ENGAGEMENT PATTERNS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS ON FACEBOOK: AN AGENDA SETTING THEORY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Objective: This case study, focusing on applying the Agenda-Setting Theory to understand the priorities of international humanitarian organizations on their Facebook pages, is highly relevant in today's digital age. Specifically, it examines the Facebook pages of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and CARE International, analyzing the frequency and presentation of topics and their audience engagement for November 2023.

Methods: The analysis utilized three main variables: frequency of topics/issues discussed, presentation of the topic, and audience engagement. Data from Facebook posts of the mentioned organizations for the entire month were examined to answer three key research questions about topic coverage and engagement levels.

Results: The humanitarian Crisis, particularly in Gaza, emerged as a significantly covered topic for both organizations, reflecting its immediacy and scale. IRC's posts frequently addressed shelter and safety, while CARE highlighted issues concerning women and children. Topics related to the climate crisis and education received minimal coverage. The presentation style varied with the topic's perceived urgency and relevance, affecting audience engagement, which was notably higher for posts about the humanitarian crisis.

Conclusion: The findings demonstrate that the frequency and presentation of topics on social media can influence public perception and engagement, supporting the principles of Agenda-Setting Theory. The focus on pressing humanitarian crises

aligns with the organizations' missions and engages audiences effectively, emphasizing the need for timely humanitarian responses.

Recommendations: The potential impact of future research in this area is significant. Expanding the sample size to include more organizations and delving deeper into the qualitative aspects of audience responses could provide valuable insights into the impact of different presentation styles on engagement, further enhancing our understanding of the application of the Agenda-Setting Theory in the context of international humanitarian organizations' Facebook pages.

Introduction

Millions are affected daily by conflicts and disasters, prompting humanitarian organizations to respond. These non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which rely on funding, donations, and volunteer support, aim to provide aid and protection to affected populations. These organizations increasingly utilize social media platforms to communicate and engage with a broad audience effectively.

The Agenda-Setting Theory, as developed by McCombs and Shaw, underscores the media's role in shaping public priorities by highlighting certain topics over others. This theory is particularly relevant to the way humanitarian organizations use social media. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter are pivotal in setting the social agenda and influencing public perceptions and actions towards global crises. According to Demirsoy (2016), media is a crucial tool for information dissemination, with its content greatly influencing society's agenda and public sentiment. The internet, and by extension social media, plays a comprehensive role in everything from community building to political marketing.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and CARE International exemplify this context. Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC provides emergency aid and long-term assistance to refugees and those displaced by war, persecution, or natural disasters. Operating in over 40 countries and 26 U.S. cities, the IRC strives to restore millions' safety, dignity, and hope. On the other hand, CARE International, established in 1945, began by delivering relief packages to war-torn Europe. Today, it is a leading humanitarian agency that provides emergency aid and manages long-term development projects, focusing on empowering women to help lift families and communities out of poverty.

These organizations leverage platforms like Facebook for fundraising or volunteer recruitment and strategically influence public and policy agendas aligned with the agenda-setting theory's principles. This influence is crucial for maintaining transparency, accountability, and impartiality in their operations, key factors that determine their effectiveness and ethical standing in the public eye.

This study analyzed these organizations' Facebook pages and posts through the lens of the Agenda-Setting Theory. The analysis provides insights into how these

organizations shape public discourse and perceptions regarding urgent global issues by examining how topics are presented and engaged. The findings are expected to reveal the engagement patterns and the effectiveness of these communications in mobilizing support and shaping the public agenda. This approach illustrates the power of strategic communication in the digital age, especially for organizations committed to addressing some of the world's most pressing humanitarian challenges.

Objective of the study

This study aimed to explore the engagement patterns of international humanitarian organizations on Facebook, applying the Agenda Setting Theory to assess their pages and posts. The specific objectives of the analysis included 1) identifying the topics covered by each organization, 2) comparing the key features of the organizations' most and least covered topics, and 3) identifying the engagement patterns on the organization's Facebook page.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study "Engagement Patterns of International Humanitarian Organizations on Facebook: An Agenda-Setting Theory Analysis" is anchored in the Agenda-Setting Theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972). This theory illustrates how the media crafts public perception by highlighting specific issues, thus influencing the public and policy agendas by shaping what people consider important without directly altering their thoughts (Woerner, 2023; Mass Communication Theory, 2010).

