevance of such knowledge on the visual framing of social programs within photojournalism. We interpret this time as a crucial phase wherein the research field began to congeal, garner attention and developing a budding scholarly community concerned with its numerous aspects.

The constantly high number of publications is an indication of an increasing range of investigation and of a transition from preliminary, explorative studies to more systematic studies.

The best quantifiable evidence of the field's growth can be seen in the last couple of years, beginning around 2023. The number of articles rapidly increased to 19 with the year of 2023, suggesting an obvious acceleration of research. This trend sharply rose again up to 2024 request, strongly surpassed 33 documents, its maximum publication rate per year. This significant increase in publications in a short time period clearly reflects a growing interest and increased academic productivity. Furthermore, and even though it is still only July 2025 (and hardly slow summer in academic terms), the year already boasts 18 papers, a good number of papers at any time of the year. Its strong recent growth suggests that the visual framing of social programs in photojournalism has become a vibrant and increasingly important area within academic discussions that continues to seize the attention of growing numbers of scholars and institutions who are committed to its exploration. This dramatic increase indicates that the field is potentially a fruitful and important area of academic research, and it is driven by current social issues and the role of media in them.

Subject Areas and Institutional Contributions

A review of subjects shows the individual scholarship fields involved in visual framing of social programs in photojournalism, thereby highlighting its interdisciplinary character and wide application. The interdisciplinary meeting of different academic traditions add depth and expands the scope of the research, to enable the simultaneous engagement with the various ways in which visual media shapes perceptions and moderates narratives of social problems. Such interdisciplinary work not only strengthens the rigor of the results but also fosters interaction among researchers across multiple disciplines, leading to a broader perspective on the issues.

Documents by subject area

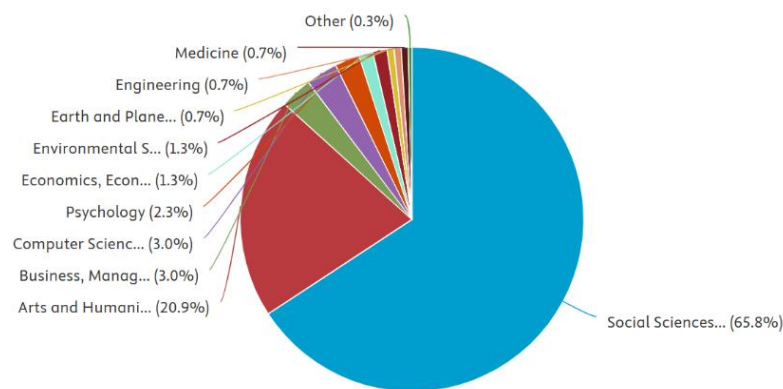


Figure 3. Pie chart of the Publication by subject area.

It is very apparent that as the leading academic discipline pushing research on visual framing of social programs in photojournalism continues to be the Social Sciences which dominate with 198 documents. This is not surprising, as the examination of the relationship between media representations, public opinion, and policy, which shapes social problems in the first place, is a social scientific inquiry. Fields such as communication studies, sociology, and media studies each fundamental to the social sciences are predisposed to analyze sights sociologically, culturally, or politically. The 198 documents are worth highlighting as they are

English language peer-reviewed articles and were obtained after the initial search was narrowed down into the “Social Science” (subject) from the broader 255 documents. Such a stringent filtering suggests a focused scholarly interest around this research domain.

After Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities is a distant second with 63 documents. This article underscores the importance of interpretation and analysis when exploring visual media. Research in this area probably investigates on semiotics, visual rhetoric and sociocultural impact of photographic representations, inquiring on the way photographs create meaning and have an effect on the building up of stories around social matters in terms of aesthetic, ethical and humanistic aspects. Arts and Humanities’ contribution balances this social scientific approach with an emphasis on the symbolic and expressive elements of visual communication, thus affording a more complex, fuller understanding of its subject matter.

The counts drop significantly outside these two dominant fields suggesting more specialized or new contributions from other areas. Business, Management and Accounting and Computer Science contribute 9 documents each. Business could come from a study of strategic communication, public relations, or the role of photojournalism in social programs campaigns. It would be a Computer Science’s contribution for example, from computational image analysis, visual data processing and developing algorithms for knowledge on media content. Psychology 7 documents Probably related to the cognitive-emotional responses to visual stimuli, and the study of how framings and visual frames affect the audience’s perception and attitudes of social issues.

The other subject categories of Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Environmental Science, Earth and Planetary Sciences, Engineering, Medicine, and Health Professions have very low participation; each contributes less than 5 documents. Their scarcity indicates that even though interdisciplinary links might exist for particular applications (e.g., graphic representation of environmental issues or health promotion), these fields are yet to become significant contributors to the vast body of research on visual framing of social programmes in photojournalism. This tendency then again highlights that the research in this topic is essentially focusing on a sociological understanding of communication and cultural interpretation, notably in the Social Sciences with less presence in the Arts and Humanities.

