SMIDGE

Social Media Narratives : Addressing Extremism in Middle Age

D4.2 – Social Network Analysis and Text Analysis Report

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY LEICESTER

FAS Research

CENTRO STUDI VILLA MONTESCA FONDAZIONE

INCLUSIVE EUROPE

KCSS Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

University of Central Lancashire UCLan Cyprus

KØBENHAVNS UNIVERSITET

Disclaimer

More info and contact: info@smidgeproject.eu | www.smidgeproject.eu

Document Control

Deliverable	4.2
WP/Task Related	WP4
Delivery Date	February 28, 2025
Dissemination Level	Public
Lead Authors	Christian Gulas, Paul Poledna, Harald Katzmair (FAS)
Lead Partner	UCPH/FAS
Contributors	-
Reviewers	De Montfort University (DMU), Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS)
Abstract	This report presents an in-depth analysis of social network interactions and text-based discussions within online platforms, focusing on the dissemination of disinformation, conspiracy theories, and polarizing content. Using Social Network Analysis (SNA) and Natural Language Processing (NLP), the study examines Telegram messages, Daily Mail user comments, and external domains to map relationships between online communities and key narratives. A central focus of this study is the application of Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) to demonstrate that the attractiveness of polarizing content is not only due to its informational claims but also because it is framed in moral terms or discusses perceived violations of moral values. The analysis highlights how disinformation and conspiracy theories emotionally engage individuals by tapping into deep-seated moral intuitions. By integrating MFT with text analysis, the study reveals how these narratives gain traction, foster group cohesion, and contribute to the erosion of trust in institutions. The findings underscore the need to address not only the factual inaccuracies of disinformation but also its moral and emotional resonance. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for designing more effective countermeasures that engage with the moral concerns underlying online radicalization.
Key Words	Social media, harmful content, disinformation, conspiracy theories, online radicalisation, social networks, semantic networks, natural language processing, sentiment analysis, moral foundations theory

Revision History

Version	Date	Author(s)	Reviewer(s)	Notes
0.1	2025/02/04	Christian Gulas, Paul Poledna, Harald Katzmair	DMU, KCSS	Draft submitted for first internal review
1.0	2025/02/19	Christian Gulas, Paul Poledna, Harald Katzmair		Submitted version

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

This report, Deliverable D4.2, builds on the findings of Deliverable D4.1, extending the analysis of disinformation, conspiracy theories, and polarizing content in online environments. While the previous report focused primarily on identifying key topics, conspiracy narratives, and the network structures through which such content circulates, this study introduces a new analytical dimension: moral framing.

A central hypothesis of this report is that the appeal of polarizing and harmful online content is not merely due to the information it conveys but also to the way it is morally framed. Many of these texts explicitly reference moral values or frame events as violations of such values, thereby evoking strong emotional reactions. To investigate this aspect, the study combines Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques with Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), as developed by Jonathan Haidt. This methodological approach allows for a systematic identification of moral narratives and their role in amplifying engagement with disinformation and conspiracy theories.

By integrating MFT into text analysis, this report provides deeper insights into the mechanisms that drive the dissemination and persistence of such content. The findings emphasize that disinformation is not only an epistemic challenge—spreading falsehoods and misleading claims—but also a moral and emotional phenomenon, shaping group identity, reinforcing polarization, and undermining institutional trust. Understanding this moral dimension is essential for designing more effective countermeasures that address not only factual inaccuracies but also the underlying moral and emotional appeal of harmful online content.

2. Background

The world has undergone profound transformations over the course of the SMIDGE project during the past two years. These transformations, spanning geopolitical, economical, and environmental dimensions, have significantly influenced the background both of the research object and the key questions of the project. Based on a comprehensive review of media coverage, the following picture of the current situation emerges (as of January 2025):

Geopolitical Shifts: The global geopolitical landscape has experienced substantial realignments. Despite severe military losses in its war against the Ukraine, Russia appears to be consolidating its influence, bolstered by strategic support from China, both militarily and economically. Concurrently, China has asserted dominance across critical emerging sectors, including artificial intelligence, semiconductor technologies, renewable energy systems, and transportation innovations. This growing strength has placed Western democracies, particularly Europe and Germany, under mounting pressure. Compounding this, China is actively pursuing the reintegration of Taiwan into its territory, while its tacit support for Russia's disinformation campaigns further exacerbates global instability. Similarly, other authoritarian regimes, such as North Korea and Iran (though weakened by Israeli military operations and the collapse of the

Assad regime in Syria), have intensified their geopolitical engagement, contributing to a more fractured and polarized global order.

Weakening of Liberal Democracies: Simultaneously, the liberal democracies of the West have shown marked vulnerability. The re-election of Donald J. Trump as president of the United States in November 2024 underscored the resurgence of right-wing populist forces, as did the significant gains of anti-EU and far-right parties in the 2024 European Parliament elections. Across Europe, political instability has intensified: Germany is undergoing governmental reorganization, with the risk of strengthening parties that are partially far-right or question Germany's alignment with the West. France is grappling with a high national debt and a legitimacy crisis of the government, while Austria faces the prospect of a far-right-led administration, following the failure of coalition talks among centrist parties. These developments are paralleled by the growing influence of Russia-aligned political forces in Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia, Romania, and Georgia. Together, these dynamics highlight the vulnerability of Western democratic institutions, and this fragility arises at a moment when global anti-democratic forces are on the rise, underscoring what can be at least described as a massive weakening of liberal-democratic power structures.

Economic Crisis and the Threat of Deindustrialization: Western industrialized nations are facing an unprecedented economic crisis, or at least difficulties, particularly in sectors that have historically underpinned their wealth, global competitiveness, and political stability. This downturn is driven by the ascendance of China, which not only benefits from lower production costs but has also emerged as a strong competitor in technological innovation. Key industries that have been cornerstones of European prosperity—such as automotive manufacturing, industrial machinery, and advanced engineering—are under significant pressure. Simultaneously, future-oriented sectors, including artificial intelligence, semiconductors, digital technologies, and renewable energy systems, are increasingly dominated by the US, China and other emerging economies. China's ability to produce cutting-edge technologies at competitive prices has accelerated the migration of critical industries away from Europe, a process that threatens deindustrialization in major economies like Germany. The resulting economic vulnerability has undermined the political center, creating fertile ground for anti-establishment and anti-EU forces.

Environmental Crisis and Climate Extremes: The year 2024 marked yet another record-breaking increase in global average temperatures, reaching the highest levels since the beginning of systematic meteorological records[1]. This relentless rise in temperatures has had catastrophic consequences, manifesting in extreme weather events across the globe. Europe and Asia faced unprecedented flooding, devastating infrastructure and displacing millions. Meanwhile, North America suffered some of the most severe wildfire seasons in recorded history, with massive forest fires ravaging Canada and the United States, destroying ecosystems and contributing further to atmospheric carbon emissions. These climatic disasters have intensified socio-political tensions, strained resources, and heightened public awareness of environmental vulnerabilities. At the same time, they have become a focal point for the spread of disinformation and

---

[1] https://climate.copernicus.eu/global-climate-highlights-2024, last accessed in January 2025.

conspiracy theories, with some narratives denying the existence of anthropogenic climate change while others exploit the fear and uncertainty surrounding these crises to undermine trust in scientific consensus and democratic institutions.