According to indeed.com (2023), the Agenda-Setting Theory has different levels and types, which explain how media manages the public's perception. At the first level, it analyzes the role of media content in shaping public opinion on various issues. On a second level, it examines the media's methods in presenting issues to capture audience attention, communicate messages, and choose stories for dissemination.

Regarding the types of agenda-setting, three agenda settings have interrelations with the stakeholders. The media agenda covers topics the media chooses to emphasize or neglect, influencing newsworthiness. Thus, if the agenda

set forth by the media influences the public, if that issue is deemed significant, it will turn into a public agenda. The policy agenda at the highest level shows how media exposure can affect policymaking, with media-highlighted issues becoming policy priorities.

There are industry influences, priming and framing, and gatekeeping: Industries use media to set agendas that align with their interests through public relations, political campaigns, and business strategies. These involve setting a tone or context through media that influences how stories are perceived and understood. Gatekeeping describes the content filtering process within media organizations that affects what is published and how it is received.

The practical application of this framework in the study involves analyzing the content of the Facebook pages of humanitarian organizations. The approach includes:

1. **Topic Coverage**

This analyzes how frequently different humanitarian issues are mentioned in posts to determine their salience and perceived importance to the audience. International humanitarian organizations are involved in a wide range of activities aimed at providing relief and support to vulnerable populations around the world (Carbonnier, 2015; Doctors Without Borders (MSF), 2021; Donini, 2012; ICRC, 2021; UN OCHA, 2021). The approach involves analyzing the frequency of topic coverage in Facebook posts by international humanitarian organizations to determine the prominence and perceived importance of various humanitarian issues. These organizations engage in a broad spectrum of activities to aid vulnerable populations globally, including:

Emergency Response: Providing immediate relief like food, water, and medical aid during natural and artificial disasters.

Healthcare Services: Delivering essential healthcare in underserved regions, including vaccinations and disease treatment.

Food and Nutrition: Addressing malnutrition through food distribution and nutrition programs.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) involves installing and maintaining water systems and promoting hygiene to prevent disease.

. *Protection Services:* Safeguarding vulnerable groups from violence and abuse through legal aid and safe spaces.

Education and Training: Enhancing community resilience via educational programs and vocational training.

Shelter and Infrastructure: Rebuilding homes and infrastructure post-disaster.

Livelihood Assistance: Supporting economic recovery through skills training and microfinance.

Advocacy and Policy Influence: Advocating for policies that protect human rights and uphold humanitarian principles.

Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction: Preparing communities for disasters to reduce future impact.

2. **The Framing and Presentation.**

Humanitarian organizations on Facebook frame and present issues using a strategic blend of visual and textual elements to shape messages, influencing audience perceptions and engagement. Defined by Foss (2004) and further elaborated by Newbold (2014), visual rhetoric theory examines the persuasive power of visual elements like imagery, symbols, and design principles such as contrast, emphasis, and color.

Images capture attention quickly and evoke empathy by illustrating personal stories or urgent situations, making them practical for campaigns focusing on specific incidents or individual narratives.

Videos offer a dynamic way to tell stories, and they combine visual and auditory elements to provide deeper context, showcasing the ongoing dynamics of humanitarian efforts or the impacts of a crisis, which enhances narrative-driven content.

Graphics and infographics simplify complex data, such as statistics on displaced populations or aid reach, providing clear and concise visual summaries highlighting crucial information at a glance.

Each media type contributes uniquely to the message. Images and videos bring human elements to the forefront, increasing relatability and emotional impact. Graphics offer a factual basis that lends credibility and aids in understanding the scope of issues. Integrating images, videos, and graphics within a single post combines the strengths of each medium, creating a comprehensive, engaging, and informative presentation that appeals to a broad audience and maximizes engagement and content-sharing potential.

By integrating various media types, humanitarian organizations effectively craft messages that engage and inform audiences, aligning with strategies to influence public opinion and increase support. This approach uses visual rhetoric to analyze how imagery and design principles emotionally impact audiences, enhancing media's agenda-setting power. The study aims to uncover how these organizations strategically use social media to engage on critical issues.