In terms of affiliation analysis, it is important to identify the most influential academic institutions and individual researchers within the scholarly field. Through examination of institutional contributions, we can determine which and how much universities and research centers are doing the work of understanding how the visuality of social programs is depicted in photojournalism. Locating these pivotal institutions and scholars can provide important information about the current status of the research, the direction of research over time, and potential areas for future research.

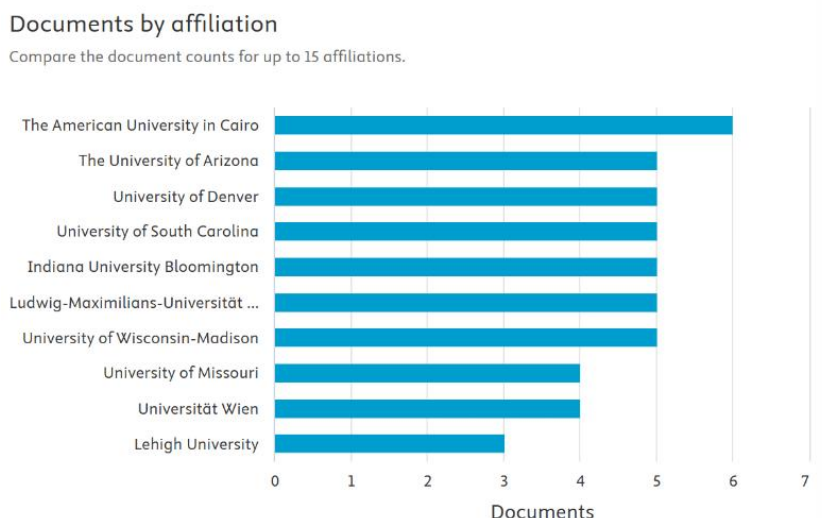


Figure 4. Diagram of the Publication by affiliation.

Contributing the most articles, The American University in Cairo, has 6 documents, indicating a strong interest in visually framing social programs at this institution. This leadership implies that a substantive program of research or group of researchers have worked in this area for some time. The existence of such a leading institute, especially beyond traditionally dominant Western centers for learning, is the best indication of how widespread and inclusive are the voices shaping the field. Work by researchers at this university has, for instance, looked at ‘Journalistic Practices on Twitter’, covering how visual content is used in reporting, an important element of visual framing.

Just behind, a large number of institutions contributed 5 documents, resulting in a strong cluster of academic work. This group consists of The University of Arizona and the University of Denver, as well as the University of South Carolina, Indiana University Bloomington, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The relatively equal distribution across a number of universities in both the US and Europe suggests that the knowledge to be found in the practice of visually framing social programmes photojournalistically isn’t just located in one blockbusting institution. Rather, it is received within a fragmentation of universities. Researchers linked to organisations such as University of Arizona, for example, have been involved in a study on the "Influence of Visual Frame Combinations in Solutions Journalism Stories," indicating a commitment to practical as well as theoretical considerations of visual framing: within particular journalistic genres. The contribution of Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München to a “Systematic Review of Studies 1979-2023” on how visual framing influences business communication is also indicative of the extensive interdisciplinary research at these universities. The presence of European universities like Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and Universität Wien along with the leading U.S. institutions represents the international and collaborative character of work in this field as well.

The drop in how many documents affiliated to other affiliations, most of them contributed 4 papers or less, also underscores the leading position of this top stratum of universities. These bodies, in those institutions, may well have thriving communication departments, media studies or journalism or broader social science research units, who support and undertake research in this interdisciplinary field. The spread of these contributions is a good sign for the diverse academic ecosystem that is contributing to a growing body of knowledge about how the visual elements also work to shape mutual understanding of social issues in photojournalism. Such a fragmented

structure gives rise to an incredible variety of opinions and approaches, which in the end, contribute a wealth of information to the general academic discourse.

Intellectual Connections Between Countries

Investigating international cooperative relationships is necessary to illustrate the nodes and links of the visual framing of social programs in photojournalism research structure. It also enables gaining insights into the international collaboration, knowledge transfer and research activities in this interdisciplinary field using tools such as bibliometrics analysis. The findings display the level of research collaboration among certain geographic regions and deal with important collaborative connections underlining the global participation of research in this field. The analysis of the bibliographic coupling can shed light to the way knowledge is connected and exchanged among countries in the study of visual framing in photojournalism in social programs.

