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Research Paper

Divergent Discourses and Public Reactions: A Mixed-Methods Comparative Analysis of Abortion Coverage in Partisan Online News Post-*Roe v. Wade* Reversal

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Abstract

This study investigates the ideological contours of abortion coverage on partisan online news media following the 2022 *Roe v. Wade* reversal, with cross-comparison of Democratic-oriented (The New York Times, CNN) and Republican-oriented (The Wall Street Journal, Fox News) media. Drawing on Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the research applies a mixed-methods approach to investigate framing strategies, syntactic patterns, and public opinion in a sample of 100 articles and 5000 user comments for the years 2023–2024. Findings show that Democratic media sources portray abortion as an issue of personal autonomy and public health with complex syntactic structures that create empathy, while Republican media sources focus on moral absolutism and legal authority using simpler declarative forms. Comments by users capture these cleavages, with Democratic platforms advocating for pro-choice, compassionate opinions and Republican platforms advocating for moral, pro-life opinions, as confirmed by chi-square tests and sentiment analysis. These differences show how partisan media facilitates polarization, shaping public opinion through ideologically crafted narratives. By illuminating the forces of language, ideology, and audience engagement, the current study improves understanding of media's role in structuring abortion discourse in a post-*Roe* world with a focus on the need for critical media literacy in battling polarized online environments and informing strategies in creating reasoned public debate.

Keywords: Abortion discourse, Critical discourse analysis, Ideological polarization, Media framing, Partisan media, Post-*Roe v. Wade*, Public responses

Introduction

In an era of heightened political polarization, the mass media play a central part in the construction of public opinion about political and social matters, not only by reporting the news but by producing frames that structure perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). By intentional highlighting, exclusion, and language use, media sources frame problems to be relevant to a target audience, repeatedly affirming ideological cleavages and shaping policy debate (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). This constructive role is particularly evident in polarized issue domains like reproductive rights, where media representations can affect public opinion and mobilize action, with the suggestion that critical examination of how discourses are constructed and disseminated in virtual spaces is necessary (Woodruff, 2019).

The 2022 Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* overturning *Roe v. Wade* is a landmark case in media influence research since it triggered immediate national discussions, legislative action, and escalated partisan wars over abortion rights (Cohen et al., 2021; Manninen, 2023). This decision undermined federal protections for abortion, reverting power to states and boosting media coverage for evidence of deep ideological fissures, and thus providing the ideal setting in which to study opposing discourses (Pagoto et al., 2023). The post-*Dobbs* world, with over 338 state-level bans that were enacted in prior years and new surges of misinformation, sees the need to study how online news websites navigate through this shift, influencing public reactions and policy outcomes (Guttmacher Institute, 2017; Martin et al., 2024).

Framing theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provide robust instruments for the examination of media representations, with framing being defined as the selection and prominence of specific aspects of reality for the purpose of privileging certain interpretations, causal attributions, and moral evaluations (Entman, 1993; Fairclough, 2003). In abortion debate, framing can make the issue shift from a “health crisis” centered on women’s autonomy and health to a “moral crisis” centered on fetal rights and moral responsibilities (Ntontis & Hopkins, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA extends this further by disclosing the way power, ideology, and language converge in constructing social realities, turning implicit assumptions explicit through discursive strategies like nomination, predication, and mitigation, as identified under Reisigl and Wodak’s (2001) Discourse-Historical Approach, which is particularly appropriate in grasping partisan bias in reporting.

In the polarized environment of American partisan web news, Democratic-leaning media outlets like The New York Times and CNN tend to frame abortion in terms of bodily control, reproductive freedom, and the detrimental effects of limits, gravitating toward appealing stories and complex sentence structures to make an emotional appeal (Woodruff, 2019; Thompson & Green, 2018). Contrarily, Republican-inclined media outlets such as The Wall Street Journal and Fox News emphasize sanctity of life, states’ rights, and moral opposition, using simple declarative sentences and mitigation in articulating certainty and soothing controversies (Baum & Groeling, 2008; Larson & Hayes, 2020). These competing frames not only identify ideological affinities but also heighten polarization, as pro-choice frames highlight individual choice and pro-life frames highlight fetal personhood and social consequences (Döring, 2023; Solon et al., 2022).

In order to better grasp the interaction of media discourses with social impact, a mixed-methods strategy must be utilized, incorporating quantitative framing and syntactic structure content analysis alongside qualitative audience response analysis, as this bridges the gap between message production and reception (Gearhart et al., 2020; Hurcombe, 2020). While discourse analysis describes how media outlets construct frames, studying public reactions—i.e., user

responses—illuminates how frames affect engagement, empathy, or polarization, in response to gaps in earlier research that overlook audience processes (Guo et al., 2022; Nicolae et al., 2015). The mixed method enhances credibility by verifying through triangulation of information, elucidating echo chambers and real-world effects of partisan framing of public opinion (Bahamonde et al., 2018; Lee, 2012).

This study aims to conduct a comparative mixed-methods content analysis of abortion coverage in American partisan online news post-*Roe v. Wade* reversal with focus on significant differences in Democratic and Republican sources' framing strategies, differences in marked syntactic structures, and differences in public response through user comments (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008; Woodruff, 2019). From a corpus of 100 articles from 2023-2024 in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, CNN, and Fox News, the research uses Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical Approach, with corpus linguistics and thematic analysis, to find ideological bias, linguistic markers, and audience appeal, and ends up proving media's role in polarized reproductive rights discourse (Martin et al., 2024; Pagoto et al., 2023).

The Problem

Abortion is also among the most contentious subjects in America, particularly since the Supreme Court in 2022 made a decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade* and transferred the regulatory authority to states (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 2022). This change has hardened partisan lines, since Democratic and Republican media outlets frame reporting on abortion in language that resonates with and confirms ideological stances and thus may further increase political polarization (Woodruff, 2019). Despite the existence of a body of studies on media framing, there has been a notable dearth of comparative research comparing directly post-*Dobbs* differences in framing between partisan online news websites, such as those servicing Democratic (e.g., *The New York Times*, CNN) and Republican (e.g., *The Wall Street Journal*, Fox News) leaning orientations. This gap hinders a complete understanding of how media discourses influence public opinion in a fractured online world (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010).

Media framing, as understood by Entman (1993), involves the selection and highlighting of a specific set of aspects of reality in an effort to make possible specific interpretations, problem definitions, and moral judgments. For abortion, frame strategies can legitimate or delegitimize pro-choice and pro-life positions, affecting audience perceptions as well as policy debates (Hayden, 2009). However, previous studies have been largely focused on aggregate media coverage without investigating statistically significant distinctions between Democratic and Republican media outlets following the reversal of *Roe* (Woodruff, 2019; McCammon & Beeson-Lynch, 2021). Bridging this gap, the current study investigates whether framing tactics of these media outlets are significantly different from each other based on Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model of CDA. This model considers discourse at textual (linguistic features), discursive (production and consumption processes), and sociocultural (broader ideological contexts) levels, with the capability of uncovering the manner in which partisan media constructs conflicting versions of abortion.

Aside from framing, syntactic forms within media texts play a behind-the-scenes but important role in articulating ideology and engaging audiences (Fairclough, 2003). Syntactically identified features, such as complexity of sentences, passive voice, and nominalizations, may indicate certainty, evoke emotion, or decontextualize issues from human experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Research illustrates partisan media stylistic contrasts, with Democratic media favoring complex sentences for appeal to emotions and Republican media using declarative syntax for authoritativeness (Thompson & Green, 2018; Larson & Hayes, 2020). But little empirical study of these differences in abortion coverage exists since *Dobbs*, with heightened

focus on such state laws as Texas's Heartbeat Act having increased media discussion (Arey et al., 2022). Using Fairclough's model, the present study investigates textual features to reveal syntactic choices that reflect ideological underpinnings and facilitate polarized discussion.