3. Post Engagements

Assessing audience interactions with posts, such as likes, comments, and shares, to measure how effectively topics engage and resonate with viewers. This analysis examines how humanitarian organizations strategically utilize Facebook to shape public discourse through their content presentation and audience engagement, emphasizing the critical metric of "Post Engagements." This metric encompasses interactions such as likes, comments, and shares, each providing a unique measure of how content resonates with audiences:

Likes: Indicate general approval, serving as a quick measure of content popularity. Additionally, the introduction of Facebook's "Reactions" in 2016—Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, and Angry—enhanced the platform's interaction capabilities, providing users with a spectrum of responses that more accurately reflect their emotional reactions, thus deepening insights into audience behavior and preferences (Constine, 2016; Evans, 2017; Stinson, 2016). The Care reaction, introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, is intended to show empathy and support (Guison, 2020).

Comments: Show deeper engagement by reflecting viewers' thoughts, questions, or discussions. This is valuable for understanding audience sentiment and fostering community.

Shares: Demonstrate the content's impact and relevance, indicating that the material was compelling enough to circulate within personal networks.

Assessing these engagements helps content creators gauge the effectiveness of their communication strategies, where high engagement rates often lead to greater visibility in Facebook's algorithm and broader content dissemination.

Methodology

Methodologically, this study employs content analysis to examine the engagement patterns of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and CARE International on their Facebook posts in November 2023. The researchers will access Facebook sites and extract the posts during the chosen period. A codebook is used to analyze variables such as topic coverage, presentation, and engagements, with each post evaluated for how well it aligns with subcategories identified within these variables. This analysis helps to understand how humanitarian organizations use Facebook to engage with the public, potentially influencing the public and policy agendas in line with the principles of the Agenda-Setting Theory.

Results

The following are the results of analyzing the FB pages of 2 international humanitarian organizations: International Rescue Committee and Care International.

1. **What is/are the most covered and least covered topic/s**?

In November 2023, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) posted 12 times, primarily focusing on humanitarian crises with ten mentions (23.3% of 43 total topics covered). Other significant issues included shelter/safety and protection, with eight mentions (18.6%), while climate change was least mentioned, appearing only twice (4.7%). CARE posted 24 times, with most coverage dedicated to women and children (12 mentions or 26.1% of 46 topics).

CARE also frequently covered humanitarian crises, appearing ten times (21.7%), while education received the least attention with just one mention (2.2%). Overall, both organizations most frequently addressed humanitarian crises in their November posts, with a combined 20 mentions out of 89 topics covered (22.5%).

Topics on women and children followed with 17 mentions (19.1%), and education was the least covered overall, mentioned only four times (4.5%). Details are in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of Topic Coverage of IRC and CARE FB Pages

Topic	IRC		CARE		Total	
	n*	%	n*	%	n*	%
Hunger/Poverty	4	9.3	4	8.7	8	9.0
Education	3	7.0	1	2.2	4	4.5
Women and Children	5	11.6	12	26.1	17	19.1
Medical/Health	5	11.6	3	6.5	8	9.0
Shelter/Safety/Protection/Refugees	7	16.3	0	0.0	7	8.0
Humanitarian crisis (war, conflicts, complex emergencies)	10	23.2	10	21.7	20	22.5
Climate Crisis (environment, natural disasters)	2	4.7	6	13.0	8	9.0
Relief/Aid/Emergency Response	6	14.0	5	10.9	11	12.4
Empowerment/Rights/Equality Promoting Inclusivity	1	2.3	5	10.9	6	7.0
Total	43	100.0	46	100.0	89	100.0

*one post may cover multiple topics

2. Based on how the topics were presented, what is the comparison between the distinctive elements seen for the organizations' most and least covered issues?
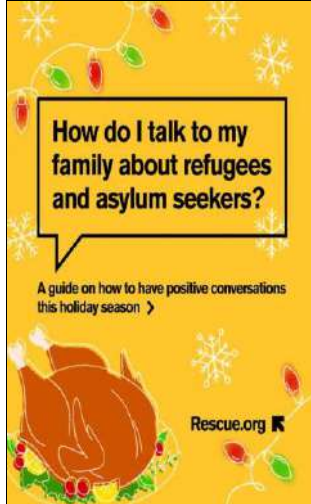
2.1 IRC Presentations

It was found that the IRC's primary focus was on humanitarian crises, with a particular emphasis on the ongoing Crisis in Gaza. Their presentations were marked using informative graphics and images highlighting the crisis's impact. These visuals were characterized by strong visual contrasts and consistent use of black, paired with brief and straightforward messaging.