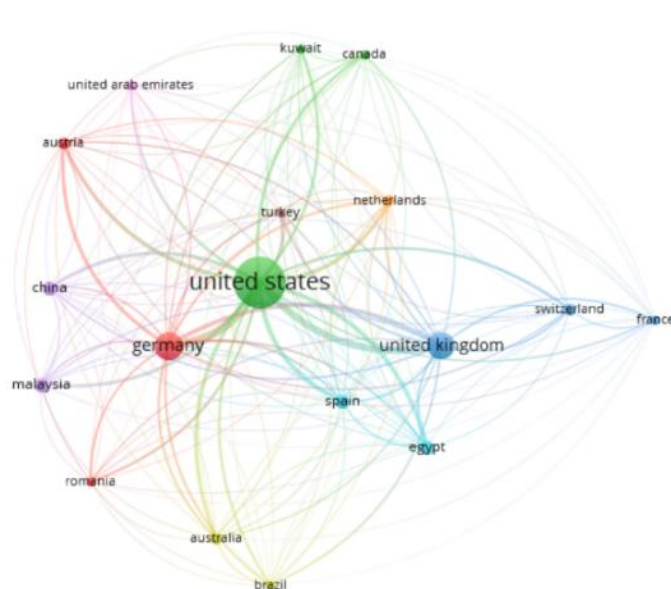


Figure 5. Countries Visualization.

In a network visualization of this data, each country would correspond to a node, and the magnitude of the “Total Link Strength” to a thickness or intensity of the links between that country and all others. It gives a sense of degree of intellectual linkage between scientists of different countries in terms of co-authorship/co-citation. Using bibliometric tools, research productivity is sometimes mapped within international academic networks, and is also analysed at country level. It deepens the insight in the commonalities of collaborative relations and knowledge exchange related with the visual framing of social programs within countries.

Table 1. Bibliographic coupling by Country.

Country	Document	Citations	Total Link Strength
United States	87	1633	12120
Germany	26	577	6448
United Kingdom	24	458	4948
Spain	7	116	2028
Egypt	7	38	1806

Country	Document	Citations	Total Link Strength
Austria	5	160	1693
Netherlands	4	366	1546
Australia	5	350	1308
Turkey	3	12	1241
China	7	12	1169
Malaysia	7	46	1038
Brazil	3	70	882
Switzerland	5	46	880
Canada	3	79	770
Romania	3	55	690
Kuwait	3	16	681
United Arab Emirates	3	44	643
Frances	3	50	463

The United States is the power house in this network of intellect. The "U.S." has the most documents, by far the most citations, and an impressive "Total Link Strength" of 12.120, indicating that the U.S. not only leads in terms of research output, but wields considerable global influence and strong collaborative ties. In a network map, the U.S. node would be the largest and most linked, suggesting that the U.S. played a key role in fueling and molding research on the visual framing of social programs. This strong presence emphasizes the large American academic interest in digital journalism as well as visual communication theory.

After the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom appear to be a next tier of influential nodes. Germany, with 26 documents, 577 citations and "Total Link Strength" of 6448; and UK with 24 documents, 458 citations and a link strength of 4948 show strong research programs and networking. Their strong connection strengths indicate that they have had frequent intellectual collaborations and copublications with the worldwide research community. Findings from these studies add to understanding about visual research methods and the role of visual references in cross-cultural contexts. Outside of these top countries, the contribution is less uniform and the connectivities more diverse. Spain, Egypt, China, and Malaysia account for 7 records and have similar research capacity. Yet their "Total Link Strength" and citations differ and may indicate different types of relationships to and levels of impact on the general intellectual network. For example, Spain has a much higher "Total Link Strength" and citations than Egypt or China. This difference indicates that despite having comparable numbers of publications, some countries have more developed and influential international partnership in research for better intercultural cooperation and visual communication within different context.

This information overall depicts a pyramid-like model of the research literature. With the US as the most influential network of nodes in the world, and Germany and the UK as major connectors. The "Total Link Strength" of other nations contributes differently to those for the US as a crucial part of their collaborative centrality and their engagement in the network on the visual portrayal of social programmes in photojournalism worldwide. Such analyses, often implemented through instruments that visualise knowledge structures and collaborations, unveil the multidimensional nature of global academic exchange.

Keyword Analysis: Dominant and Emerging Themes

Keywords reflect a brief sketch of the major subjects and categories of research articles

Twitter. This suggests that scholars frequently employ content analysis to investigate how visual framing is manifested in both legacy print media and in digital media such as social media. This category of studies often applies both qualitative and quantitative approaches to the content analysis of visual stories in order to contribute with knowledge about how messages are shaped and spread across varied media. The attention also encompasses analysis of how visual content in newspapers and on social networking sites contributes to the public perception and engagement.