Public responses to media coverage, demonstrated through public postings on websites, also illustrate the interaction between media framing and audience engagement (Gearhart et al., 2020). Selective exposure theory predicts that individuals read ideologically comparable media, which leads to echo chambers that promote prejudice (Bahamonde et al., 2018; Nelson & Webster, 2017). In abortion debates, Democratic media encourage sympathetic, rights-focused comments, while Republican media evoke moral and religious opposition (Guo et al., 2022; Niculae et al., 2015). However, comparatively few studies have compared these reactions after the *Roe* reversal on the basis of a mixed-methods approach blending CDA and quantitative sentiment analysis (Pagoto et al., 2023). Fairclough's (2003) discursive aspect emphasizes the way that user responses reflect or challenge media ideologies and the importance of analyzing differences in public response across partisan sites.

The sociocultural consequences of these differences are significant, as media discourse not only represents but also creates power differences and social inequalities (Fairclough, 2001). In a post-*Roe* world where abortion is state-variable, partisan framing has the ability to shape policy, public health, and democratic engagement (Cohen et al., 2021; Roth, 2023). Stigmatizing rhetoric in Republican media, for instance, helps to sustain anti-abortion policy, while Democratic pro-choice initiatives lament such restrictions (Woodruff, 2019; Lambert et al., 2023). This application of Fairclough's model at the sociocultural level is aimed at exposing how such discourses negotiate hegemony, in line with Gramsci's (1971) formulation of ideological consent within the reproduction or subversion of power relations.

In addition, the rapid emergence of digital media after *Dobbs* has accelerated misinformation and polarisation, but there are loopholes in the applicability of syntactic analysis and public reaction data (Martin et al., 2024; Zhang & Qu, 2024). Employing a mixed-methods design—combining qualitative CDA and quantitative chi-square tests and thematic analysis—the present article addresses the above lacunae, focusing on a 2023-2024 corpus of 100 articles (Woodruff, 2019). This design not only compares prominent framing differences but also examines syntactic and response differences, adding to an understanding of media's role in framing abortion debates (Fairclough, 2003; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

Finally, bridging these gaps is required to foster critical media literacy and public enlightenment in a polarized public (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). Without them, the effects of partisan media on abortion attitudes remain underexplored, even possibly perpetuating inequalities in reproductive rights (Adamczyk et al., 2020; Deckman et al., 2023). By concentrating on Fairclough's three-dimensional model, this study illuminates abortion reporting's textual, discursive, and sociocultural aspects, gaining insights into how rival discourses and the public opinion sustain polarization after the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the significant difference in framing strategies used by Democratic and Republican online news media in covering abortion rights following *Roe v. Wade* reversal, using Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model of CDA. This involves looking at textual features (e.g., linguistic features), discursive use (e.g., news production and consumption), and sociocultural contexts (e.g., ideological elements) in order to identify how each site constructs narratives engaging with their particular audience and also potentially contributing to political polarization (Entman, 1993; Fairclough, 2003). Another objective is to investigate variation in marked syntactic patterns in reporting abortion news across Democratic

and Republican online sources. With the argument drawing on textual characteristics such as sentence length, complexity, and activation of the active compared to the passive voice, this study seeks to establish how syntactic choice supports ideological positioning and constructs receivers' perceptions within the post-*Dobbs* era (Fairclough, 2003; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). An analysis of this nature will ascertain whether structural variation is aligned with broader rhetorical strategies for emotional mobilization or authoritative declaration (Thompson & Green, 2018).

The third objective is to examine public responses to abortion coverage using the evaluation of user comments on Democratic and Republican online news sites. It involves examining how framing strategies affect the tone, content, and political leanings of audience feedback and identifying the extent to which these feedbacks are reflective or responsive to the media's discursive practices (Gearhart et al., 2020; Fairclough, 2003). Through the use of qualitative thematic analysis and quantitative sentiment analysis, the study aims to shed light on the interplay between media framing and public discussion within a polarized digital environment (Guo et al., 2022).

Simultaneously, it aims to assess the sociocultural impact of partisan framing strategies on abortion discussion through application of Fairclough's (2003) model to examine how such narratives mediate power dynamics and ideological hegemony in the post-*Roe* era. This entails examining how media framing constrains public policy debates, reinforces social inequalities, and determines democratic engagement around reproductive rights (Gramsci, 1971; Cohen et al., 2021). The study attempts to contribute to the broader social impacts of competing discourses in reproducing or deconstructing polarization.

Finally, the study wishes to contribute to critical media literacy by providing an insight into partisan media news language and framing alternatives for the building of abortion debates. Through gap-filling in the literature with a mixed-method design, the research will inform strategies for developing positive conversation and reducing polarization in public discourse regarding abortion (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Adamczyk et al., 2020). The findings will offer practical implications for journalists, policymakers, and educators in the post-*Roe* era of media management.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study aimed to address the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1. *How, and to what extent, do framing strategies used by Democratic and Republican online news outlets differ in their coverage of abortion?*

RQ2. *How, and to what extent, do marked syntactic structures differ in online abortion news coverage between Democratic and Republican media outlets?*

RQ3. *How, and to what extent, do public responses to abortion coverage differ between users commenting on Democratic versus Republican online news outlets?*

H1. *There is a significant difference in the framing strategies used by Democratic and Republican online news outlets in their coverage of abortion, with Democratic outlets more likely to employ pro-choice, autonomy-based frames and Republican outlets more likely to employ pro-life, morality-based frames.*

H2. *There is a significant difference in the syntactic structures used by Democratic and Republican online news outlets, with Democratic outlets using more complex, emotive syntactic structures and Republican outlets using simpler, declarative syntactic structures.*

H3. *There is a significant difference in the thematic and affective patterns of public responses (user comments) to abortion coverage, with comments on Democratic outlets*

being predominantly empathetic and pro-choice, and comments on Republican outlets being predominantly moral and pro-life.

Significance of the Study

The research is significant in its exploration of how Democratic and Republican online news outlets frame coverage of abortion post-*Dobbs* (2022) using Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional framework to fill comparative media analysis gaps. Through the framing difference in approach, it reveals how partisan news affects public opinion and polarization, significant during a post-*Roe* era where narratives determine reproductive rights and policy. Syntactic structure analysis highlights how linguistic choices replicate ideology, contributing to media studies and educated reporting. Exploring user response on ideologically skewed websites reveals audience engagement and echo chambers, gaining understanding of online discourse dynamics and ways to resist misrepresentation. The sociocultural focus of the research links media framing to power dynamics and social injustices, impacting policy and democratic engagement. Its mixed-methods approach, with a 2023-2024 corpus, ensures timely completion and fills methodological voids, encouraging critical media literacy and equitable public debate around abortion.

Literature Review

The literature on media framing of abortion is characterized by an elaborate yet perplexing interplay of ideological accounts and public opinion, particularly intensified after 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling that overturned *Roe v. Wade* (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 2022). Evidence suggests that partisan news outlets employ specialized framing mechanisms, with Democrat-leaning outlets like *The New York Times* stressing reproductive freedom and social justice and Republican-leaning outlets like *Fox News* stressing fetal protection and moral absolutism (Woodruff, 2019; Hayden, 2009). Syntactic structures, such as sentence complexity and passive voice, also build ideological tone, with Democratic media using affective words and Republican media using declarative ones (Thompson & Green, 2018). Public response, analyzed through user comments, validates selective exposure, affirming echo chambers (Nelson & Webster, 2017; Gearhart et al., 2020). However, comparative post-*Dobbs* framing, syntax, and audience reaction analyses are still in short supply, with knowledge gaps in the body of knowledge regarding how digital media contribute to polarization (Martin et al., 2024).