Post/Presentation	Post/Presentation	Post/Presentation
This post discusses the severe impacts of the escalating conflict in the Middle East, highlighting widespread devastation and IRC's protective efforts for civilians. The graphics use a stark black background and highlighted text to emphasize the seriousness, with vivid images illustrating	This post calls for an urgent humanitarian ceasefire. It uses plain black background graphics and large, highlighted text to create contrast and emphasize the message. The wording is brief but direct, conveying the need for immediate action and underscoring the urgency of the situation.	This post highlights the ongoing deterioration of Gaza's healthcare system, leading to the suspension of crucial humanitarian efforts. The presentation is concise and clear, employing a plain black background and large, highlighted text for emphasis. Unlike previous posts that used yellow, this post employs red to

the destruction to encourage support for IRC's cause. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/InternationalRescueCommittee/posts/pfbid02XLkncbqFkDRgzGwbZJ8RBuNvBJ79jofzdtDdNLtL1vz4a2hXwmD7G2E1axPPVcdml	**Link:** https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=735117318652276&set=a.220839400080073	underscore the urgency of immediate action. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=735704655260209&set=a.220839400080073

The second most covered topic was shelter/safety & protection. In contrast to the previous topic, the presentation used informative graphics with brighter colors and lighthearted photos.

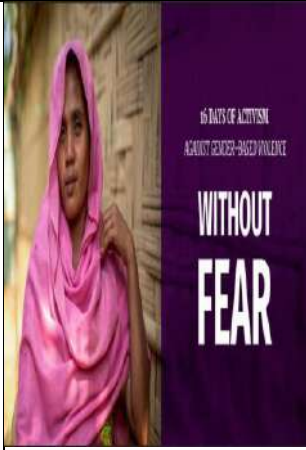| Post	Presentation	Post	Presentation
	This post answers questions and provides sticking points on how audiences can talk to friends and family about refugees and asylum seekers during the beginning of the holiday season, using bright colors to symbolize and evoke a sense of joy and hope during Christmas season.		This post highlights refugee families celebrating their first Halloween in the U.S. with photos of children in costumes, sparking viewer delight and promoting support for the organization's efforts, showcasing the positive impact on refugees. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/Internationa

	Link:		lRescueCommittee/
	https://www.facebo		posts/pfbid02KwvdG
	ok.com/Internationa		FvzBcAt1s8n7cDypUj
	lRescueCommittee/		eKLtHyVupDChDn1q
	posts/pfbid09ymUjK		GynW33kaPmfH71uF
	dAzDgxwNt4TeC2E4		3LmhwUZi8l
	Qe7DaEEdGWJFAnRC		
	gmKn38JqjoXCWWa		
	xf4BaFNd7j6l		

Lastly, the least covered topic was on climate crises. The presentation of the topic used informative videos educating audiences about occurring issues regarding the topic, in collaboration with IRC ambassadors, to make them more engaging.

Posts	Presentations
	This post features a video collaboration between the IRC and their ambassador, actor Piper Perabo, focusing on #COP28, the U.N.'s climate summit. This major event brings together world leaders to address the climate crisis. The video employs clear messaging, images, and graphics to discuss climate change issues, making it engaging and informative for viewers. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/InternationalResc ueCommittee/videos/1318687792173126

2.2 CARE Presentations

CARE's most covered was on women and children. The presentation of the topic used combinations of colorful graphics with images of women and short but inspiring messages that stand for the well-being and rights of women and children, written in big fonts.