The yellow cluster links together keywords such as social media, Instagram, gender and culture all reflecting an increasing focus on how visual framing works in digital and cultural domains. And this cluster demonstrates how modern social platforms such as Instagram are employed in studies relating to identity, representation, and social norms, here particularly in relation to gender and culture. Second, by opening up these platforms to the production of user generated content, new dynamics in visual framing emerge, with people and communities creating and sharing their own stories that challenge dominant media representations and power relations.

Finally, the purple cluster includes terms like photojournalism, conflict, media effects and visual framing. This cluster indicates usages of visual framing in media specified to journalism especially in the conditions of conflict or crisis and its contribution to decisions of society and media effects. Scholarship here often focuses on the ways in which photojournalistic images interpret and articulate conflicts, shaping viewers' understanding of what is happening and who is involved. By Studying visual stories told in the context of the space of photojournalism researchers can discover the ethics and politics at stake in visual reporting from conflict zones.

In the case of indegree keyword co-occurrence network, clusters are visualized as certain thematic communities in a general research domain. Each cluster is described by a list of keywords that frequently co-occur, suggesting their strong semantic relation. Although the clusters that emerged from the analysis are clearly defined by the thematic scope of the articles, these are also connected, which mirrors the multilayered character of the research field as a whole, and the way in which certain themes converge or influence one another. The colors for each cluster serve to visually define such thematic groupings.

Table 2. Cluster, Keywords and Theme Summary.

Cluster	Keywords (occurrences)	Themes to be discuss
Red	Mass Media (5), Media Role (5), News Media (4), Photograph (4), Photography (7), Politics (4), Visual Analysis (4)	The Visual Framing of Politics in Mass Media
Green	Communication (4), Images (9), Instagram (7), Media (4), Visual (6), Visual Framing Analysis (4)	Analyzing Visual Communication and Framing in Media
Blue	Content Analysis (17), Framing (25), Newspaper (5), Twitter (5), Visual Communication (16)	Visual Framing and Content Analysis in News Media and Social Platforms
Yellow	Covid-19 (6), Culture (4), Gender (4), Social Media (15)	Digital Narratives of Gender and Culture during the COVID-19 Pandemic on Social Media
Purple	Conflict (5), Media Effects (4), Photojournalism (15), Visual Framing (98)	The Impact of Visual Framing in Photojournalism on Conflict Perception and Media Effects

The Red Cluster labelled by terms as 'Mass Media', 'Media Role', 'News Media', 'Photograph', 'Photography', 'Politics' and 'Visual Analysis' mainly concentrates on the class The Visual Framing of Politics in Mass Media. Research in this cluster commonly examines how graphic features in legacy news media affect political communication and public opinion. Meaning and context This book reminds of the important role of photography and visual stories in shaping political debates and public opinion. This space is particularly important for grasping the seductiveness of images in the formation of political discourse and public opinion.

The Green Cluster includes such terms as 'Communication', 'Images', 'Instagram', 'Media', 'Visual' and 'Visual Framing Analysis' categorised as Analyzing Visual Communication and Framing in Media. Not only does this cluster interrogate the basic principles of visual communication looking at how images are framed and interpreted within a range of media contexts it also emphasizes how platforms such as Instagram are becoming key nodes which shape contemporary visual communication practices. 'This is a posting about looking' This paper examines the relationship between the posting of visual content on social media platforms, and broader cultural signification of such visual narratives.

As for methodological tools and facilities, the Blue Cluster features the keywords 'Content Analysis', 'Framing', 'Newspaper', 'Twitter' and 'Visual Communication'. Typically, the research in this field employs content analysis to examine visual framing in conventional print media, such as newspapers, versus new media products, including Twitter. This method makes it possible to deconstruct a visual narrative quantitatively, while simultaneously offering a qualitative dimension, to shed light on how this type of narrative influences the public perception and participation.

The Yellow Cluster is connected to research about Digital Narratives of Gender and Culture during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Social Media, featuring keywords such as "Covid-19", "Culture", "Gender", "Social Media". This cluster reflects a growing scholarly interest in how social media platforms produce and circulate visual narratives, particularly those about gender and cultural phenomena in times of global upheaval, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. User content generation are key contributors for defining digital representations and forming public opinion. In addition, visual framing of these stories may also reinforce or undermine established cultural stereotypes and norms, further complicating the understanding of visual communication in the digital era.

Last, the Purple Cluster, with terms like Conflict, Media Effects, Photojournalism and Visual Framing, investigates The Impact of Visual Framing in Photojournalism on Conflict Perception and Media Effects. It is an area of research that explores the impact of photojournalism on the visual framing of conflict and through it the shaping of public opinion, and media effects. It frequently examines the moral and political dimensions of visual reportage at times of crisis. Some scholars examine how visual narratives in photojournalism mediate the way conflicts are seen, drawing attention to the crucial visual dimension that images play in molding viewers' perceptions and attitudes. In addition, studies in this cluster explore how the framing of the images can influence how audiences emotionally and psychologically respond, influencing attitudes towards the parties concerned in the conflict and the conflict itself.