The New Context of Disinformation and Conspiracy Theories: At the inception of the SMIDGE project in early 2023, disinformation and conspiracy theories were primarily analyzed as tools of societal polarization and radicalization. However, the past two years have demonstrated a marked shift. These phenomena have penetrated the societal mainstream and are increasingly wielded as instruments of governance by authoritarian regimes and right-wing populist movements mentioned above. Governments, political actors, and online platforms have used them to sow distrust, destabilize democratic norms, and amplify moral grievances. This pronounced "war against reality", as the British journalist Peter Pomerantsev has termed it (2019), has made the task of analyzing disinformation and conspiracy theories both more urgent and more complex. This phenomenon is driven not only by the weakening or abandonment of content management on social media platforms such as X (acquired by Elon Musk, who has become a key influencer for Donald Trump), Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp (see Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg's announcement of the termination of external fact-checking in January 2025[2]) but also by the emergence of new platforms and media ecosystems dedicated to promoting "alternative facts." Compounding this is the erosion of traditional editorial media, which has historically served as a counterbalance to disinformation, further exacerbating the challenge. Authoritarian states like Russia have institutionalized disinformation as a cornerstone of hybrid warfare, strategically deploying conspiracy narratives to weaken liberal democracies. Platforms like TikTok and X (formerly Twitter) amplify such narratives, either through state-sponsored campaigns or profit-driven algorithms. TikTok, in particular, is often considered a platform where disinformation and conspiracy theories can spread and is also suspected of posing risks to mental health, especially among young people[3]. These effects contribute to broader socio-political weakening, not only in Western societies. In parallel, disinformation's moral and psychological appeal—especially during crises—has facilitated its rise. By framing crises within coherent, albeit false, narratives, disinformation provides a semblance of clarity and meaning amidst uncertainty, thus gaining traction among increasingly fragmented and disoriented populations.

The proliferation of disinformation and conspiracy theories on online platforms is not solely about spreading specific content or evoking emotional responses. A key objective is to flood the media space with an overwhelming volume of content, making rational public discourse more difficult or nearly impossible. This tactic exploits the tendency of established media to amplify and engage with such content, further saturating the information ecosystem.[4] As a

---

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/live/2025/01/07/business/meta-fact-checking, last accessed in January 2025.
[3] For an example of how Albania is attempting to address TikTok's influence on radicalization, see: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/pixels/article/2024/12/21/albania-to-shut-down-tiktok-for-a-year-says-prime-minister_6736346_13.html, last accessed 2025/02/17.
[4] A good example is the significant advertisement for Donald Trump resulting from the viral video featuring the song *"Eating the Cats"*, which referenced a statement made by Trump, in September 2024. Although intended

result, the space for constructive, reasoned public debate is eroded, and the belief in the concept of truth is profoundly undermined.

The global dissemination of disinformation and conspiracy theories—driven both by states such as Russia and China and by right-wing and populist political movements in the West—has evolved into a strategic political tool for demobilization. This strategy seeks to flood the public sphere with false or disorienting content, ultimately causing individuals to disengage from discussions and civic participation.[5] Many people – if not supporting these movements – retreat from these spaces, claiming they no longer know what is true (a hallmark of the post-truth society) and asserting that no one can be trusted. This deliberate spread of disinformation serves to shrink the participatory space, paving the way for its domination by a small elite. These elites often include oligarchic figures, such as Elon Musk or executives of major Big Tech companies in the United States, who exert significant influence over social media platforms all around the world and artificial intelligence development. Remarkably, these oligarchs—often referred to as "globalists"—form alliances with anti-globalist movements, which traditionally oppose global technologies and corporations and advocate for a focus on the regional. This paradoxical collaboration amplifies the effectiveness of disinformation as a tool for destabilization and control.

Impact on research questions: Against the backdrop of the crises and transformative developments outlined above, this report seeks to address the question of why disinformation and conspiracy theories have become so pervasive and, for many individuals, such compelling explanatory frameworks. These narratives appear to facilitate the processing of global crises and disruptive changes by offering seemingly coherent interpretations of complex and distressing phenomena. In the first research period of our tasks within the SMIDGE project, the focus was on documenting the prevalence and themes of disinformation and conspiracy theories across specific social media platforms. This objective remains a priority and continues to be addressed; however, additional central questions now emerge:

1. **Attractiveness**: What makes the content of conspiracy theories and disinformation so emotionally and affectively appealing?

2. **Emotions**: Which emotions and sentiments are primarily invoked and expressed through these narratives?

3. **Moral violation**: What role does the appeal to the violation of moral values play in their effectiveness?

---

to be ironic or critical, the video ultimately amplified his visibility and influence.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BrCvZmSnKA (last accessed January 2025).

[5] This was also the case in the early weeks of Donald Trump's second presidency in January 2025, when he announced political decisions and measures in rapid succession. It seemed not only about declaring what would happen but also about drawing the media and political opponents into a constant, agitated debate over the intent and feasibility of his statements. This strategy hindered measured responses, and indeed, there was significantly less resistance and protest during Trump's second inauguration compared to his first. See https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/02/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-trump-column-read.html, last accessed 2025/02/03.

We hypothesize that the attraction of conspiracy theories and disinformation lies not only in their cognitive or rational elements (i.e., their content) but also, and perhaps more importantly, in their affective and emotional resonance. These narratives provide individuals with a means to articulate emotions elicited by crises, including fear, anger, and moral outrage. Moreover, we contend that these emotional reactions are particularly intense because the crises and transformations described above are perceived not merely as threats to social status or economic stability but as violations of deeply held moral values. From this perspective, disinformation and conspiracy theories serve as vehicles for expressing moral emotions, which arise as reactions to societal disruptions.

While this is not the sole reason for their appeal—as noted in our interim report, conspiracy theories also foster group cohesion by creating a sense of belonging or are exploited by political actors to sow uncertainty and mobilize resources—our focus here is on the emotional and moral dimensions of their attraction. Specifically, this report investigates how conspiracy theories and disinformation resonate affectively and why they succeed in addressing the emotional needs of individuals during periods of profound societal crisis.

We therefore assume that conspiracy theories are, in part, a response to societal changes, crises, or crisis-like societal developments. These changes have a significant impact on the lives and daily routines of citizens and often demand that they change their behaviours or habits. This demand can evoke intense emotional reactions and, in some cases, reactivate traumatic experiences, as it suggests that there is something inherently flawed in their social identity or accustomed lifestyle – for instance, because they heat with fossil fuels, refuse vaccination, drive gas-powered cars, eat too much meat, reject gender-neutral language, or find the justice claims of LGBTQ+ individuals disturbing. An important reason for these demands —justified as they may be within the context of a liberal, pluralistic society or the necessity to tackle existential threats—to evoke such strong emotions, we believe, is that they are seen by individuals as violating moral values important to them (freedom, care, justice, authority, loyalty, purity, etc.).

From our perspective, disinformation and conspiracy theories are a way to channel these emotions. Emotions, according to leading psychoanalytic approaches, are non-symbolized affects. Conspiracy theories symbolize these effects by weaving them into a coherent narrative with elements typical of conspiracy theories, thus making them psychologically manageable. Our study aims to determine the underlying moral sentiments and to identify the violation of moral values targeted by conspiracy theories. Countermeasures, in our view, should address these values (and thus emotions) to be more effective – just like conspiracy theories, they could operate on the affective level as well, not just at the rational-cognitive level.