Post	Presentation	Post	Presentation
	This post features a GIF that merges images, graphics, and video elements. It displays a background image of a woman overlaid with violet and orange-themed graphics. The top text announces, "16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence." The message, "I stand with her right to [ ] without fear, " is central to the GIF," set within an orange box. This box cycles through words like dress, play, dream, walk, travel, and learn, highlighting the freedoms women should enjoy without fear. **Link:** https://fb.watch/o_EK kAYTl1/		This post was used as CARE's cover photo, which consists of an image of a woman on the left, along with text and graphics on the right, which again states, "16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence," with great emphasis on "Without Fear" with the use of big fonts. **Link:** https://www.faceboo k.com/photo/?fbid=6 78576774374411&set =a.294152762816816

Other posts honor the legacies of notable women, featuring graphics that contrast a black background with light text. The black background might symbolize mourning their passing, but the posts focus on sharing inspiring quotes from these women. This highlights how their legacies and contributions continue to inspire and will always be remembered.

Posts		Presentations
"Joining with so many others touched by Rosalynn Carter in celebrating her life and legacy. I have never seen a more powerful, sustained partnership than Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter's 77 years of marriage and change-making. From the Governorship to the Presidency, Rosalynn helped advance contributions from peace-making to human rights to conservation. She fully shares in the founding of the Carter Center and its extraordinary accomplishments in eradicating disease, promoting free and fair elections, and so much more. But perhaps most indelible has been her work in transforming mental healthcare both nationally and internationally. Our world is markedly better because Rosalynn Carter lived." -Michelle Nunn, CARE President and CEO	"Rosalynn Carter was a remarkable human being who had a tremendous impact on our state, our nation, and the world. Her leadership and courageous advocacy on mental health was transformative. Over the last 50 years, Rosalynn led our nation in improving mental health. She inspired increased investment, major health insurance reform and high-level attention on an issue that had been neglected for far too long. We all should be grateful for her inspiration and her leadership. Rosalynn was a full partner in President Carter's political life, spiritual life, and philanthropic life. He loved her deeply. He trusted her implicitly because of her exceptional judgment and her deep compassion for all human beings. She taught us by example to respect and treat every person with dignity and fairness." -Sam Nunn Co-Chair and Co-Founder NTI	These posts feature statements from Michelle Nunn, President and CEO of CARE, and Sam Nunn, Co-Chair and Co-Founder of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI). Both express their admiration for Rosalynn Carter's leadership and impactful contributions, acknowledging how she has positively influenced many lives throughout her lifetime.
Links: https://www.facebook.com/ photo/?fbid=9046140645547 48&set=a.412301700452656	**Links:** https://www.facebook.com/ photo/?fbid=9094964673998 41&set=a.412301700452656	

The second most discussed topic was the humanitarian crisis, which focused on the ongoing Crisis in Gaza. Like IRC, the topic was presented using informative graphics featuring a dark background with contrasting colored text in large fonts for emphasis. The messages were straightforward and designed to evoke a sense of urgency.

Posts/ Presentations	Posts/ Presentations	Posts/ Presentations
This post outlines CARE's actions and support during the temporary ceasefire in the Gaza conflict. The message is concise and direct, using a plain black background with light text and red symbols to underscore the gravity of the situation—additionally, the post advocates for a humanitarian ceasefire. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=686034440295311&set=a.294152776150148	This post conveys CARE's deep concerns about losing contact with their staff and families in Gaza. A plain black background with highlighted text is used to emphasize the gravity of the situation. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=680525790846176&set=a.294152776150148	This post emphasizes CARE's concerns for Gaza's children, highlighting family traumas and losses with a darkened photo depicting Gaza's destruction and highlighted text to underscore the issue's gravity. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=672250601673695&set=a.294152776150148

The least covered topic was education. The presentation primarily featured an image with text highlighting education-related issues, with more detailed insights and information in captions and linked resources. This style of presentation is similarly employed for other topics covered.

Post	Presentation
	This post highlights the challenges faced by Muslim women in accessing education, featuring an image with the text "Afghanistan: What life is like for the women of Ghazni." It includes a link to a CARE article that offers more profound insights into the issue. **Link:** https://www.care.org/news-and-stories/perspectives/what-life-is-like-for-women-in-afghanistan/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_content=65409e82-d3ab-4b33-9238-dc579809bd29&utm_campaign=fy24_organic

3. What is the average number of total engagements the organizations have gained within the month? Which topic/ posts had the highest number of engagements, and which had the least?