These distinct clusters, while each focusing on a specific aspect of visual framing, collectively illustrate the interdisciplinary and complex nature of this research area, highlighting how various themes are interconnected and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of visual communication. For instance, the study of visual framing in mass media not only shapes

political communication but also influences public perception, demonstrating the persuasive power of images in shaping political discourse.

4.1 The Visual Framing of Politics in Mass Media

The visual representation of politics in the mass media is critically important in determining how politics is visually framed, which affects public opinion, political participation, and ideological stance. This complex process can be traced by a number of landmark studies of the interaction of visual and political discourse. A study by Fathir et al. highlights the role of visual framing in social media, specifically in the political context of BERSIH 2.0 in Malaysia. They discovered that when certain visual elements were included, the likelihood of political actions might be massively increased due to rousing intense emotion and engaging users which, in short, shows that visuals have the potential as a great mobilization instrument (Fathir, Lokman, Kadir, & Sualman, 2022; Fathir et al., 2023). Utilizing Instagram as a site for visual framing in the digital sphere, Zamora-Medina examines how far right political parties appropriate visual symbols as a means of constructing political identity, and communicate ideologies, stressing the emotional potential that images have as a discursive strategy for political messaging (Zamora-Medina, Shahini-Hoxhaj, & Gërguri, 2025).

Schindler and Müller analyse the graphic design of newspaper spreads to argue that forms and styles invariably echo partisan positions. They claim that the perception of such patterns by media users can prime their interpretation of political messages, strengthening the ideological connotations within visually organized media content (Schindler & Müller, 2018). This also applies to TV graphics, in which Dekavalla claims opci-onal visual (as in, not verbal) cues in political narratives may be more effective in communicating what she refers to as the “strategic game frame” of political competition (Dekavalla, 2020). Visual framing and public perception is particularly clear in societies in conflict. Stewart et al. studied the 2020 Democratic presidential debates demonstrating how network visual production elements camera angles and framing may have influenced public perceptions of candidates and their electoral chances (Stewart, Eubanks, Hersom, & Hearn, 2021). This also coincides with the findings of Mortensen et al. in that the news media uses visual stereotypes to influence societal perception, especially on contentious social issues such as marijuana use (Mortensen, Moscovitz, Wan, & Yang, 2020). In addition, Vaughan and Kerr focus on the more visual nature of representations that draw attention to the display of wealth inequality in political communication as a demonstration of how it can reaffirm dominant notions of what is fair and just in political debates (Vaughan & Kerr, 2025). This nexus also appears in the news on migration crises as images hold a great power in framing collective sentiment and narrative about refugees and immigrants, as evidenced in the works of Greenwood and Thomson or Irom (Greenwood & Thomson, 2020; Irom, 2025).

Overall, these works combine to underscore the importance of visual framing in mass media as both a medium for setting public attitudes, mobilizing political participation, and reinforcing ideological predispositions, highlighting its importance as a core component of political communication in contemporary society. In the case of social program photojournalism representation, selectively chosen images in photojournalism can substantially bias public attitudes and hence evaluations of these programs by focusing on particular aspects, outcomes, or clients. Furthermore, this kind of framing determines the emotional and psychological reactions of viewers and listeners, which in turn will contribute to determine their perceptions of the actors as well as of the issue at stake.

4.2 Analyzing Visual Communication and Framing in Media

Interpretation of visual communication and framing in media illustrate the complex

relationship between visual cues, viewer interpretation, and the construction of political or social stories. Through the analysis of various studies, a nuanced understanding develops about how images shape public discussion, particularly in politically charged contexts. The influence of visual framing in constructing narratives is a case in point, as demonstrated by Winkler et al. who analysed the strategies of ISIS in social media. They emphasize that the visual framing of news involves more than images; it also features accompanying sounds that help shape the emotional and cultural meaning-making that viewers bring to media (Winkler, El-Damanny, Saleh, Hendry, & El-Karhili, 2021). Consistent with these findings, Lee and Ho's study on the interplay between visual frames (photo or lack of photo) and textual frames shows that photographs have a strong effect in shaping public opinion rather than text when it comes to framing technology-related stories, indicating the power of the images to frame narratives about technology (E. W. J. Lee & Ho, 2018).