3. Theoretical Approach

3.1. Conspiracy Theories from a Psychoanalytic Perspective

Conspiracy theories, in their current magnitude and impact, can be traced back to historical shifts parallel to the French Revolution, the Enlightenment, secularization, and the pluralization of society. They can in part be understood as a reaction to these developments (Loetz & Müller, 2024). Historically, conspiracy theories have played a pivotal role in various significant events, most notably in their archetypal, antisemitic form in Nazi Germany, with devastating consequences. Today, digital social media act as an accelerant, spreading conspiracy theories with unprecedented speed and reach.

Psychoanalysis offers a particularly valuable lens for understanding conspiracy theories because they are quintessentially a depth-psychological phenomenon, with the unconscious regarded as playing a decisive role. Following that, conspiracy theories should not be seen as irrational opposites to a "reasonable normality." Reality itself is far less rational than we often wish to believe, and conspiracy theories do not stand in contrast to it on purely rational grounds. Instead, they are distinguished by other characteristics (ibid., p. 2):

- **Stasis**: Conspiracy theories are static and immune to objections. They do not engage in argumentative discussion.
- **Personalization**: They rely on personalized causes for events, as abstract, complex, and systemic causal relationships can rather be conceptualized.
- **Rejection of ambiguity**: Conspiracy theories do not tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, or ignorance. Chance occurrences are not accepted; everything must have a cause.
- **Manichaeism**: They often feature a clear distinction between good and evil, with evil being personified. However, there is usually a lack of a positive vision of the good or a goal worth striving for. Belief in conspiracy theories is frequently associated with both cognitive and physical withdrawal from the world.
- **Alternative facts**: Instead of critical reflection on societal structures, conspiracy theories produce "alternative facts", claiming them as the truth of a supposedly hidden reality. This is also why fighting conspiracy theories with "correct facts" often fails; it places the argument on the same level, which only reinforces relativism. The true causes, from a psychoanalytic perspective, are missed.

Against this background, Loetz and Müller (ibid., pp. 3ff.) highlight five specific psychological functions that conspiracy theories serve:

1. **Reduction of complexity**: Like other epistemic approaches, including science, conspiracy theories simplify the complexity and uncertainty of the world. However, this is only one part of their function.
2. **Emotional anchoring**: Conspiracy theories are primarily rooted in emotional, not cognitive, processes. They help manage emotions such as fear, aggression, and hatred, which often stem from real or perceived experiences of humiliation. This emotional

core makes them inherently destructive, especially when those who believe in them hold real power.

3. **Projection as psychic relief**: Conspiracy theories provide relief by projecting difficult internal states, connected to deep emotions such as fear and aggression, onto an external actor—typically the conspirators. This mechanism of splitting off and attributing one's unbearable mental states to others is central, though not unique, to conspiracy theories. As their critics we also project our own (unconscious) realization of how much we contribute to the world that gives rise to conspiracy theories onto their proponents.

4. **Narcissistic self-enhancement**: Conspiracy theories fulfil a narcissistic need to strengthen the self. The feeling of being "awakened" and possessing secret knowledge counters feelings of powerlessness. However, unlike paranoia, this does not result in a sense of omnipotence but rather leads to withdrawal from the world. The fight against the perceived conspirators is often postponed unless political capital becomes available. As Loetz and Müller (ibid., p. 6) state: "Conspiracy theories offer the chance to feel grandiose without having to say 'I'."

5. **Identity creation**: Conspiracy theories contribute to identity formation, becoming an integral part of the self due to their stabilizing effect. Criticism of conspiracy theories is thus experienced as a threat to one's identity. Additionally, identity is reinforced by sharing this knowledge with others, creating a sense of belonging within a social group.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, conspiracy theories function as a defence mechanism against the disintegration and fragmentation of the self. The sources of such psychic fragility can be manifold, stemming from both individual and societal causes. Current crises and demands for societal transformation likely exacerbate feelings of fear, uncertainty, and aggression in many individuals. A simple fact-checking approach is unlikely to change these deep-seated emotions. As Loetz and Müller (2024, p. 7, own translation) argue, "The battle for reason will not be won by merely presenting conspiracy theorists with 'correct' facts—they doubt them precisely because they sense, perhaps rightly, that facts themselves are produced within certain contexts and are not just reflections of truth."

What we are concerned with is that, while it is important, it is not sufficient to address disinformation and conspiracy theories on a purely phenomenological level, for example, by creating an inventory of their semantic and visual expressions. This alone does not adequately account for their appeal. A psychoanalytic perspective on conspiracy theories ultimately emphasizes their deeper emotional and psychological functions, rather than dismissing them as mere cognitive failures that can be addressed solely through fact-checking, media literacy training, or promoting complexity thinking (Han et al., 2024). While these measures are important, they are insufficient to fully address the psychological impact of conspiracy theories. These analyses aim to capture at least part of this impact by first examining the moral foundations and their perceived violations as discussed in the messages of (partially) conspiracy-theory-driven channels (D4.2). Secondly, they explore the sentiments and moral emotions expressed within these channels, which disseminate polarizing content, disinformation, and conspiracy theories, as well as the themes associated with these emotions (D4.3).

3.2. The Role of Moral Emotions

The study of moral emotions is critical to understanding human responses to moral and social issues, particularly within social media environments that facilitate rapid exchange of emotionally charged content. As explored by Jonathan Haidt (2003), moral emotions are distinct from other types of emotions in that they are tied to societal concerns and the well-being of others, rather than solely to personal interests. We aim to outline the defining characteristics of moral emotions according to Haidt, the categories within this domain, and their relevance to analyzing disinformation and conspiracy theories from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Definition of moral emotions: Moral emotions are emotions that arise in response to social interactions and events that affect not only the individual but also have implications for the well-being of others or the broader social order. Unlike emotions such as fear or happiness, which typically respond to personal gains or losses, moral emotions are evoked by events that affect others, particularly those that resonate with moral or ethical values. These emotions are rooted in shared moral standards and judgments that transcend individual self-interest, making them integral to societal cohesion and moral behavior. Moral emotions like anger, disgust, shame, compassion, and gratitude play a role in motivating actions that reinforce social norms and foster collective values, especially among social groups (Haidt 2003, p. 853).

Haidt categorizes moral emotions into several key groups based on their underlying motivations and action tendencies:

a) **Other-Condemning Emotions**: Emotions such as anger, contempt, and disgust arise in response to perceived moral violations by others. Anger is often triggered by perceived injustices, leading to a desire for reparation or punishment. Contempt involves a sense of superiority and moral disdain, often arising when social hierarchies are disrupted. Disgust, which extends beyond physical revulsion, often signifies moral disapproval of behaviors that transgress societal standards.

b) **Self-Conscious Emotions**: Shame, embarrassment, and guilt help regulate behavior by reinforcing societal expectations and promoting conformity to group norms. Shame and guilt, in particular, emerge when individuals evaluate their actions against social or moral standards, motivating behaviors that seek to repair social bonds.

c) **Other-Suffering Emotions**: Emotions such as compassion and empathy arise in response to the suffering of others. These emotions prompt prosocial behaviors, encouraging individuals to provide comfort or assistance. They are vital in moral contexts, fostering altruistic actions and enhancing group solidarity.

d) **Other-Praising Emotions**: Emotions such as gratitude and elevation are triggered by the virtuous actions of others. These emotions not only foster appreciation but also encourage individuals to emulate the moral behaviors they witness, thus reinforcing social virtues.