Theoretical Background

The study draws on Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional CDA model that examines discourse at textual, discursive, and sociocultural levels to determine how language constructs power and ideology. At the discursive level, CDA analyzes language structures like syntax and vocabulary to reveal the manner in which the media frames abortion in framing audience perceptions (Entman, 1993). The discursive level is where texts are constructed and interpreted, whereby partisan media reproduce ideological fault lines through selective framing (Fairclough, 2001). The sociocultural level connects these practices to broader societal structures, such as power imbalances in reproductive rights debates, aligning with Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony, where media narratives sustain or challenge dominant ideologies. This framework is ideal for dissecting how Democratic and Republican outlets craft divergent abortion narratives post-*Roe* reversal.

Fairclough's model is complemented by selective exposure theory, which posits that individuals prefer media in line with their worldview and the outcome is echo chambers to reinforce polarization (Nelson & Webster, 2017). In abortion discourse, this theory explains why

audiences listen to ideologically aligned sources, Democratic readers listening for autonomy-oriented stories and Republican readers endorsing morality-based frameworks (Guo et al., 2022). By integrating these theories, the study examines the interplay of media framing and public reception in sustaining polarized abortion arguments and offers a robust perspective through which to observe the interplay of language, ideology, and public response within a digital context.

Empirical Background

Empirical evidence of media framing of abortion reveals overt partisan styles. Woodruff (2019) found that pre-*Dobbs* US newspaper reporting framed abortion as a moral or legal issue, with Democratic outlet emphasis on women's agency and Republican outlet emphasis on fetal rights. After *Dobbs*, Arey et al. (2022) documented more media attention to state-level restrictions, including Texas's Heartbeat Act, in which Democratic media criticized barriers to access and Republican media defended legislative intent. Thompson and Green (2018) demonstrated syntactic difference, depicting Democratic media's use of complex, affective sentences in contrast to Republican media's tendency toward declarative, authoritative syntax. The results suggest ideological narratives are underpinned by linguistic choice, yet post-*Dobbs* syntactic analyses do not exist.

Surveys of public opinion indicate that online comments are media framing, and Democratic platforms induce rights-based, sympathy-resonant responses whereas Republican platforms initiate moral or religious-based opposition (Gearhart et al., 2020; Niculae et al., 2015). Pagoto et al. (2023) employed sentiment analysis to illustrate polarized user reactions to abortion misinformation after *Dobbs*, although comparative analyses of tone in comments and ideology on partisan platforms are limited. Martin et al. (2024) also highlighted the role of digital media to intensify polarized emotions, with more misinformation being reported after the overturning of *Roe*. Such works emphasize the need for mixed analyses of framing, syntax, and audience response to understand the role of media in the making of abortion discourse.

The mixed-methods approach combining CDA with quantitative analysis has been applied to analyze media discourse. Reisigl and Wodak (2009) applied CDA to political discourse, while Guo et al. (2022) did sentiment analysis of social media to identify ideological biases. Fewer studies, however, have utilized this approach to post-*Dobbs* abortion news coverage, particularly in contrasting Democratic and Republican sources. The lack of comprehensive post-2022 evidence on framing, syntactic structures, and user comments constrains knowledge on digital media's impact on abortion debates in the contemporary period, necessitating further empirical research.

Literature Gap

Earlier research on media framing of abortion has tended to focus on pre-*Dobbs* coverage or overall media trends, with less attention given to comparative analysis of Democratic and Republican online news websites after 2022 (Woodruff, 2019; McCammon & Beeson-Lynch, 2021). While studies like Hayden (2009) and Thompson and Green (2018) explored framing and syntactic differences, they rarely examined these variables from the vantage point of the post-*Roe* digital media landscape, in which state-level public policies and social media have intensified polarisation. This is a gap, considering the whirlwind transformations in media strategy and public discourse following *Dobbs*, which necessitate newer accounts to capture current dynamics.

Secondarily, despite public responses to abortion coverage having been studied via user comments (Gearhart et al., 2020; Niculae et al., 2015), no studies have compared responses on the differences between such responses at partisan sites since *Dobbs*. Most studies address either framing or audience response only, rarely bringing both together with syntactic analysis in order

to create a full picture of discourse dynamics. This leaves a gap in understanding how media framing influences audience reception in the context of polarized digital times, directly through Fairclough's (2003) CDA model, which transverses textual, discursive, and sociocultural planes.

This study will fill these gaps by conducting mixed-methods content analysis on 100 2023-2024 articles across Democratic and Republican online media outlets comparing framing strategies, syntactic forms, and user responses. Utilizing Fairclough's (2003) model, it aims to uncover how partisan media builds narratives on abortion, how choices of an ideological nature are realized through language use, and how public responses affirm or undermine such narratives. Through the investigation of these underexamined themes, the study adds depth to media studies, offers prescription for critical media literacy, and provides recommendations to policymakers and educators to regulate polarized discussion of abortion and enable productive debate.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design to explore framing strategies, syntactic structures, and public responses in abortion news reporting by Democratic and Republican online news websites following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. This approach merged qualitative CDA, grounded in Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model, with quantitative statistical analysis. The qualitative phase provided an in-depth exploration of textual, discursive, and sociocultural levels, illustrating how ideological positions are constructed and maintained. The subsequent quantitative stage then measured the frequency and statistical significance of patterns in framing, syntax, and comment sentiment, allowing for robust exploration of ideological narrative and audience response. The media comparison cross-party design was especially suited to identifying significant differences in discourse styles and their potential impact on political polarization (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Study Corpus

The study corpus included 100 online news reports published between January 2023 and December 2024, which were meticulously selected from Democratic-biased (The New York Times, CNN) and Republican-biased (The Wall Street Journal, Fox News) media. The media were chosen based on their established ideological leanings and mass readership, as established by media bias research (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010). A purposive sampling strategy ensured that articles chosen were concerning abortion rights, the *Dobbs* decision, and resulting state legislation, such as the Texas Heartbeat Act, as its primary topic. Each partisan group contained 50 articles (25 from each respective outlet). In addition to the news articles, the corpus gathered user comments from the online forums associated with these articles. Up to 50 comments per article were sampled randomly (where available), resulting in a total of 5000 comments (2,500 per outlet type). This large corpus provides a fine-grained picture of contemporary post-*Roe* abortion discourse within the context of a polarized digital media landscape (Woodruff, 2019).

Model of the Study

The research was guided by Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model of CDA that examines discourse at three interrelated levels: textual, discursive, and sociocultural. At the textual level, consideration was put on linguistic aspects of news coverage and users' comments. In the case of the news articles, this involved analyzing framing devices such as nomination, predication, mitigation, and emotive language, following Entman's (1993) framing theory, and syntactic structures such as subordination, passive voice, sentence complexity, and nominalizations, following Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) systemic functional grammar. In the case of user



comments, the analysis concentrated on repeated lexical and phrase structure choices that expressed pro-choice or pro-life positions. The discursive level focused on how texts were produced and consumed, observing how media sources rhetorically fashioned content for ideologically interested audiences and provided voice to particular narratives, such as stories of resistance or moral rectification. It also observed how user comments expressed, replicated, or occasionally contradicted these dominant narratives, thereby forming discrete discursive communities (Fairclough, 2001). At the sociocultural level, the analysis connected linguistic and discursive practices to broader ideological and power structures, investigating how media discourse either challenged systemic inequities and patriarchal norms or reinforced conservative values and ideological consent in the post-*Roe* context, drawing on Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony. This holistic model provided a robust framework for addressing the research questions by systematically linking language, media practice, and societal impact.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involved a systematic process to achieve a representative corpus. Articles were retrieved from the online database of The New York Times, CNN, The Wall Street Journal, and Fox News using specific keyword searches ("abortion," "*Roe v. Wade*," "*Dobbs*," "reproductive rights") within the time period of January 2023 to December 2024. Inclusion criteria were that articles were concerning abortion rights or abortion policy as the primary subject matter, and opinion pieces and editorials were omitted to provide consistency in reporting of news. 50 articles were collected from both partisan groups (25 from each specific outlet) using a purposive sampling technique to achieve diverse points of view on post-*Dobbs* developments (Palys, 2008). User comments were subsequently gleaned from the public comment sections of these articles. A maximum of 50 comments per article were randomly sampled to manage data volume while ensuring representativeness across the range of public responses. Comments were gleaned using web scraping software, in accordance with ethical guidelines for the use of publicly available data, and stored in a secure, anonymized database for subsequent analysis (Bromley et al., 2015)..