Schindler and Müller emphasize the ideological implications of newspaper layouts, pointing out how different layouts systematically tend to be taken as partisan positions. The study concludes that the layout can be used as a visual framing effect that determines how we see political messages through the visual structures (Schindler & Müller, 2018). This is consistent with Mortensen et al. study, which analyzed the visual stereotype of marijuana users in the U.S. news media, and which demonstrated that both verbal and visual images have the ability to shape social perceptions and imbue them with specific cultural meaning (Mortensen et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies by Greenwood and Thomson analysing migration narratives illustrate how visual images can impact public attitudes to refugees. They reveal that visual framing directly translates into empathetic representation or threat to individuals' portrayal and, thus, on public perceptions and societal acceptance (Greenwood & Thomson, 2020). This proposition is further supported by recent research in which Elshabassy et al. examined visual representations of refugees from different cultural contexts, finding that representations of Middle Eastern and Ukrainian refugees are heavily juxtaposed and demonstrate differences from one another, reflecting wider geopolitical positionings (ElShabassy, Elhosary, Fahmy, Gheith, & Ayad, 2025).

The sophistication of visual framing is revealed in Irom's work on visual narratives of the Rohingya crisis and on how visual narratives changed in different news outlets. Here, images are seen to inform narratives around urgent issues, and to act as representatives of broader public perceptions and media duties, or media roles (Irom, 2025). This broader context is reinforced by the results of Damanny and Garud-Patkar, who examined visual framing of COVID-19 in the media across countries, and found evidence of the strategic deployment of visuals to convey soft power messages (El Damanny & Garud-Paktar, 2022). Consistent with this, new research also suggests that visual frames produce diverse emotional tones among audiences, which have been showed in the systematic review of visual framing studies conducted by Geise and Xu. They found that the influence of visual framing effects is regionally contingent; that is, the impact of the visual framing varies with the images used, illustrating how visual saliency can distort public views and policy support on issues such as animal welfare and environmental disasters (Geise & Maubach, 2024; Geise & Xu, 2024). The combination of these studies reveals the power of visual framing in political communication and discourse. The relationship between images and their textual references plays an important role in the processes of influencing public attitudes and actions, as can be seen in the arguments made above from a media rhetorical perspective.

In summary, visual framing is a tool of communication and influencing public opinion and resonance of certain ideological positions in the society. As an example, within the framework of social programs' photobased representation, the choice and the representation

manner of images can greatly affect public's opinion, by underlining specific aspects and bearing influence on attitudes toward the programs themselves and their beneficiaries. Additionally, visual framing can strengthen pre-existing bias or provide new ways of seeing by selecting which parts of a story are emphasized. This can have implications on the way in which the effectiveness, equity, and cost-effectiveness of social programs may be perceived by audiences, highlighting the relevance of ethics within visual communication.

4.3 Visual Framing and Content Analysis in News Media and Social Platforms

Analysis of visual framing and visual content in news media and social platforms provides crucial insights into how imagery and modes of presentation construct public perceptions and influence social reality. Analyses of individual studies, however, demonstrate the dramatic impact of visuals on audience involvement and comprehension of news. A key site of research is the influence of visual framing in political communication. For instance, Stewart et al. analyzed visual priming during the 2020 Democratic presidential debates, showing that how the camera treated candidates systematically differed according to their electability and that it influenced public perceptions of candidate viability (Stewart et al., 2021). This underscores how visual framing can shape reader perceptions and drive political dynamics.

Also employing a systematic method, Geise and Xu offered a literature review of visual framing research, noting that visuals are frequently cast to the side when bit-by-bit of media production are analyzed, while they are key contributors to molding public perception and feeling (Geise & Xu, 2024). Hopke and Hestres examined the visual representations used in the Paris Climate Talks on Twitter and found that media representations play a central role in shaping public opinion on climate change (Hopke & Hestres, 2018). This reiterates the point that visuals are not just supplementary but integral to representing crucial global discussions. Meanwhile, Lee and Ho's study into photographic-textual framing work found that images can generate much more attention and impact compared to text entering the hierarchies in new stories consumption (E. W. J. Lee & Ho, 2018).

By contrast, research on the visual representation of failed subjects demonstrates the ways in which images reinforce prevailing stereotypes and prevailing public sentiments. For instance, Greenwood and Thomson examined how representations of refugees escaping war are often positioned as victims, a framing that may elicit sympathy while also perpetuating their perceived association with vulnerability (Greenwood & Thomson, 2020). Entertaining refugees through a visual frame is not just audience attitude-forming but also policy development and humanitarian response material, and this is exemplified in Borah and Irom's assertion on the significance of the image in informing the policies and aid given to refugees (Borah & Irom, 2021). Additionally, Elshabassy et al. illuminated differences between visual representations of Middle Eastern and European refugees, well noting that media narratives can be shifted to match the social and political attitudes and biases at a particular time (ElShabassy et al., 2025). In addition, the study of Fathir-et al. on the BERSIH 2.0 in Malaysia highlights how social media visuals can rouse political participation by triggering empathy and forming community among its users. Their results showed that carefully designed visual components in social media posts greatly impact political interventions (Fathir et al., 2023). This trend testifies to the increasing significance of visual framing in today's activist and political movements.