3.1 Engagements of IRC and CARE

According to IRC's engagement data for November 2023, data in Table 2 revealed the average number of engagements per post was 299. The post with the highest engagement, at 519, featured graphics on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and shelter/safety & protection. The second highest engagement was 472 for a post about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza alongside issues concerning women and children. The post with the fewest engagements, at 87, addressed topics on women & children and relief/emergency response.

Table 2

Number of Reactions, Comments, & Shares for IRC

Post No.	Topics Covered	Presentation	Reactions	Comments	Shares	Total
1	Women & Children Shelter/Safety & Protection Humanitarian Crisis	Images	412	32	28	472
2	Women & Children Medical/Health Shelter/Safety & Protection Humanitarian Crisis Relief/Emergency Response	Image and Graphics	286	70	80	436
3	Shelter/Safety & Protection Humanitarian Crisis	Graphics	394	41	84	519
4	Medical/Health Humanitarian Crisis Relief/Emergency Response	Graphics	212	36	79	327
5	Humanitarian Crisis Relief/Emergency Response	Graphics	326	65	48	439
6	Medical/Health Humanitarian Crisis	Graphics	165	52	28	245
7	Education Women & Children Medical/Health Shelter/Safety & Protection Humanitarian Relief/Emergency Response	Combination of all	261	83	86	430
8	Shelter/Safety & Protection	Graphics	138	14	44	196
9	Hunger/Poverty Education Women & Children Medical/ Health Shelter/Safety & Protection Humanitarian Crisis Climate Crisis Relief/Emergency Response	Video	72	14	4	90
10	Education Shelter/Safety & Protection Humanitarian Crisis	Graphics	153	22	38	217
11	Women & Children Relief/Emergency Response	Image	63	14	10	87
12	Women & Children Shelter/Safety & Protection Humanitarian Crisis	Image	101	14	17	132

Table 3 revealed CARE's engagement data for November 2023; the average engagement per post was 63. The post with the most engagements, reaching 152, focused on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Following closely, a post that discussed the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and issues related to women and children received 141 engagements. The least engaged post addressed the climate crisis with just 15 interactions.

Table 3

Number of Reactions, Comments, & Shares for CARE

Post No.	Topics Covered	Presentation	Reactions	Comments	Shares	Total	Post No.	Topics Covered	Presentation	Reactions	Comments	Shares	Total
1	Women & Children Humanitarian Crisis	Image and graphics	103	19	19	141	13	Women & Children Empowerment/Human Rights/Equality	Image and Graphics	51	4	12	67
2	Education Women & Children	Image	43	6	6	55	14	Women & Children Empowerment/Human Rights/Equality	Image	31	2	2	35
3	Hunger/Poverty Climate Crisis	Image	27	5	4	36	15	Hunger/Poverty Medical/ Health Humanitarian	Image	24	1	3	28
4	Humanitarian Crisis Relief/Emergency Response	Graphics	80	15	22	117	16	Hunger/Poverty Humanitarian Crisis	Image	35	3	4	42
5	Climate Crisis	Image and Graphics	39	5	6	50	17	Hunger/Poverty Humanitarian Crisis Climate Crisis Relief/Emergency Response	Videos and Graphics	48	1	5	54
6	Climate Crisis	Image	52	3	2	57	18	Women & Children Empowerment/Human Rights/Equality	Image and graphics	66	7	15	88
7	Humanitarian Crisis	Image	35	4	5	44	19	Women & Children Humanitarian Crisis	Graphics	57	9	4	70
8	Women & Children Medical/Health	Image	23	2	1	26	20	Women and Children Humanitarian Crisis Relief/Emergency Response	Image and Graphics	27	3	2	32
9	Women & Children Empowerment/Human Rights/Equality	Image and Graphics	48	4	3	55	21	Humanitarian Crisis Relief/Emergency Response	Graphics	123	3	13	139
10	Climate Crisis	Image	25	2	1	28	22	Relief/Emergency Response	Image	29	2	3	34
11	Humanitarian Crisis	Graphics	118	12	22	152	23	Climate Crisis	Image	13	1	1	15
12	Women & Children Empowerment/Human Rights/Equality	Graphics	74	3	2	79	24	Women and Children	Graphics	57	7	12	76

3.2 Reactions towards Posts of IRC and CARE

The engagement analysis for IRC and CARE, as detailed in Table 4, presents a comprehensive breakdown of the emotional reactions garnered by each organization's content. IRC and CARE predominantly received 'Likes' as their primary form of engagement, accounting for approximately 70.9% of the total reactions. Specifically, IRC recorded 1,824 likes, making up 70.8% of its reactions, while CARE received 849 likes, constituting 71.0% of its engagements.