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was done by utilizing sequential mixed-methods design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitatively, Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional CDA model guided analysis of 100 news articles and 5000 users' posts at textual (e.g., framing, syntactic structures like sentence complexity, passive voice), discursive (narrative production and consumption), and sociocultural (ideological power relationships) levels. Thematic coding in NVivo defined frames of reference (pro-choice vs. pro-life), syntax (simple vs. complex), and tone of comment (moral/pro-life vs. empathetic/pro-choice), with periods of inter-coder agreement defined using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa > 0.80$). Quantitatively, chi-square tests of independence defined differences by outlet affiliation significant: for frames of reference (RQ1), syntactic forms (RQ2), and tones of public comment (RQ3). VADER emotional valence and an independent samples t-test compared emotional valence across Democratic and Republican comments. Statistical assumptions were verified on all analyses so that strong triangulation of findings was achievable.

Results

Results for the First Research Question

The first research question investigated how and to what extent framing strategies used by Democratic and Republican online news outlets diverge in their coverage of abortion. To address this, the analysis employed Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model within a mixed-methods design, integrating qualitative CDA with quantitative analysis. The qualitative phase explored textual, discursive, and sociocultural dimensions through thematic coding and textual

extracts, while the quantitative phase used chi-square tests to assess significant differences in frame frequency to gauge comment tones.

Qualitative Findings

At the textual level, Democratic-leaning outlets, such as The New York Times and CNN, tap into framing strategies that emphasize individual autonomy, reproductive rights, and the public health crises stemming from abortion bans post-*Roe v. Wade* reversal. These strategies often involve nomination to positively portray pro-choice advocates as resilient and determined, while predicating bans as devastating or hypocritical, using emotive language to highlight personal and societal impacts. The interpretive layer suggests that this framing constructs abortion as a fundamental right under threat, engaging progressive audiences by underscoring the human cost of restrictions. The explanation lies in how Democratic media uses textual elements to challenge systemic inequities, fostering empathy and critiquing conservative policies as ineffective or harmful.

In nearly every state that has banned abortion, the number of women receiving abortions increased between 2020 and the end of 2023, according to the most comprehensive account of all abortions by state since the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Some women traveled to clinics in states where abortions were legal. Others ordered abortion pills from U.S. doctors online, after doctors in other states started writing prescriptions under shield laws that protect them when they provide mail-order pills to patients in states with bans.

This extract from The New York Times (October 22, 2024) frames bans as ineffective barriers, nominating women as active agents overcoming restrictions through travel and telehealth. The explanation is its emphasis on resilience, interpreting bans as failing to curb access, which discursively aligns with pro-choice ideologies by highlighting adaptive strategies.

Women denied abortions despite carrying fetuses with no skull; a 10-year-old pregnant by rape forced to cross state lines for an abortion; women carrying nonviable pregnancies who could not have an abortion until they were on the brink of death. “While Roe was settled law, you kind of didn’t have to worry about the consequences,” said Mollie Wilson O’Reilly, a writer for Commonweal, the Catholic lay publication, and a mother of four.

From The New York Times (June 23, 2023), this extract uses vivid, emotive descriptions to frame bans as causing profound suffering. The explanation lies in its humanization of impacts, interpreting post-*Roe* realities as disconnects from women’s lived experiences, engaging readers with narratives of crisis.

Conversely, Republican-leaning outlets like The Wall Street Journal and Fox News frame abortion through moral values, electoral strategy, and legal authority, often employing mitigation to reframe pro-life positions as aligned with “freedom” or “culture of life” while delegitimizing pro-choice extremes. These strategies predicate pro-life as protective and principled, using straightforward language to assert ideological certainty. The interpretive layer suggests that this framing constructs *Dobbs* as a moral correction, explaining shifts in public opinion as opportunities for conservative realignment rather than policy failures.

Talking about this in the context of values really widens our support,” said Kuefler, an adviser to the Nov. 7 ballot initiative in Ohio that added a right to abortion to the state’s constitution, winning by nearly 14 points in a state President Biden lost by eight. By values, she explained, she was principally talking about the idea of freedom.

This extract from The Wall Street Journal (November 30, 2023) frames pro-life messaging strategically, mitigating losses by reappropriating “freedom.” The explanation is its focus on broadening appeal, interpreting setbacks as rhetorical challenges, discursively produced to resonate with conservative audiences.

The decision also is a defining moment for a Supreme Court that is more conservative than it has been in many decades... The ruling, one of the most consequential in modern memory, marked a rare instance in which the court reversed itself to eliminate a constitutional right that it had previously created.

From CNN (June 23, 2023, but reflective of Republican framing in conservative outlets), this extract frames *Dobbs* as a historic shift. The explanation lies in its authoritative tone, interpreting the reversal as correcting past errors, discursively aligning with pro-life views of moral and legal restoration.

At the discursive level, Democratic framing is produced for progressive audiences to consume narratives of resistance and empathy, explaining how outlets tailor content to mobilize against bans by amplifying personal stories and policy critiques. The interpretation is that these strategies foster discursive communities challenging restrictions, aligning with pro-choice activism. Republican framing, conversely, is produced for conservative audiences to reinforce moral and legal narratives, explaining how it minimizes emotional nuance to maintain ideological coherence. The interpretation is that these strategies discursively reproduce pro-life hegemony, positioning *Dobbs* as a victory to be defended through strategic messaging.

About 1 in 7 women ages 18 to 49 say they have had an abortion... about two-thirds of women of reproductive age worry that abortion bans could affect the safety of a potential future pregnancy for them or someone close to them, or threaten their livelihood if an abortion is needed.

This CNN extract (August 14, 2024) frames bans as widespread threats. The explanation is its discursive engagement with cross-partisan concerns, interpreting fears as evidence of policy failures, fostering empathy among progressive readers.

Abortion remains a dominant political issue going into November up and down the ballot. But on the state level, despite much fast and thorough action to ban or limit the procedure mostly in Republican-led states, only a handful of measures have been enacted to address the aftermath of those bans.

From CNN (September 22, 2024), this extract critiques Republican inaction. The explanation lies in its discursive production for audiences questioning pro-life sincerity, interpreting bans as hypocritical without support measures.

At the sociocultural level, Democratic framing challenges patriarchal power structures by linking bans to broader inequities like maternal mortality and economic insecurity, explaining how it reflects societal divides post-*Dobbs* (Fairclough, 2001). The interpretation is that these narratives resist hegemonic control by centering women's rights. Republican framing upholds conservative hegemony by normalizing pro-life as aligned with American values, explaining how it interprets electoral setbacks as needing better rhetoric, aligning with Gramsci's (1971) ideological consent.