In the context of visual misinformation, Bennen et al. and we would like to note the perils of visual disinformation in the COVID-19 crisis, when imagery might be employed to spread confusion or to support established storylines concerning public health emergency (Brennen, Simon, & Nielsen, 2021). This speaks to an important need for critical visual literacy, as

misinformation-stoking images can break down trust and contribute to societal divisions. Further, the visual framing of social issues like climate change was investigated by O'Neill et al., who alleged that sensational coverage of heatwaves in European media can weaken the global call to arms on climate by misrepresenting risks (O'Neill et al., 2023). Such framing does not just impact public opinion but can shape the political conversation around climate policies further illustrating the concept that visuals are indeed powerful and their consequences can be major legislative changes.

Overall, the research on image framing and content analysis in news and social media more broadly reveals the complex ways in which visuals influence public opinion, political participation, and the reproduction or subversion of social scripts. Within the realm of representation of social programs in photojournalism, visual mediation in media can influence public opinion of social projects, calling attention towards the necessity of conscious visual and ethical choices when narrating visual themes. Also, visual framing's selection of the story can reinforce those frames and expectations or introduce a new perspective. This can have implications for how viewers judge the effectiveness, fairness, and value of social initiatives, highlighting the relevance of visual ethics in communication.

4.4 Digital Narratives of Gender and Culture during the COVID-19 Pandemic on Social Media

The gendered and cultural digital stories that are being told (specifically on social media) during the pandemic are heavily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. This age of increased connectivity and digital information dependency has impacted how gender identities and cultural narratives are visually made and transmitted. A series of articles shed light on these dynamics and demonstrate how visual framing effectively tells stories of gender, power, and cultural identity. The digital narratives under the pandemic condition were commonly visual stories about the persons and collectivities. For instance, Kwesell et al. highlight social media as an essential arena to circulate narratives of the personal and visual depictions of mechanisms for coping with isolation. The healing function of shared narrative is how collective memory and community resiliency grow in times of pandemic (Kwesell, Wu, Lama, & Lin, 2023). This is also reflected by Damanhoury and Garud-Patkar, who conducted a study on social media content throughout the pandemic, which verified the importance of visual framing in narrative communication, including the visual presentation of public health interventions in a variety of society (El Damanhoury & Garud-Paktar, 2022).

Gender performativity has figured prominently in visual representation on social media as well during this period. Sexist symbols have long served as emotional triggers and the transmitter of what is expected of us as a society. Chen et al. conducted research on the depiction of both gender and the news in images regarding artificial intelligence, revealing how the visual narrative reproduces bias and sustains conventional gender roles (Chen, Zhai, & Sun, 2024). Such is especially the case in COVID-19 with depictions of health care workers where the imagery emphasized the gendered nature of caregiving roles; women were overwhelmingly pictured in the nurturing role, with the effects of reinforcing stereotypes (Brennen et al., 2021). In addition, evidence shows how aesthetics can be politicized during the pandemic. For example, Bastos et al. how the use of visual tropes in the social media disinformation ecosystem engages viewers, sometimes even subtly reinforcing stereotypical norms of gender within narratives aimed at men (Bastos, Mercea, & Goveia, 2023). These framing strategies not only shape gendered perceptions but also societal dynamics more broadly in crisis contexts, themselves a barometer of broader societal values and disparities.

How public health messages are framed also carried important cross-cultural implications. Irom's investigation of visual narratives on the COVID-19 pandemic highlights how geographical proximity and cultural intimacy can shape visual narratives. They claim that representations of one of the marginalized groups, i.e. the Rohingya refugees, have been constructed from the visual images which either humanized or dehumanized it and led to the public empathy and response (Irom, 2025). This suggests an urgent need for more informed visual discourses that celebrate the complexities of gender and cultural identity. Study of stories about marginalized people has exposed omissions and distortions in reporting. For example, Elhosary's work illustrates how differently the disaster survivors were visually framed in the coverage, where participants were visualized as helpless victims in media while NGO accounts materialized positive empowering narratives proposing resilience instead (Elhosary, 2025). Such a dichotomy mirrors more widespread attitudes toward gender during times of emergency. Trending stories have been demonstrated to change taking into consideration of public opinion and social conditions. The COVID-19 outbreak has stimulated new modes of expression that change the way cultural identity is expressed and perceived. The analysis by Safaian and Teune shows that image storylines during the pandemic tend to reflect latent social fears and wishes, specifically along racial and cultural lineaments (Safaian & Teune, 2022). This highlights the power of visual framing as a tool to disrupt or perpetuate stereotypes and prejudice in public debate.