This reaction was less frequent regarding other emotional responses, such as love. IRC garnered 263 'Love' reactions, 10.2% of its total, compared to CARE's 76 'Love' reactions, representing 6.4%. Care, both organizations experienced similar engagement levels with 'Care' reactions. IRC had 276 (10.7%), and CARE had 127 (10.6%). Notably, both organizations also received many 'Sad' reactions, indicating emotional solid engagement with the content. IRC had 199 'Sad' reactions (7.7%), while CARE had a slightly higher percentage with 138 reactions (11.5%).

Minimal reactions were noted for 'Ha ha,' 'Wow,' and 'Angry.' There were no 'Ha ha' reactions recorded for either organization. 'Wow,' reactions were nearly nonexistent, with only five total across both organizations. 'Angry' reactions were very few, totaling 14 across both IRC and CARE. In total reactions, IRC's content evoked a total of 2,575 reactions. CARE, on the other hand, saw a total of 1,196 reactions. This data illustrates the nature of the emotional responses elicited by the content posted by IRC and CARE, with the majority of engagements being positive (Like, Love, Care). This indicates that the content has resonated with the audience on serious topics, as reflected in the significant emotional response of 'Sad' reactions.

IRC recorded 457 comments (12.8% of engagements) and 546 shares (15.3%), while CARE logged 123 comments (8.2%) and 174 shares (11.7%), totaling 580 comments and 720 shares. The analysis indicates IRC consistently achieves higher engagement than CARE, suggesting a larger or more active follower base. Both organizations see more shares than comments, highlighting their content's relevance and the importance of shareable content in expanding reach and influence as part of their social media strategies.

Table 4

Reactions to Different Feelings on Facebook of IRC and CARE

Engagements	IRC		CARE		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
👍Like	1824	70.8	849	71.0	2673	70.9
❤️Love	263	10.2	76	6.4	339	9.0
🤗Care	276	10.7	127	10.6	403	10.7
😄Ha ha	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
😮Wow	4	0.2	1	0.1	5	0.1
😢Sad	199	7.7	138	11.5	337	8.9
😠Angry	9	0.3	5	0.4	14	0.4
Reaction (Total)	2575	100.0	1196	100.0	3771	100.0
		72.0			3771	74.4
💬 Comments	457	12.8	123	8.2	580	11.4
Share Share	546	15.3	174	11.7	720	14.2
	3578	100.0	1493	100.0	5071	100.0

3.3 Comments that Boost Engagements.

Engagements indicate the perceived importance of topics among audiences. Analysis shows that frequently covered topics like humanitarian crises receive the most engagement, suggesting that coverage frequency influences audience perceptions of issue importance. The presentation style, emphasizing urgency and seriousness, also significantly boosts engagement. Furthermore, the politically sensitive nature of issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict amplifies engagement, as it is widely debated across various platforms. The screenshots from the IRC page exemplify these reactions, and no relevant comments are included from the CARE page.