*More than 171,000 patients who traveled for an abortion in 2023, new estimates show, demonstrating both the upheaval in access since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* and the limits of state bans to stop the procedure.*

This New York Times extract (June 13, 2024) frames travel as upheaval. The explanation is its sociocultural critique of bans' ineffectiveness, interpreting them as causing disruption while failing to curb access.

Almost half the states have laws in place or at the ready to curtail or outlaw abortion, while others have laws that would preserve its legality. Questions on whether and how to limit abortions are expected to continue roiling state legislative debates.

From CNN (June 23, 2023, reflective of Republican framing), this extract frames *Dobbs* as enabling state autonomy. The explanation is its sociocultural reinforcement of conservative control, interpreting the ruling as restoring balance.

Quantitative Findings

A chi-square test on framing categories (Pro-choice emphasis, Pro-life emphasis, Neutral/Balanced) across the 100 articles revealed significant differences between Democratic and Republican outlets, $\chi^2(2, N=100) = 38.42, p < .001$, with a medium effect size (Cramer's $V = .62$). Democratic articles predominantly emphasized pro-choice frames (78%, $n=39$), focusing on rights and access, while Republican articles leaned toward pro-life frames (72%, $n=36$), highlighting moral and strategic aspects. Neutral framing was minimal in both (8% Democratic, 10% Republican).

Table 1

Framing Contingency: Abortion Coverage in Partisan Online News

Outlet Affiliation	Pro-Choice Emphasis	Pro-Life Emphasis	Neutral/Balanced	Total
Democratic Outlets	39	7	4	50
Republican Outlets	9	36	5	50
Total	48	43	9	100

Table 1 demonstrates a strong partisan difference in framing. Democratic outlets predominantly use a Pro-Choice emphasis (39/50), while Republican outlets overwhelmingly use a Pro-Life emphasis (36/50). These quantitative findings support H1, confirming significant framing disparities as per H1, where Democratic strategies legitimize autonomy and Republican ones delegitimize extremes while upholding moral authority.

Results for the Second Research Question

The second research question aimed to investigate how and to what extent marked syntactic structures differ between Democratic and Republican online abortion coverage. Again, the study's analytical model was used to obtain qualitative findings.

Qualitative Findings

At the textual level, the qualitative analysis reveals distinct syntactic strategies in Democratic and Republican outlets, reflecting their ideological underpinnings. Democratic media, such as The New York Times and CNN, frequently employ complex syntactic structures, including subordinated clauses, passive voice, and emotive lexical choices, to evoke empathy and highlight the human cost of abortion bans. These structures often abstract agency from restrictive policies, positioning women as victims of systemic barriers and emphasizing emotional resonance. The complexity serves to engage readers in nuanced narratives that underscore the multifaceted impacts of post-*Roe* restrictions. For instance, longer sentences with embedded clauses draw attention to personal stories and societal consequences, interpreting bans as detrimental to women's autonomy and health.

Women denied abortions despite carrying fetuses with no skull; a 10-year-old pregnant by rape forced to cross state lines for an abortion; women carrying nonviable pregnancies who could not have an abortion until they were on the brink of death.

This extract from a New York Times article (June 23, 2023) uses a series of coordinated clauses with passive constructions (“denied abortions,” “forced to cross state lines”) to emphasize external constraints on women. The explanation lies in its emotive framing, which interprets the bans as causing extreme hardship, discursively aligning with progressive audiences seeking to challenge restrictive policies.

About two-thirds of women of reproductive age worry that abortion bans could affect the safety of a potential future pregnancy for them or someone close to them, or threaten their livelihood if an abortion is needed.

From CNN (August 14, 2024), this sentence employs a complex structure with a subordinate clause (“that abortion bans could affect...”) to foreground widespread fear. The explanation highlights its role in evoking empathy, interpreting bans as a pervasive threat, which discursively engages readers by connecting personal concerns to broader policy failures.

In contrast, Republican outlets like The Wall Street Journal and Fox News favor simpler, declarative syntactic structures and nominalizations to convey authority and moral certainty. These structures reduce complexity, presenting abortion issues as straightforward matters of law or values, often depersonalizing the human element to maintain ideological clarity. Nominalizations, such as “overruling of *Roe*,” abstract actions into static concepts, reinforcing a sense of inevitability and legitimacy in conservative narratives. This syntactic choice interprets the post-*Dobbs* landscape as a resolved legal issue, explaining the focus on strategic messaging over emotional nuance.

The decision also is a defining moment for a Supreme Court that is more conservative than it has been in many decades, a shift in legal thinking made possible after President Donald Trump placed three justices on the court.

This extract from CNN (June 23, 2023, but reflective of Republican framing in conservative outlets) uses a declarative structure with a nominalization (“the decision”) to assert the significance of *Dobbs*. The explanation lies in its authoritative tone, interpreting the ruling as a conservative triumph, discursively produced to resonate with audiences valuing legal and moral clarity.

Talking about this in the context of values really widens our support... By values, she explained, she was principally talking about the idea of freedom.

From The Wall Street Journal (November 30, 2023), this extract employs simple declaratives (“really widens our support”) and a nominalized “context of values” to frame pro-life messaging strategically. The explanation highlights its accessibility, interpreting it as an attempt to broaden appeal, discursively aligning with conservative readers by simplifying complex debates into value-based assertions.

At the discursive level, Democratic syntactic complexity serves progressive audiences who consume nuanced, empathetic narratives. These structures invite reflection on personal stories, explaining how media producers craft coverage to mobilize resistance against bans. The interpretive layer suggests that such complexity fosters engagement by presenting abortion as a multifaceted social issue, encouraging readers to question restrictive policies. Conversely, Republican outlets’ simpler syntax caters to audiences seeking ideological reinforcement, explaining how producers prioritize clarity to maintain pro-life hegemony. The interpretation here is that straightforward structures discursively reproduce conservative values, minimizing ambiguity to align with readers’ expectations of moral and legal certainty.

*In nearly every state that has banned abortion, the number of women receiving abortions increased between 2020 and the end of 2023, according to the most comprehensive account of all abortions by state since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.*

This New York Times extract (October 22, 2024) uses a complex sentence with a passive construction (“abortions increased”) and a prepositional phrase (“according to...”) to present empirical data emotively. The explanation is that it discursively engages readers by framing women’s resilience as a counterpoint to bans, interpreting the data as evidence of agency overcoming restrictions.

The ruling, one of the most consequential in modern memory, marked a rare instance in which the court reversed itself to eliminate a constitutional right that it had previously created.



From CNN (June 23, 2023, but reflective of Republican framing), this sentence uses a declarative structure with a nominalization (“the ruling”) to emphasize finality. The explanation lies in its discursive production for conservative audiences, interpreting *Dobbs* as a historic correction, reinforcing legal authority.

At the sociocultural level, Democratic syntactic choices challenge patriarchal power structures by highlighting systemic harms, explaining how complex structures reflect broader societal inequities post-*Roe* (Fairclough, 2001). The interpretation is that these narratives resist hegemonic control by centering women’s experiences, positioning bans as threats to social justice. Republican syntactic simplicity, conversely, upholds conservative hegemony by framing abortion as a settled issue, explaining how declarative forms align with Gramsci’s (1971) concept of ideological consent. The interpretation here is that such syntax perpetuates traditional power dynamics, minimizing debate to maintain pro-life dominance.

More than 171,000 patients who traveled for an abortion in 2023, new estimates show, demonstrating both the upheaval in access since the overturn of Roe v. Wade and the limits of state bans to stop the procedure.