We regard detecting moral emotions in social media content as helpful for comprehending the appeal and dissemination of disinformation and conspiracy theories. Psychoanalytically, moral emotions are central to the unconscious dimensions of belief and identity. They influence social attitudes and affiliations by activating unconscious moral and identity-based responses,

which are often less accessible to cognitive reasoning. This emotional activation is particularly significant in the context of conspiracy theories, which – as we want to demonstrate – frequently refer to moral sentiments to create a sense of belonging, urgency, and righteousness among followers.

Moral emotions operate at an unconscious level, impacting individuals' beliefs and reactions without them being fully aware of the influence. Conspiracy theories and disinformation leverage these unconscious processes, engaging emotions like anger and contempt to amplify feelings of moral superiority or victimization, making users more susceptible to emotionally charged narratives. Furthermore, they foster a sense of identity and solidarity within groups, a phenomenon that conspiracy theories often exploit to create tightly knit communities bound by shared moral outrage or suspicion. Detecting these emotions helps reveal how group formation is shaped and reinforced around specific moral narratives. And finally, moral emotions can anchor beliefs and make them resistant to change or transformation, as these emotions validate and justify individual or group stances (Leone et al., 2019).

To understand the role of moral emotions in disinformation and conspiracy theories, it can be helpful to explore how these emotions function unconsciously and how psychoanalytic theories, particularly those of the British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1897 – 1979), elucidate this process. From a psychoanalytic perspective, emotions are complex, often unconscious, mental states that require processing to be understood and integrated. Bion introduced the concepts of "beta" and "alpha" elements to explain this transformation. Beta elements are raw, unprocessed emotional experiences—often overwhelming or chaotic—that the mind initially cannot digest. Left in their unprocessed state, these emotions create discomfort or confusion. Through the "alpha function," however, these beta elements are transformed into alpha elements, allowing them to become thinkable, manageable, and meaningful mental representations that contribute to deeper psychological insight and growth (Mertens 2018, pp. 41ff.).

Bion's concept of the "alpha function" is closely related to his idea of containment. In his model, a "container" (often symbolized by a caregiver or therapeutic figure) holds and processes another's beta elements, helping them transform into alpha elements. This containment provides a safe space for turbulent emotions to be metabolized, enabling individuals to handle complex emotional experiences rather than being overwhelmed by them. Without containment, beta elements remain unresolved, accumulating within the unconscious as unprocessed mental content (Mertens 2018, pp. 67ff.).

Conspiracy theories – our argument suggests – can function as a type of psychological container, especially for group-oriented moral emotions such as anger, contempt, or disgust, which are often heightened by disinformation narratives. These narratives are designed to evoke powerful moral emotions by focusing on themes of social injustice, threats to the community, or betrayal by perceived "others." Disinformation leverages these themes, both semantically and visually, to engage moral emotions that go beyond individual concerns and resonate at the collective level, making individuals feel part of a shared cause or struggle.

In this sense, conspiracy theories provide a structure for raw emotional experiences, taking chaotic or anxiety-provoking feelings and embedding them within a narrative that offers

coherence and meaning. By acting as containers, conspiracy theories allow individuals to channel unprocessed beta elements, such as fear, mistrust, or a sense of powerlessness, into a framework that feels purposeful. This process helps to avoid the discomfort associated with holding raw beta elements, creating temporary psychological relief by giving these emotions a defined form.

In addition to the multitude of crises and transformative demands that many people have faced in recent years—such as the COVID pandemic, energy crisis, economic downturn and inflation, digital transformation, geopolitical conflicts, and climate and environmental crises—social media has introduced an additional impact (Balzer, 2020). Each of these crises alone generates numerous "beta elements" that are difficult to mentalize, yet social media further compounds this effect, often overwhelming our capacity to confront reality and process these crisis-laden impressions. Social media, omnipresent in the form of our smartphones, brings these crises to us almost in real time, filtered in ways that amplify our negative emotions, as these platforms profit from capturing and sustaining our attention (Habermas 2022).

3.3. The Violation of Moral Foundations

But how can we determine which moral emotions and values are addressed in the textual material available to us? How can we operationalize them? We suggest that the concept of Moral Foundations offers a suitable approach for this purpose. The Moral Foundations Theory, developed by Jonathan Haidt and his colleagues (Haidt, 2013), provides a framework for understanding the various dimensions of human moral reasoning. This theory posits that there are several innate and universally available psychological systems that form the basis of intuitive ethics. These foundations are shaped by both evolutionary processes and cultural influences, leading to variations in moral priorities across different societies.

The reasons for the suitability of Moral Foundations Theory lie in its ability to systematically capture moral intuitions across different ideological and cultural contexts. Given that our analysis focuses on content associated with harmful, polarizing, and conspiratorial narratives, it is essential to use a framework that accounts for the diverse moral concerns that may drive engagement with such material. By structuring moral reasoning into distinct foundations, the theory enables a nuanced examination of how specific moral appeals contribute to the attractiveness and emotional impact of conspiracy narratives. Furthermore, Moral Foundations Theory is particularly well-suited for operationalizing moral values in a way that makes them measurable through Natural Language Processing techniques. By offering a structured and empirically validated taxonomy of moral concerns, it provides a methodological basis for detecting and quantifying moral frames in textual data, allowing for a systematic investigation of their role in shaping online discourse.

Haidt determines the following moral Foundations:

Care/Harm: The Care/Harm foundation is primarily concerned with the prevention of emotional or physical harm to others. This moral dimension is rooted in the evolutionary need to protect and nurture offspring and kin. It is characterized by feelings of compassion and

empathy towards those who are suffering or vulnerable. Individuals with a strong emphasis on the Care foundation are highly sensitive to signs of distress and harm, advocating for policies and behaviours that promote the well-being and protection of others. Instances of cruelty, neglect, or violence are seen as profound moral violations within this foundation (Haidt, 2013, p 153ff.).

Fairness/Cheating: The Fairness foundation revolves around issues of justice, equality, and re-ciprocal altruism. This dimension is concerned with the moral imperative to maintain fair ex-changes and interactions among individuals. It is deeply rooted in the evolutionary benefits of cooperative behaviour, where cheating or free riding—taking benefits without providing pro-portional returns—undermines trust and social cohesion. Individuals who prioritize Fairness are vigilant against instances of cheating, favouritism, and unjust treatment, advocating for systems and practices that ensure equal opportunities and fair outcomes for all members of society (ibid., p. 158ff.).

To further refine the concept of Fairness, researchers have distinguished between two com-plementary facets: **Equality and Proportionality** (Atari et al., 2022). While both relate to fair-ness in interactions, each emphasizes a unique perspective on what constitutes a fair ex-change. These distinctions help clarify how different moral concerns drive attitudes towards justice, distribution of resources, and cooperative behaviours. Additionally, these foundations often align with differing political perspectives, with Equality rather associated with political attitudes on the left and Proportionality associated with those on the right.

Equality: The Equality foundation focuses on the idea that all individuals deserve equal treat-ment and equal access to resources, rights, and opportunities, regardless of their background, status, or contributions. This perspective on fairness is rooted in the moral principle that all individuals possess inherent worth and, as such, should be granted the same respect and rights. Within this foundation, any deviation from equal treatment—such as discrimination, favoritism, or exclusion—is viewed as a moral violation. Individuals who prioritize Equality ad-vocate for systems and policies that minimize disparities and support the fair, impartial treat-ment of everyone. Politically, this emphasis on Equality aligns more with left-leaning ideolo-gies, which often support policies aimed at reducing social and economic disparities, such as progressive taxation, universal healthcare, and equal opportunity initiatives.