In summary, visual framing on social media has been emphasized in creating and expressing gender and cultural narrations in the pandemic. By attending to the compositional components of these stories, scholars and educators may learn how visual texts construct understanding, influence behavior, and comment on the formations and performance of gender and culture in culture today. In relation to photojournalism's coverage of social programs, these findings serve as a reminder of the importance of critically evaluating visual framing in an effort to promote balance and equity in representation given the medium's potential to reinforce stereotypes or engender empathy.

4.5 The Impact of Visual Framing in Photojournalism on Conflict Perception and Media Effects

Visual framing in photojournalism and public perception of conflict and media effects is a research field of high importance, and is a telling example of the crucial role of visual images in building public perceptions of conflicts. Allison's comprehensive review of the literature illustrates how the pictorial aspect of conflicts particularly with respect to migration, war, and humanitarian crises effects the viewer's emotions and sense of reality. Winkler et al. looked at the use of propaganda through visual means by ISIS, and noted the importance of the audio-visual mix in creating cultural perceptions. Their findings demonstrate how the militated framing of conflict from specific perspectives can arouse emotive reactions and regulate public understanding of, and the complexity of, such narratives (Winkler et al., 2021). This echoes Greenwood and Thomson's study of the need for nuanced visual framing within media reportage which shapes public attitudes of humanitarian-related issues and policy (Greenwood & Thomson, 2020).

A central theme of the literature is how audiences are being discursively constructed by framing of refugees and migrants. For example, Greenwood and Thomson concentrated on news photography exposure of migration images that can elicit either empathy or present people as a threat, highlighting that the visual representation of the images generate the discourse around these images and shape public perception about humanitarian (Greenwood & Thomson, 2020). Further support is lent by Borah and Irom, who examined the visual framing of the Rohingya

crisis and donation intentions, revealing that frame images are critical to shaping public willingness to help during a humanitarian crisis (Borah & Irom, 2021). Furthermore the study of Elshabassy et al. counterpoised these conversations by comparing how Middle Eastern refugees versus European refugees are visualized in social media at times of crisis. They demonstrated how differences in framings can evoke different cultural sympathies, thereby at last defining who is and is not entitled to aid in war situations (ElShabassy et al., 2025). This difference matters, because it reflects a broader societal bias in media coverage.

Visual framing in conflict photography is also evident in the public's understanding of events concerning police brutality, for instance, which we can see, for example, from Wan et al., who analyzed media coverage of the Los Angeles and Ferguson riots. Their research also demonstrated the influence of different visual frames in arousing different emotions, which suggested the importance of context and presentation in conflict stories (Wan, Mortensen, Zhu, & Li, 2018). This is also the viewpoint of Hellmueller and Zhang, who sought to explore the "role of iconic pictures as the turning point in altering patterns of global discourse about the refugee crisis but get closer to the people rather than just having texts do the job (Hellmueller & Zhang, 2019). Visual propaganda is also consequently emerged as a key component of conflict narratives, often on platforms such as social media. The work of Seo and Ebrahim demonstrates the way visual propaganda has been used in conflicts such as the Syrian war, with images chosen and edited to represent particular ideological storylines (Seo & Ebrahim, 2016). This shows that the force of visual form can reach beyond a form of representation and be deeply involved in discursive formations, in this case, in the shaping and reshaping of how to think and enframe something in the world, hence the importance of a discourse analytic appreciation of the framing of images.

In summary, the visual framing effect in photojournalism on interpretation of conflict and news effects on considering ethic aspects and critical viewing in visual media. When portraying social programmes in pictures, the framing of images can have an effect on how the programmes are viewed by the public, affecting perceptions and uptake. Photojournalists create the visual narrative, and have the power to either encourage understanding and support through responsible visual storytelling, or perpetuate biases and misunderstandings.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the wide-ranging survey of existing research in visual frames of social programs in photojournalism indicates the importance of visual storytelling practices in informing the public, facilitating social knowledge and driving social conversations across different parts of the world with notable influence from the US and other leading countries with which it has strong global ties. The bibliometric analysis is interesting as it shows the predominance of social sciences in the field, especially communication, sociology, and media studies, reflecting the interdisciplinary character of visual framing research. Going forward, and based on the findings presented, it is suggested that digital platforms and visual story-telling tools can be further examined to make the active participation and emotional engagement of the audience even more effective, to research the intersectionality of social issues with groundbreaking visual methodologies and to expand the cross-cultural and international cooperation to include a wider variety of voices and contexts. Furthermore, researchers should focus on longitudinal studies to trace changes and emerging patterns of visual framing and its societal implications, with a commitment to methodological and ethical rigor. Building on

interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary methods as well as advancing the use of new technologies in image and data analysis tools the result will be a broader understanding and visualization of social programs - leading to enhanced rhetoric capacity and more effective communication strategies for facilitating awareness and reality change within communities.

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