This New York Times extract (June 13, 2024) uses a complex structure with a relative clause (“who traveled”) and a participial phrase (“demonstrating both...”) to highlight systemic disruption. The explanation is its sociocultural challenge to bans, interpreting travel as defiance against restrictive power structures.

Abortion remains a dominant political issue going into November up and down the ballot. But on the state level, despite much fast and thorough action to ban or limit the procedure mostly in Republican-led states, only a handful of measures have been enacted to address the aftermath of those bans.

From CNN (September 22, 2024), this extract uses coordinated clauses to critique Republican inaction. The explanation is its sociocultural framing of hypocrisy, interpreting policy failures as undermining pro-life claims to support women.

Quantitative Findings

A chi-square test was conducted to assess differences in syntactic structures (Complex vs. Simple) across the 100 articles. Complex structures were defined as sentences with multiple clauses, passive voice, or emotive modifiers, while simple structures included declarative sentences or nominalizations (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The results brought to light significant differences, $\chi^2(1, N=100) = 5.88, p = .015$, with a moderate effect size (Cramer’s $V = .24$). Democratic outlets used complex structures in 56% of articles ($n=28$), emphasizing emotional and nuanced narratives, while Republican outlets favored simple structures in 70% of articles ($n=35$), reflecting authoritative and clear messaging.

Table 2

Syntax Contingency: Online Abortion News Coverage

Outlet Affiliation	Complex Syntactic Structures	Simple Syntactic Structures	Total
Democratic Outlets	28	22	50
Republican Outlets	15	35	50
Total	43	57	100

Table 2 suggests that Democratic outlets use complex structures more frequently than Republican outlets (28 vs. 15), while Republican outlets rely more heavily on simple structures (35 vs. 22). These quantitative findings support H2, confirming that Democratic outlets employ more complex syntactic structures to evoke emotional resonance, while Republican outlets use

simpler, declarative forms to convey authority and certainty. The qualitative extracts illustrate how these syntactic choices align with ideological goals, discursively engaging distinct audiences and socioculturally reinforcing or challenging power dynamics in post-*Dobbs* abortion discourse.

Results for the Third Research Question

The third research question investigated how and to what extent public responses to abortion coverage diverge between users commenting on Democratic versus Republican online news outlets.

Qualitative Findings

At the textual level, user comments on Democratic-leaning platforms, such as The New York Times and CNN, predominantly reflect empathetic, rights-focused tones, aligning with pro-choice ideologies. These comments often employ nomination strategies to frame women as victims of restrictive policies, using emotive language and personal narratives to emphasize autonomy and systemic inequities. The interpretive layer suggests that these responses reproduce the pro-choice framing of the articles, explaining how commenters engage with media narratives to challenge abortion bans and advocate for reproductive rights. The emotional resonance in these comments discursively reinforces resistance to post-*Roe* restrictions, positioning bans as threats to individual freedom and public health.

This shows bans don't work; women need autonomy to make their own choices, especially in cases of rape or health risks. It's heartbreaking to see a 10-year-old forced to travel for care.

This comment, from a New York Times article (June 23, 2023), uses emotive terms (“heartbreaking”) and nomination (“women need autonomy”) to frame bans as ineffective and harmful. The explanation is that it discursively aligns with the article’s pro-choice narrative, interpreting bans as violating personal rights, engaging readers with a call for empathy and policy change.

The fact that women are traveling across states or ordering pills shows how desperate the situation is. Bans are putting lives at risk, and it's not just about choice—it's about survival.

From a CNN comment section (October 22, 2024), this response employs a causal clause (“shows how desperate”) to highlight systemic consequences. The explanation lies in its reproduction of the article’s framing of resilience, interpreting travel and telehealth as acts of survival, discursively challenging restrictive policies.

These politicians claim to care about life but do nothing for mothers or children after birth. It's pure hypocrisy, and women are suffering because of it.

This comment, from CNN (September 22, 2024), uses a contrastive structure (“claim to care... but do nothing”) to critique Republican inaction. The explanation is its empathetic tone, interpreting hypocrisy as a betrayal of women, discursively engaging progressive readers to question pro-life rhetoric.

In contrast, comments on Republican-leaning platforms like The Wall Street Journal and Fox News emphasize moral and religious objections, aligning with pro-life ideologies. These responses often use mitigation to soften controversial aspects of bans, framing abortion as a moral issue and employing nomination to construct pro-life advocates as defenders of “life” or “values.” The interpretive layer suggests that these comments reproduce the moral certainty of Republican articles, explaining how commenters reinforce conservative narratives by prioritizing fetal protection and states’ rights over individual autonomy.

We need to protect life from conception. Abortion is a sin, and states are right to limit it. The court finally corrected a decades-long mistake.

This comment from a Wall Street Journal article reflects a declarative structure and moral nomination (“protect life from conception”). The explanation is its alignment with pro-life framing, interpreting *Dobbs* as a moral victory, discursively produced to resonate with conservative audiences valuing religious and legal authority.

Freedom means respecting the sanctity of life, not ending it. These laws are about saving babies, not controlling women.

From a Fox News comment section, this response uses a simple declarative and redefinition (“freedom means...”) to align with pro-life values. The explanation lies in its mitigation of control accusations, interpreting bans as protective, discursively reinforcing conservative hegemony.

The data might show abortions rising, but that’s because people are misled by liberal media. Life begins at conception, and we need stronger laws to reflect that.

This comment, from The Wall Street Journal (October 22, 2024), employs a concessive clause (“might show... but”) to dismiss opposing data. The explanation is its moral framing, interpreting public opinion as misguided, discursively aligning with Republican narratives to uphold pro-life ideology.

At the discursive level, Democratic comments are consumed and reproduced by audiences resisting abortion bans, explaining how they engage with media narratives to amplify personal stories and critique systemic failures. The interpretation is that these responses foster a discursive community advocating for policy change, aligning with pro-choice activism. Republican comments, conversely, are produced for conservative audiences seeking to reinforce pro-life hegemony, explaining how they consume media to affirm moral and legal stances. The interpretation is that these responses discursively maintain ideological clarity, resisting pro-choice narratives by emphasizing traditional values.

I’m a mother, and I can’t imagine being forced to carry a nonviable pregnancy. These bans are cruel, and we need to vote to protect our rights.

This New York Times comment (June 13, 2024) uses a personal narrative and emotive adjective (“cruel”) to resist bans. The explanation is its discursive engagement with progressive readers, interpreting bans as inhumane, fostering a call to action.

The Bible is clear about the value of life. Abortion is wrong, and states are finally doing what’s right by protecting unborn children.

From a Fox News comment, this declarative statement invokes religious authority. The explanation is its discursive reproduction of pro-life ideology, interpreting *Dobbs* as moral progress, engaging conservative readers.

At the sociocultural level, Democratic comments challenge patriarchal power structures by highlighting inequities, explaining how they reflect broader societal concerns like maternal mortality and economic insecurity (Fairclough, 2001). The interpretation is that these responses resist hegemonic control by centering women’s autonomy, aligning with social justice movements. Republican comments uphold conservative hegemony by framing abortion as a moral violation, explaining how they reinforce traditional power dynamics per Gramsci’s (1971) concept of ideological consent. The interpretation is that these responses perpetuate polarization by normalizing pro-life dominance despite public shifts toward abortion rights.

If bans are making women travel or risk their lives, that’s not pro-life—it’s control. We need policies that actually support women and families.

This CNN comment (August 14, 2024) critiques pro-life rhetoric with a contrastive structure. The explanation is its sociocultural challenge to patriarchal control, interpreting bans as harmful, aligning with progressive resistance.



Liberals keep pushing abortion as a right, but it's about killing babies. States should have the power to protect life, and voters agree.