Comments	Analysis
Nassim Sarah We are witnessing the worst any human could bring upon another, especially when the majority are innocent children. Easy way to take action: www.ceasefiretoday.com Please share CEASEFIRETODAY.COM Ceasefire In Gaza NOW! 6w Like Reply	This comment affirms IRC's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and a link to help others act. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=735117318652276&set=a.220839400080073
Eman Otair The number has grown since and we became more aware of atrocities in the West Bank as well. The world needs to make a stand against ongoing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Children and civilians deserve an end to this nightmare. 3w Like Reply	This comment expresses affirmation for IRC's post on protecting children and civilians, as well as the need for people to make a stand against the genocide of Palestinians. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/InternationalRescueCommittee/videos/773917318081681
Dennis Krizan These two groups of people hate each other and would like nothing more than to have the other group removed completely from planet earth. The recent events only serve to deepen this hate. The only solution is to elect a leader of each country that honestly wants the hate and violence to stop. Only then can they start to work toward a lasting peace that is fair to people on both sides. 2w Like Reply	This comment expresses concerns about the long-term conflict between the two nations and suggests that the only solution to this issue is electing new leaders on both sides who stand for the end of violence and hate for the nations. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/InternationalRescueCommittee/videos/773917318081681
Tyler Schaal International Rescue Committee, what an irresponsible, disappointing post. The civilians of a free, democratic nation were brutally attacked by a terrorist group during a ceasefire. That terrorist group is 100% responsible for each of the 6,000+ dead or missing children that you mentioned. A ceasefire does not protect children in that region of the world — it puts them in even greater danger. I am ashamed to have ever supported IRC. It won't happen again. 5w Like Reply	The following comment above expresses disapproval of IRC's post, expressing that it is the "terrorist group" (referring to Hamas) that is solely responsible for the danger posed on civilians and children and that a ceasefire would only worsen it. **Link:** https://www.facebook.com/InternationalRescueCommittee/videos/773917318081681

Conclusions

Analyzing the Facebook pages of international humanitarian organizations through the lens of Agenda Setting Theory offers several key insights into how these entities use social media to shape public perception and agenda.

First Level: Setting the Agenda

IRC and CARE frequently cover humanitarian crises, particularly the ongoing conflict in Gaza, reflecting its urgency and the immediate need for attention. The conflict, which escalated significantly on October 7, 2023, has seen severe consequences, including substantial casualties and a humanitarian emergency, as highlighted by both organizations through their consistent and informative posts. Such coverage not only informs but also emphasizes the critical nature of the crisis, aligning with the organizations' missions to aid those affected by conflict and disaster.

IRC and CARE's Coverage Emphasis:

IRC: Focuses on shelter, safety, and protection, aligning with its goal to assist those disrupted by conflict and disasters, including the climate crisis. CARE: Prioritizes issues related to women and children, aiming to combat poverty and promote social justice by focusing on gender equality and women's rights.

Second Level: Shaping Perceptions

The presentation of these issues, especially the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, is carefully crafted with stark graphics and direct messages that create a sense of urgency, urging immediate action. This strategy effectively makes the audience perceive these issues as significant and pressing.

Visual Presentation: Uses contrasting colors, informative graphics, and direct messaging to highlight the severity of the crises, influencing how people think and react to these issues.

Engagement Analysis: The high engagement levels on posts about the humanitarian crisis suggest that this topic resonates powerfully with audiences, likely due to its immediate relevance and the ongoing political discourse surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This engagement reflects public concern and underscores the effectiveness of the organizations' messaging strategies.

Political Nature of Topics: The controversial and highly political nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict invites extensive public interaction and debate, further amplified by the organizations' emphatic coverage and the polarizing global opinions on the issue.

In conclusion, our analysis demonstrates how humanitarian organizations use social media to shape public discourse and perceptions in line with Agenda Setting Theory. By focusing on specific crises and leveraging media, these organizations set the public agenda and shape global views on these issues. Analysis of Facebook content from two international humanitarian organizations shows how their posts are designed to engage audiences deeply with humanitarian challenges. The urgency conveyed in these posts significantly impacts public perception, especially in the coverage of humanitarian crises, where strong engagement indicates public awareness of their severity. This highlights Agenda Setting Theory's role in influencing public attention and attitudes, showing that strategic communication from these organizations informs and inspires action and empathy, leading to substantial changes in public sentiment and behavior.

Limitation of the Case Study

The case study analyzing how humanitarian organizations use Facebook to influence public perceptions has several limitations. Selection Bias: it only examines two organizations, limiting the generalizability of findings. Scope of Data: the analysis is solely on Facebook, ignoring other platforms that might impact public discourse. Quantitative focus: the analysis measures engagement without delving into the qualitative reasons behind audience reactions. Temporal Limitations: data is tied to specific posts within a limited timeframe, which may not represent broader trends or ongoing crises. Measurement of Impact measures social media engagement but not the real-world impact of these interactions. Assumption of Media Effects: the study presumes that media exposure alters perceptions based on Agenda Setting Theory without proving causation.

Expanding the research scope and incorporating qualitative methods could address these limitations, providing a deeper understanding of social media's role in shaping public attitudes and actions.

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