Proportionality: The Proportionality foundation, in contrast, emphasizes the idea that individ-uals should receive rewards, resources, or recognition in proportion to their contributions, ef-forts, or achievements. This foundation is grounded in the principle that fair exchanges should reflect the relative input or merit of each participant. From this perspective, fairness involves rewarding hard work and ensuring that free riding or unjust advantages are avoided. Propo-nents of Proportionality support systems and practices that reflect a balance between contri-bution and outcome, seeing unearned gains or losses as morally unacceptable. This view of fairness aligns more closely with right-leaning ideologies, which tend to prioritize individual responsibility and merit-based outcomes, often favoring policies that reward personal effort and minimize government intervention in wealth distribution.

Loyalty/Betrayal: The Loyalty foundation highlights the importance of allegiance and solidarity within a group. This moral dimension is tied to the evolutionary advantages of cohesive, cooperative groups that work together to achieve common goals. Loyalty involves prioritizing the interests of one's group—whether it be family, community, or nation—over individual interests. Acts of betrayal, such as putting personal gain ahead of group welfare, are seen as severe moral infractions. Loyalty fosters group unity and collective identity, often manifesting in patriotism, team spirit, and group loyalty (Haidt, 2013, p. 161ff.).

Authority/Subversion: The Authority foundation pertains to the respect and adherence to traditions, social hierarchies, and established authorities. This moral dimension is rooted in the evolutionary need for stable, organized social structures that maintain order and facilitate group coordination. Respect for authority figures, such as parents, leaders, and societal institutions, is a core aspect of this foundation. Disobedience or disrespect towards traditional authority figures is perceived as morally wrong, as it threatens social order and the continuity of established norms and practices (ibid., p. 165ff.).

Purity/Degradation: The Purity (or Sanctity) foundation is concerned with the purity and sacredness of both the body and the soul. This moral dimension arises from the evolutionary need to avoid pathogens and contaminants, which historically posed significant threats to health and survival. Sanctity encompasses a range of behaviours and attitudes aimed at preserving the purity and integrity of the self and the community. It often manifests in religious and cultural practices that emphasize cleanliness, sexual propriety, and spiritual wholesomeness. Additionally, the concept of sanctity extends beyond the individual body, encompassing, for example, the untouchable or pristine aspects of nature and the environment, reflecting a moral concern for the preservation of natural ecosystems. Deviant acts, degrading behaviours, and situations that raise contamination concerns are seen as violations of this moral foundation (ibid., p. 170ff.).

Graham et al. (2011) group moral foundations into individualizing and binding categories. **Individualizing foundations**, which include Care and Fairness (both Equality and Proportionality), focus on the protection and well-being of individuals, emphasizing empathy, compassion, and justice. These foundations prioritize individual rights and aim to prevent harm and injustice toward others. In contrast, **binding foundations** include Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity. These foundations prioritize group cohesion, social stability, and adherence to shared norms, encouraging individuals to place group interests above personal ones. Binding foundations emphasize loyalty to one's group, respect for authority, and the maintenance of social and moral order, which helps create stronger, more cohesive communities.

Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory suggests that violations of moral foundations trigger strong emotional responses, as these foundations are closely tied to values that individuals consider fundamentally important. When a person perceives an affront to core moral principles—such as fairness, loyalty, or sanctity—this violation activates emotions like anger, disgust, or fear, which in turn strengthen the individual's attachment to these values.

We assume that disinformation and conspiracy theories often target topics related to perceived violations of moral foundations, making these theories especially appealing to

individuals who feel that their core values are under threat (Leone et al., 2023, Nejat et al., 2023, Gkinopoulos et al., 2022). Conspiracy theories thus gain traction by addressing issues that evoke emotional resonance through moral concerns. They do not merely convey information but serve as "containers" for intense emotions, in the sense of Wilfred Bion's concept explained above. A "container" provides structure for overwhelming emotions, transforming raw emotional responses into a more manageable narrative form. Conspiracy theories function similarly by embedding these powerful emotional responses within coherent narratives. By framing complex social and political events as morally laden battles between good and evil, conspiracy theories offer an ordered structure to the chaos of events and feelings, providing adherents with a way to cope psychologically with perceived threats to their moral values.

Leone et al. (2023) argue that conspiracy theories often inherently involve moral judgment: "Conspiracy beliefs imply a moral evaluation because they generally interpret negative and frightful events as intentional plots originating from malevolent agents" (ibid., p. 1). They hypothesize that individuals who highly value the "binding foundations"—that is, the group-oriented moral values of Loyalty, Authority, and Purity—are more likely to engage with conspiracy theories than those who prioritize the "individualistic foundations" of Care and Fairness. Given recent developments, however, we believe this hypothesis could be extended further. Among conspiracy theory adherents, the boundaries between individualism and collectivism blur in intriguing ways, as Amlinger and Nachtwey (2022) suggest in their study on "Libertarian Authoritarianism." Many conspiracy theory supporters perceive themselves as isolated members of a majority, manipulated, oppressed (i.e., threatened in their freedom), or even targeted for extinction by an elite minority. The Care/Harm Foundation, typically classified as individualistic in Graham et al.'s (2011) framework, becomes group-focused here, as in the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory, which alleges that "globalists" or a similar elite (often with antisemitic implications) aim to "replace" native Europeans with refugees or Muslims. Likewise, the Fairness/Cheating Foundation takes on a group orientation when anger over perceived injustices is expressed, such as the claim that refugees receive support at the expense of native citizens or that Ukraine is funded and armed while the domestic economy deteriorates—a discourse currently resonating strongly in Germany.

In the following investigations, our focus is less on which moral foundations are upheld by individuals who believe in conspiracy theories, but more on examining which themes crucial to conspiracy theories engage specific moral foundations.

We posit that a key reason for the appeal of polarizing content, disinformation, and conspiracy theories is, among many other aspects, that they serve as a container—that is, a framework and expressive outlet—for emotions arising from the real or perceived violation of moral foundations amid current crises, events, transformations, or claims for transformation of individual behaviour.

We present three hypothetical examples: The **Chemtrails conspiracy theory** suggests that the white trails left by airplanes are not harmless contrails but contain chemicals intentionally sprayed into the atmosphere by powerful entities. The supposed reasons include mind control, population control, or manipulating the environment for undisclosed purposes. This theory speaks to concerns of **Care**, as it suggests harm to the general population without their

knowledge or consent, violating people's right to live in a safe environment. Additionally, it challenges **Authority** by questioning the motives and trustworthiness of government or other authoritative bodies, framing them as deceivers of the public. **Purity** is also significant, as the theory implies that harmful toxins or chemicals are being spread across nature and people, corrupting the natural environment and endangering human health.

Another conspiracy theory claims that government or elite groups are manipulating the weather and even controlling minds through secretive programs like **geoengineering or HAARP** (High-Frequency Active Auroral Research Program). Proponents argue that these projects cause natural disasters or are used for mass control, far beyond their stated research purposes. The theory activates **Loyalty** by framing these institutions as out-group forces threatening people's well-being. It also challenges **Authority** by portraying government or scientific bodies as dangerously experimenting on the public. Additionally, **Purity** may again play a role here, as the theory implies that tampering with natural systems (such as the climate or weather) is inherently corrupt or unnatural.

And the **Great Reset conspiracy theory** suggests that a global elite is using crises like the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to radically reshape society according to their own agenda. This involves allegedly stripping people of freedoms, implementing authoritarian control, and restructuring economies to suit elite interests. This resonates with **Fairness**, as it implies that the restructuring benefits the elite at the expense of the general public, violating the principle of equal opportunity. It also taps into **Authority**, as it suggests that these elites misuse their power to impose control. Finally, **Loyalty** is relevant, as the theory suggests that these elites are a threat to the autonomy and sovereignty of communities and nations, making them seem like enemies to the people's values and identity.