This Wall Street Journal comment uses a contrastive structure to dismiss pro-choice framing. The explanation is its sociocultural reinforcement of conservative values, interpreting states' rights as moral, upholding pro-life hegemony.

Quantitative Findings

A chi-square test was conducted to assess differences in comment tones (Empathy/Pro-choice, Moral/Pro-life, Neutral) across 5000 comments (2,500 per outlet type). Tones were coded using thematic analysis for ideological alignment and VADER sentiment analysis for emotional valence (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014). The results showed significant differences, $\chi^2(2, N=5000) = 461.92$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size (Cramer's $V = .43$). Democratic comments were predominantly empathetic/pro-choice (60%, $n=1500$), reflecting rights-focused sentiments, while Republican comments were mostly moral/pro-life (58%, $n=1458$), emphasizing religious and ethical objections. Neutral comments were minimal in both groups (10.4% Democratic, $n=260$; 10.5% Republican, $n=262$).

Table 3

Public Comments Contingency: Thematic and Affective Patterns

Outlet Affiliation	Empathy/Pro-choice Focus	Moral/Pro-life Focus	Neutral Focus	Total Comments
Democratic Outlets	1,500	740	260	2,500
Republican Outlets	780	1,458	262	2,500
Total	2,280	2,198	522	5000

Table 3 confirms the polarization in public reaction. Users commenting on Democratic outlets are approximately twice as likely to use Empathy/Pro-choice language (1,500 vs. 740 in other sections), and users commenting on Republican outlets are nearly twice as likely to use Moral/Pro-life language (1,458 vs. 780). Sentiment analysis further revealed that Democratic comments had a higher positive sentiment score ($M=0.32$, $SD=0.19$) compared to Republican comments ($M=0.15$, $SD=0.22$), indicating stronger emotional engagement, $t(4998)=12.45$, $p < .001$. These quantitative findings support H3, confirming that public responses on Democratic platforms are empathetic and pro-choice, while those on Republican platforms are moral and pro-life, reflecting divergent ideological engagements in post-*Dobbs* abortion discourse.

Summary of Results

The research revealed stark, statistically significant contrasts in Democratic and Republican online media framing of abortion since *Roe*. Democratic sources (The New York Times, CNN) employed predominantly pro-choice frames (78%) focused on autonomy and public health with the deployment of complex syntactic organization (56%) to elicit empathy. Republican sources (The Wall Street Journal, Fox News) employed predominantly pro-life frames (72%), a focus on morality and legal prerogative with simpler, declarative syntax (70%). These bifurcations also manifested in public responses, with Democratic sites featuring posts that were highly sympathetic and pro-choice (60%), and Republican sites featuring messages that were highly moral and pro-life (58%), corroborating the fact that partisan media not only generate ideologically distinct reports, but also create ensuing echo chambers among their audiences.

Discussion

Discussion Relating to the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis stated that Democratic and Republican online news websites differ significantly in the frames they use in reporting abortion, with Democratic sites being more likely to use pro-choice, autonomy-based frames, and Republican sites being more likely to use pro-life, morality-based frames. The findings strongly support H1, affirming robust framing strategy contrasts between Republican and Democratic online news outlets in their coverage of abortion following the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. This configuration well supports Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model of CDA.

Textually, Democratic media's emphasis on individual freedom and empathy, such as in passages describing women's resistance to traveling for abortions or using shield laws, shows Fairclough's idea of linguistic items constructing social realities. This defines pro-choice advocates as empowered agents and conditions bans as organizational errors, supplementing Entman's (1993) theory of framing, which assumes that media selects bits of reality to promote specific meanings. The quantitative results from the chi-square test ($\chi^2(2, N=100) = 38.42, p < .001$) confirm this divergence, showing that 78% of Democratic articles adopted pro-choice frames, interpreting bans as threats to reproductive rights and public health, thereby challenging hegemonic power structures as per Gramsci's (1971) ideology of consent.

These results are consistent with previous empirical studies on partisan media framing of abortion. For instance, Woodruff (2019) found Democratic-voting newspapers emphasizing women's agency and health risk in pre-*Dobbs* coverage, in contrast with this study's description of framing stories in *The New York Times*, such as stories about a 10-year-old rape victim forced to cross state lines. This overlap illustrates how Democratic framing post-*Dobbs* follows on from past trends, inflating personal crises for the purpose of condemning policy differences. Also, Hayden (2009) documented the "choice" vs. "life" rhetoric, which is echoed in the Republican media's highlighting of moral absolutism and fetal protection in this study, as attested in the softening of pro-life positions in *The Wall Street Journal* in the use of "values" language. The 72% pro-life orientation of the Republican articles also supports Hayden's work, explaining how such framing legitimates boundaries insofar as it places them in line with legal authority and moral certainty.

The discursive and sociocultural dimensions reinforce H1 accordingly, with Democratic framing being created for liberal readers in order to construct oppositions to bans, interpreting public accommodations like telehealth as resistive acts against patriarchal domination (Fairclough, 2001). This also resonates with Thompson and Green's (2018) research on partisan news, whereby left-wing media leverage framing to invoke sentiment, mirroring CNN excerpts condemning Republican hypocrisy from empathy-provoking narratives. On the Republican side, emphasizing states' rights and election tactics, like interpretations of *Dobbs* as a "defining moment," continues conservative hegemony, in line with Gentzkow and Shapiro's (2010) media slant compounding ideological inclinations report. All together, these agreements with theoretical models and previous studies affirm H1, illustrating partisan framing sustains polarization in post-*Roe* abortion discourse, and its consequence for policy debates and democratic engagement.

Discussion Relating to the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis postulated that Democratic online news outlets utilize more complex, affective syntactic patterns to a greater extent, while Republican news outlets use less complex, declarative syntactic patterns. The evidence clearly confirms H2, which establishes that Democratic online news sites utilize more intricate syntactic constructions to produce emotional resonance, while Republican sites utilize more straightforward, declarative constructions to

convey authority and confidence in abortion news. This corresponds perfectly to Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional CDA model.

At the textual level, Democratic media's appeal to subordinated clauses, passive voice, and affective modifiers, such as in instances like "Women denied abortions despite being pregnant with a fetus that lacked a skull; 10-year-old who was raped and became pregnant forced to cross state lines" (The New York Times, June 23, 2023), reflects Fairclough's (2001) argument that linguistic complexity constructs rich social realities. These constructions decontextualize agency out of restrictive policies, foregrounding systemic harm and appealing to progressive readers on an affective level, consistent with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) functional grammar theory, which links syntactic choice to ideological function. Statistical evidence through the chi-square test ($\chi^2(1, N=100) = 5.88, p = .015$) supports this difference, with 56% of Democratic articles employing complex constructions compared to 70% of Republican articles employing simple constructions. This maps Democratic syntax to the production of sympathy and Republican syntax to the appeal to moral rectitude.

These findings are consistent with previous work on syntactic variation in party media. Thompson and Green (2018) found that liberal media used compound sentences with emotive words to highlight personal narratives in pre-*Dobbs* abortion coverage, as did this study with Democratic media's advanced syntax, such as CNN's "About two-thirds of women of reproductive age worry that abortion bans could affect the safety of a potential future pregnancy" (August 14, 2024). This alignment explains how complexity provokes reflection on social inequalities, validating pro-choice orientations. Republican media prefer the declarative syntax and nominalizations like "The decision also is a defining moment for a Supreme Court that is more conservative than it has been in many decades" (CNN, June 23, 2023, typical of conservative framing) validates Woodruff's (2019) findings that conservative media use plain syntax to validate power. The use of nominalizations like "overruling of *Roe*" depersonalizes things, and this accords with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) interpretation of nominalization as an ideological abstraction tool and considering *Dobbs* as a concluded case on law.

At discursive and sociocultural levels, Democratic syntactic complexity is constructed for those audiences appreciating subtle narratives, detailing how they create resistance to prohibition through the accentuation of individual and systemic outcomes, according to Fairclough's (2003) focus on discourse constructing social practices. This is in line with Reisigl and Wodak's (2009) discourse-historical perspective, whereby linguistic means address target audiences, as in Democratic excerpts projecting travel for abortion as resistance. Republican simplicity, conversely, reinforces conservative hegemony by producing clear, authoritative narratives for audiences seeking moral certainty, aligning with Gramsci's (1971) concept of ideological consent. Extracts like The Wall Street Journal's "Talking about this in the context of values really widens our support" (November 30, 2023) reflect this, explaining strategic messaging to maintain pro-life dominance. These theoretical foundations and previous research alignments verify H2, emphasizing syntactic forms' effects in amplifying post-*Dobbs* abortion debate polarization, with relevance to the engagement of media literacy and the public.

Discussion Relating to the Second Hypothesis

The third hypothesis inferred that There exists a broad difference in public thematic and affective responses (user comments) to abortion coverage, where Democratic media outlet comments tend to be generally empathetic and pro-choice, and Republican media outlet comments tend to be generally moral and pro-life. The results firmly proves H3, since posts by users on Democratic web news pages invoke sympathetic and right-based feelings consistent with pro-choice values and those on Republican sites invoke moral and religious reasons consistent

with pro-life values. This is firmly supported by Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model of CDA.

At the textual level, Republican platform statements, for example, "This is proof that bans don't work; women must have freedom to have the power to make their own choices, especially in the cases of rape or health issues. It is distressing to see a 10-year-old need to travel out of state for treatment." (from *The New York Times*, June 23, 2023), employ emotive language and nomination strategies to frame women as victims of over-regulatory policies. This aligns with Fairclough's (2001) discourse theory of constructing social identities, and how commenters mirror pro-choice media discourses to resist systemic injustices. Quantitative results from the chi-square test ($\chi^2(2, N=5000) = 461.92, p < .001$) and sentiment analysis (Democratic $M=0.32$ vs. Republican $M=0.15, t(4998)=12.45, p < .001$) confirm this divide, where 60% of Democratic comments are empathetic/pro-choice, reading bans as harmful and continuing resistance against patriarchal domination.

These results concur with prior research on audience response in polarized media environments. Gearhart et al. (2020) found that liberal news website commentaries reflect empathic, rights-based attitudes, which this study's finding of such Democratic comments as "These politicians claim to care about life but do nothing for mothers or children after birth" supports. It's outright hypocrisy, and women are suffering." (from CNN, September 22, 2024), which denounce pro-life hypocrisy. This alignment illustrates how Democratic audiences respond to media framing in a way that highlights individual stories, interpreting bans as threats to autonomy and well-being. Republican reactions, such as "We need to save life from conception. Abortion is sinful, and states have the right to restrict it.". The court finally corrected a decades-old mistake." (from *The Wall Street Journal*), and align with Niculae et al.'s (2015) conclusion that conservative platform users frame religious and moral opposition, using declarative forms in order to reinforce pro-life hegemony. The 58% moral/pro-life messages on Republican platforms confirm this, interpreting *Dobbs* as a moral victory, such as in conservative media's framing of juridical power.

On the level of discourse, Democratic responses are produced and received in an echo chamber that is progressive, as Nelson and Webster's (2017) selective exposure theory outlines how users perpetuate pro-choice discourses through resisting bans based on emotional reasoning. This is evident in responses like "If bans are causing women to travel or put their lives in danger, that's not pro-life—it's control.". We need policies that in practice benefit women and families." (from CNN, August 14, 2024), discursively countering power relations. Republican statements, in contrast, replicate conservative media's moral specificity, for example, "The Bible is clear about the value of life. Abortion is wrong, and states are finally doing what's right by protecting unborn children." (from Fox News), outlining their stance in supporting pro-life convictions for same-orientation audiences. The sociocultural interpretation, rooted in Gramsci's (1971) concept of ideological consent, suggests Democratic comments resist patriarchal hegemony by centering women's autonomy, while Republican comments perpetuate traditional power dynamics by normalizing fetal protection, deepening polarization in post-*Dobbs* discourse.

These findings are consistent with Pagoto et al.'s (2023) study of polarized user response following *Dobbs*, wherein social media tweets reflected ideological fault lines, as progressive users listed health issues and conservative users listed moral issues. Greater positive sentiment among Democratic tweets is consistent with greater emotional investment and supporting Reisigl and Wodak's (2009) discourse-historical method in linking audience discourse to the conflicts over power in society. H3 is evidenced by these theoretical and empirical convergences, demonstrating the ways in which partisan comments reinforce media framing, reinforce



polarization, and shape public discourse around abortion, with an effect supporting productive discussion and fighting misinformation online.

Conclusion

This study confirms strong framing strategy, syntactic structure, and public response differences between Democratic and Republican online news sites in their post-*Roe v. Wade* abortion narratives substantiating all three hypotheses on the basis of mixed-methods design based on Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional model of CDA. Democratic media like The New York Times and CNN frame abortion in terms of autonomy and public health, evoking sympathy with rich syntactic constructions, while Republican media like The Wall Street Journal and Fox News frame abortion in terms of moral absolutism and legal mandate in straightforward, declarative form. User comments emulate these bifurcations, with Democratic platforms creating sympathetic, pro-choice orientations and Republican platforms maintaining moral, pro-life worldviews, as evidenced through chi-square tests and sentiment analysis. These findings confirm how partisan media fuels polarization in abortion debate, shaping popular perception and reinforcing ideological echo chambers in a post-*Dobbs* online environment, with far-reaching implications for media practice and literacy.

Implications for the Understanding of Global Media Practice

The study's results offer significant implications for global media practices through the proof of how partisan framing and syntactic choices within US abortion reporting reflect broader trends across ideological media polarization worldwide. The conflict between Democratic media sources' rights-based, empathetic frames and Republican media sources' moralistic, authoritative frames is in line with global trends where news media adjust content towards ideologically similar audiences, as in cross-national studies of polarized media systems in Europe and Asia (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This means that media channels all over the world can utilize the same linguistic strategies—complexity in order to create emotional rapport or simplicity in order to create authority—to enhance cultural and political polarization, particularly on contentious issues like reproductive rights. Having comment areas on online sites also mirrors global trends in audience-driven debate, whereby selective exposure strengthens echo chambers (Nelson & Webster, 2017). These results challenge media practitioners to recognize their ability to shape public opinion and consider balancing ideological framing as a means of generating less polarized media environments globally, especially with increasing use of digital media for news consumption.

Pedagogical Implications for Critical Media Literacy

The study emphasizes the need for more intensified critical media literacy education to cope with polarized abortion debate and its democratic consequences. The distinctive framing and syntactic styles that were found—Democratic news media's affective sophistication over Republican news media's authoritative simplicity—highlight the way the media makes us think, requiring pedagogical strategies that teach students to deconstruct partisan storylines and detect linguistic manipulation (Kellner & Share, 2019). Educators can use these findings to design courses that emphasize analyzing framing, syntax, and comments, instructing students to question ideological bias in sources like The New York Times or Fox News. Through an integration of Fairclough's (2003) CDA framework, educators can make students ready to critically assess media's construction of power relations, building skills to challenge misinformation and promote healthy debate. It is particularly important in a post-*Dobbs* era where hyper-partisan discourse is shaping policy and social justice, requiring educators to prepare students for active civic engagement in all digital media spaces.

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