We can assume that conspiracy theories often engage multiple moral foundations simultaneously. Their significance—and this is what we aim to demonstrate below—lies less in addressing specific moral foundations individually, but rather in their overall high moral charge. Conspiracy theories are particularly effective when they encompass as many different moral transgressions as possible. In some cases, however, a particular moral foundation takes precedence, as we will see, for example, in relation to QAnon and its claim of a globally operating pedophile network.

To sum up, we consider it essential to understand these moral frames to understand the attractiveness of disinformation and conspiracy theories. In highly polarized and controversial topics, individuals with opposing views often fail to understand why a particular news story, event, or action is perceived as violating a specific moral value or the other. People differ in terms of which moral values they prioritize and which events they see as infringing upon these values. However, when addressing disinformation and conspiracy theories, it becomes crucial to foster an understanding of the emotional impact of moral violations. While we may not achieve agreement on moral values themselves, we can work towards a shared understanding of what it means to experience a moral violation. Everyone knows what it feels like to have their moral values violated; everyone knows what it feels like to experience anger in response to a situation perceived as unfair. The goal of this analysis is not to create moral consensus but to promote mutual understanding of the emotions that arise from such violations.

Disinformation and conspiracy theories are one way of framing and expressing emotions that arise from the violation of moral values. This shared recognition of moral injury and its emotional consequences is the foundation for meaningful engagement and measures. And disinformation and conspiracy theories are one way of framing and expressing emotions that arise from the violation of moral values.

4. Methodology

4.1. Social Network Analysis

We employ Social Network Analysis (SNA) methods to examine the patterns and relationship structures between various entities—both semantic units and social actors—within our datasets. SNA originated in early 20th-century small group studies and has since developed into a critical methodology for examining complex relational patterns within various social frameworks (Wasserman & Faust, 2012). Its foundations were laid by pioneering psychologists and sociologists, including K. Lewin, J.L. Moreno, and F. Heider, who sought to measure and map social relationships, correlating these quantitative mappings with qualitative characteristics such as the balance of positive and negative ties, structural balance, and referential attachment. Methodologically, SNA is rooted in graph theory and matrix algebra, offering a robust framework for the analysis and interpretation of relational data (Mrvar and Batagelj, 2018).

In the field of social media data analysis, SNA proves highly effective in identifying and examining the intricate web of connections among diverse entities (Sloan et al., 2018). These entities go beyond individual social actors to encompass any units that can form relationships. For instance, within semantic networks, SNA enables the exploration of how various concepts or themes are interlinked. Applying SNA to social media enables investigating both social and semantic structures. In terms of social structures, SNA can delineate and analyze networks formed by different platforms and channels, mapping how they interact, disseminate information, and exert influence on each other. This type of analysis is crucial for understanding information diffusion, trend propagation, and influence dynamics across social media. Regarding semantic structures, SNA aids in mapping the interrelations among different topics or themes discussed on social media. By examining these topic interconnections, SNA provides insights into prevailing narratives, their development over time, and their links to wider social conversations.

SNA also offers a diverse set of network metrics for analyzing networks at the levels of actors, relationships, communities, and overall structure. A notable strength of SNA is its advanced mapping and visualization techniques, which reveal intricate network structures and connections often hidden from view in conventional visualizations. These visualizations are instrumental in uncovering latent patterns and pinpointing central actors, links, and communities within networks, thus delivering valuable insights into the dynamics of social relationships (Krempel, 2005).

4.2. AI-driven detection of Moral Foundations in Text Messages

As explained in Section 3.2, a central aim of our analysis is to determine which moral foundations are addressed by Telegram messages in the context of conspiracy theories. We find the hypothesis plausible that content is particularly successful and appealing when it discusses moral violations affecting specific groups of people or those they perceive as affecting them. By attempting to identify the types of moral violations involved (e.g., perceptions of injustice, illegitimacy, disgust, or disruption of the usual order) that were most frequently addressed, we aim to better understand the powerful impact of conspiracy theories. Additionally, we seek to contribute to the discussion of which topics and moral issues counter-interventions should address to effectively counteract conspiracy narratives.

In the following analysis, we focus on assigning moral foundations to text units (i.e. Telegram messages and Daily Mail user comments) using machine learning techniques. For this, we refer to the Moral Foundations Reddit Corpus (MFRC, Trager et al. 2022), a publicly available dataset of more than 16,000 Reddit messages with assigned moral foundations.[6] This corpus pertains to English messages, and this is the reason why we are only examining the English-language text corpus for its moral foundations. At the time of writing this report, there is, as far as we can see, no way to apply this method to German-language texts. However, the Moral Foundations Concept claims to be, to some extent, "universal"[7], so we assume that the conclusions drawn from it can also be applied to the German-speaking context.

Using the MFRC, we trained a machine learning model, which was then applied to our Telegram messages and Daily Mail user comments to identify the moral foundations addressed within them. This approach allows us to determine the extent to which moral foundations are addressed and identify those most frequently occurring. The MFRC encompasses comments from subreddits. Subreddits are specific forums or communities within the website reddit.com, each dedicated to a particular topic or theme. Users can join these subreddits to engage in discussions, share content, and view posts related to the specific subject of the subreddit. Trager et al. had annotators classify each of these Reddit comments in terms of the moral foundations. We took the MFRC including the annotations to fine-tune a natural language processing (NLP) model (OpenAI's GPT-3.5 Turbo model) to classify and interpret the Telegram messages with respect to the moral foundation categories.

Our approach involved integrating the annotations from Trager et al.'s MFRC into a format suitable for model fine-tuning. Each Reddit comment in the corpus was originally evaluated by three independent annotators, providing a rich set of perspectives on the moral sentiments expressed. In our adaptation, we merged these multiple annotations to enhance the depth and diversity of the training data for the language model. Instead of treating each annotation separately, we consolidated the annotations for each Reddit comment into a single record. This approach was taken to ensure that the model training could benefit from the full spectrum

---

[6] https://huggingface.co/datasets/USC-MOLA-Lab/MFRC, last accessed 2025/02/03.
[7] For the discussion on the problem of the universal applicability of Moral Foundations Theory, see Atari et al., 2023.

of moral interpretations provided by the different annotators. Where annotators agreed, a single label was used. In cases of disagreement, we included the diversity of labels to maintain the breadth of moral sentiments. This method aimed to enrich the model's learning process by exposing it to a wider range of moral nuances. Central to the preprocessing phase was the decision to discard the 'Thin Morality' category. Despite being part of the original annotation scheme, this category consistently yielded unsatisfactory fine-tuning results, prompting its removal to refine the classification model's focus on the remaining categories.

Fine-tuning in the context of machine learning, particularly in natural language processing, involves the adjustment of a pre-trained model to perform a specific task or accommodate a particular type of data. The pre-trained model, in this case, GPT-3.5 Turbo, has already learned a vast amount of general information about language and its use. Fine-tuning refines this general knowledge base, enabling the model to focus on and become more proficient in a specific domain or task – here, identifying and classifying moral sentiments in Reddit comments. This fine-tuning process differs from training a model from scratch. It starts with a model that has already learned a broad range of language features and nuances. The goal is to build upon this pre-existing knowledge, steering the model's focus toward the peculiarities of the specific dataset at hand. This approach is often more efficient than starting the learning process anew, as it leverages the extensive learning the model has already undergone. The decision to use GPT-3.5 Turbo for fine-tuning was informed by its proven effectiveness in understanding and generating natural language, as well as its adaptability to specific tasks through fine-tuning[8]. The fine-tuning process aimed to harness these capabilities and direct them towards the specialized task of identifying and categorizing moral sentiments as per the MFRC.

The training proceeded for a total of three epochs, to ensure comprehensive learning without overextending the number of iterations that could lead to overfitting. An epoch in this context refers to a complete pass through the entire dataset, which allows the fine-tuning process to iteratively enhance the model's ability to discern and apply the moral foundations framework to new data.

The primary indicators of success within model training are the training and validation losses, which are critical for evaluating the model's predictive accuracy. The training loss, recorded at 0.3504, indicated how well the model learned from the training dataset. The validation loss, slightly higher at 0.4172, reflected the model's performance against new, unseen data. This differential between the training and validation losses suggests a good generalization without significant overfitting, although such analyses should be conducted with careful observation of potential performance gaps. These loss values guide the ongoing adjustment of the fine-tuning process, serving as vitally important feedback. Lower loss values signify that the model's predictions are closely aligned with the actual annotations, pointing to an efficient and effective learning course. In summary, the fine-tuning procedure, represents a targeted effort

---

[8] Evaluating the performance of Large Language Models (LLMs) is a challenging task, as the selection of specific benchmarks can introduce bias into the results. To mitigate this, we referred to the LMSYS Chatbot Arena Leaderboard which is a crowdsourced open platform for LLM evals, available at [https://huggingface.co/spaces/lmsys/chatbot-arena-leaderboard] (last accessed on 2024/02/20), which aggregates the outcomes of over 200,000 comparative evaluations conducted by humans.

to endow the GPT-3.5 Turbo model with the capacity to accurately interpret and replicate the moral assessments as established in the annotated dataset.

This process led to applying the fine-tuned GPT-3.5 Turbo model to classify the English-language Telegram messages and Daily Mail user comments. This task aimed to automate the complex process of moral foundation analysis, leveraging the customized capabilities of the model. To facilitate this application, a custom Python script was developed. The script's primary function was to automate interactions with the OpenAI API, utilizing the fine-tuned model to systematically analyse the text material.

The classification used differs slightly from that described in Section 3.2. The following categories are used in the MFRC:

1. **Care/Harm**: This category emphasizes empathy, kindness, and protection of others from harm. It values nurturing and caring behaviours, advocating for the welfare and safety of all, especially those vulnerable or in need.
2. **Equality/Inequality**: This foundation addresses issues of fairness, justice, and equal rights. It rather resonates with liberal, progressive, or leftist attitudes, focusing on equality as a form of justice. It underscores the importance of treating individuals equitably and opposes discrimination or unfair treatment based on arbitrary criteria.
3. **Proportionality/Disproportionality**: This concept relates to justice as deserved inequality. It's rather aligned with conservative positions, emphasizing that rewards or consequences should be proportionate to one's actions or merits. This foundation advocates for equitable treatment based on contribution or effort, rather than equal outcomes for all.
4. **Loyalty/Betrayal**: This foundation centers on allegiance, fidelity, and loyalty to a group, community, or nation. It values solidarity, commitment, and the importance of standing with one's group, often placing group interests above individual ones.
5. **Authority/Subversion**: This principle deals with respect for legitimate authority, tradition, and the established social order. It values hierarchy, structure, and the role of authority figures in maintaining order and stability.
6. **Purity/Degradation**: This foundation focuses on sanctity, purity, and avoiding degradation. It values the preservation of what is considered pure or sacred, whether in moral, spiritual, or physical terms, and often involves abiding by certain codes or standards to maintain this purity.

5. Database

5.1. Telegram Messages

5.1.1. English-language Messages

For the following analyses, we used and also updated the Telegram data from the TGDataset.

As previously described in D4.1, the TGDataset, originally developed by Sapienza University of Rome, served as the foundation of our analysis. While they applied a snowball approach to expand channels based on message forwarding, our focus was on refining and tailoring this data for our specific research objectives. We concentrated on German and English-language channels relevant to disinformation and conspiracy theories.

To begin, we used the Compact Language Detector 2 (an open-source language detection library, developed by Google and used in a Python environment) to filter the dataset, identifying 10.8 million German and 48.6 million English messages. We then applied the "T-Systems-on-site/cross-en-de-roberta-sentence-transformer" model to generate embeddings—numerical representations that capture the semantic meaning of each message. These embeddings allowed us to conduct a deeper, more nuanced analysis of the text (D4.1, p 26f.).

We formulated statements across 20 different conspiracy theory topics to guide our selection process. For each message, we calculated the cosine similarity between its embedding and these predefined conspiracy theory statements, which helped us measure how closely the content aligned with the topics we were investigating. Messages with a similarity score of 0.2 or higher were retained for further analysis. To refine the dataset, we applied different thresholds for German and English-language channels. For English-language channels, we selected those with at least 50 messages meeting the similarity criteria, while for German-language channels, we included those with a minimum of 5 relevant messages. This distinction was based on differences in channel size and activity levels between the two languages. The resulting filtered dataset formed the core of our analysis, focusing specifically on harmful content, disinformation, and conspiracy theories across Telegram channels.

The messages and posts obtained in this way primarily originated from the years 2019, 2020, and 2021. To gain insights into the topics discussed in recent messages and posts, assess whether there have been changes in the virulence of these topics, update the network analysis, and conduct moral violation analysis and sentiment analysis, we additionally collected all posts from the 100 English-language channels with the highest subscriber counts, as identified in D4.1, between September 2023 and September 2024. This was done using access to the Telegram API through the Python Telethon library. The Telegram API provides developers with programmatic access to Telegram's messaging platform, allowing them to interact with public channels, retrieve data, and automate tasks[9]. In this case, we used Telethon, a Python library specifically designed for interacting with the Telegram API[10]. Telethon allows for easy retrieval

---

[9] https://core.telegram.org/, last accessed October 2024.
[10] https://docs.telethon.dev/en/stable/, last accessed October 2024.

of messages, user data, and metadata from Telegram channels by providing a streamlined interface for API requests. Through Telethon, we were able to gather large volumes of messages, urls, and meta-data without overloading the server by downloading the data in batches. This ensured we could process real-time and historical messages efficiently for our analysis.

The data collection period spanned from September 25, 2023, to September 24, 2024. Of the 100 channels identified in the TGDataset, 86 were still active or accessible via the Telegram API at the time of data update. From these channels, a total of 449,621 messages and posts were collected, including metadata and reactions, i.e. graphic icons which denote user-interaction markers such as likes, thumbs-up, hearts, and other emotive indicators that reflect individual responses to the content without requiring textual input.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the number of English language Telegram messages per month between September 2023 and September 2024. There are no significant fluctuations in message volume between the months, with the monthly average standing at 37,560 messages (excluding the months 09/23 and 09/24, which were not fully collected) sent from the 86 channels. The slight variations observed remain within a relatively consistent range, indicating steady activity across the observed period.

Figure 1 – English-language Telegram messages per month (86 channels, 449,621 messages).

5.1.2. German-language Messages

Similarly, as with the English-language messages, we applied the same approach to the German-language messages. For the top 100 Telegram channels in our base dataset with the highest subscriber counts, we collected metadata using a Python script based on the Telethon library. Of the 100 selected German-language channels, 90 remained accessible and active for data collection at the time of our update. Using the same Telethon script applied to the English-language channels, we retrieved data from the German-language channels for the identical period, spanning from September 25, 2023, to September 24, 2024. This process yielded a total of 399,201 messages for 90 channels, including metadata and emotional reaction icons.

Figure 2 presents the results of this data collection. The monthly distribution of German-language messages closely mirrors that of the English-language messages, displaying a relatively consistent volume overall with a peak occurring in January 2023.
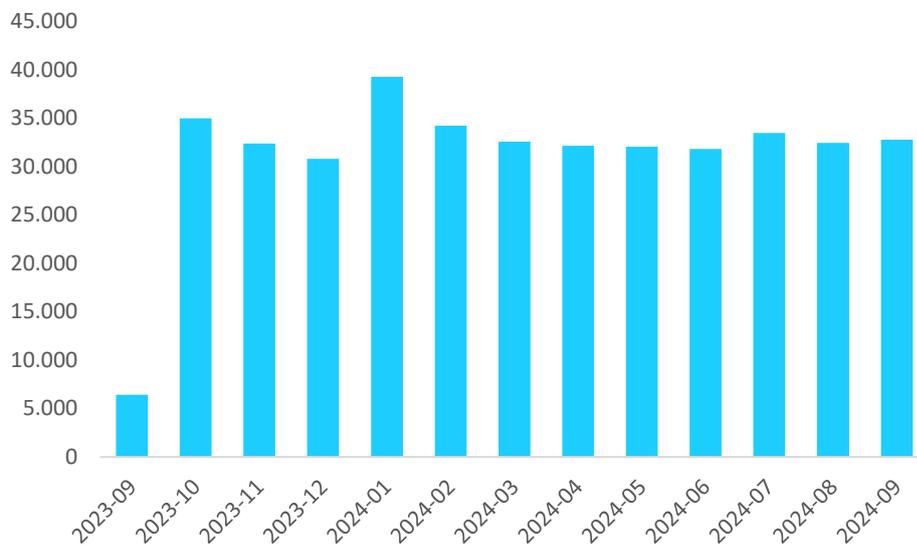
Figure 2 - German-language Telegram messages per month (90 channels, 399,201 messages).

5.2. Daily Mail Articles and User Comments

We can assume that user comments on news platform articles represent a valuable data source for analyzing and identifying users' opinions, attitudes, and emotional dispositions (Kubin et al., 2024). In the construction of the Daily Mail dataset, as described in the Progress Report D4.1, a Python-based web scraping tool was developed to systematically extract data from the publication's online platform. The data collection targeted articles published in 2021. At the time of data collection for Deliverable D4.1, it was initially planned to extend the dataset of Daily Mail user comments to include those from the 2023/2024 period for the final analysis. Unfortunately, due to changes on the Daily Mail's website, it is no longer possible to extract this data, though the exact reasons for this restriction remain unknown to us. As a result, the following analyses will be conducted using the 2021 dataset. We do not anticipate that this limitation poses a significant issue for the study. While certain focal points or aspects may have shifted over time, the core relevance of the topics under investigation remains unchanged. Furthermore, we assume that the emotions expressed in the user comments, as well as the moral violations addressed in these discussions, and the conspiracy theories popping up in the discussions, are temporally stable. Therefore, the analyses based on the 2021 data should still hold validity in answering our research questions. Given the valuable insights provided by the Daily Mail data, we believe it would be inadvisable to disregard it entirely. The Daily Mail website serves as a platform where individuals with a wide range of opinions, including both moderate, conservative, and non-extreme views, as well as more radicalized, extreme perspectives, are represented. This is true regardless of the level of content moderation implemented by the platform. Importantly, the site attracts a significant demographic of middle-aged individuals, which aligns with the target population our study aims to address. This further reinforces the

value of the dataset, as it provides insight into the discussions and sentiments of this critical group.

The dataset includes a comprehensive set of metadata for each article, such as a unique identifier (article ID), the headline, publication date, topic category as classified by the website, and the total number of user interactions in the form of comments. To capture audience engagement, the scraper was designed to retrieve the most recent comments up to a predetermined limit per article, ensuring consistent data structure for analysis. For each comment, the dataset records relevant details to provide insight into user interaction and engagement. These include the comment text, a user ID, the comment's timestamp (creation date), and measures of community feedback, indicated by the number of positive (likes) and negative votes (dislikes). Additionally, the total vote count and the article's topic category are recorded.

Initially, 225,265 articles with comments were retrieved. After data cleansing, which involved restricting the dataset to 2021 articles and removing duplicates, a total of 224,981 articles remained as raw data. At the time of download in March 2023, 60,161,527 comments were associated with these articles, of which 41,797,198, or 69.5%, were successfully downloaded. Due to the technical challenges of accessing data from the Daily Mail's online system and the specific methods employed in data retrieval, we obtained a large but partial dataset, representing 69.5% of the total comments linked to the selected articles. This subset primarily contains the most recent comments, reflecting the limitations encountered in the data collection process.

5.3. YouTube Channels and Videos

Besides network and text analysis, another focus of this study is the examination of domains and websites referenced in Telegram messages to identify the platforms to which these messages are connected. A particular emphasis is placed on analyzing YouTube videos, specifically investigating which YouTube videos are linked within Telegram messages. This allows us to understand the role of YouTube as a content source within Telegram discussions and to assess the extent of inter-platform connectivity. For this study, we concentrated on German-language Telegram messages collected over the period from September 2023 to September 2024. From the dataset of 399,201 German Telegram messages, we extracted a total of 23,573 unique links to various YouTube videos. Subsequently, we gathered metadata for 4,668 of these videos. The remaining videos lacked available metadata, primarily due to their deletion in the interim or other restrictions preventing access to metadata from YouTube's side. However, we consider this number sufficiently large to make statements about the nature and content of the videos. The decision to analyze YouTube videos from German-language Telegram messages was guided by methodological considerations. Many of the advanced computational methods used for semantic and textual analysis, such as Moral Foundations Theory analysis and sentiment analysis, are predominantly developed for English-language text. Due to the limited availability of equivalent tools for German-language content, we opted to focus our YouTube analysis on the German-language Telegram dataset. This ensures that our investigation aligns with the available analytical frameworks and maximizes the reliability of our findings. The data

collection process for YouTube videos was conducted using the YouTube API and a dedicated Python script, enabling a systematic and structured retrieval of relevant metadata.

5.4. The Presence of Middle-Aged Users in Our Material

A central focus of our study is the 45–65 age group, as this demographic plays a crucial role in the dissemination, consumption, and potential impact of polarizing content and conspiracy theories. This focus was carefully considered in the selection of data sources for the present study. One of the primary datasets consists of Telegram messages from channels known to be key platforms for the spread of conspiracy narratives and polarizing material.

While comprehensive demographic data on Telegram users is limited, available statistics suggest that the platform serves a diverse and broadly distributed user base across multiple age groups . Recent data indicates that approximately 21.6% of Telegram users are over 45 years old, while 29.4% fall within the 25–34 age range, and 23.8% are aged 35–44. While TikTok and Instagram have a higher proportion of younger users, Telegram - similar to Face-book - has a more broadly distributed audience, including a relatively large share of middle-aged individuals.

Although it is not possible to determine the exact age composition of users engaging with specific Telegram channels, the dataset analyzed in this study consists of channels that are particularly relevant for understanding the dissemination of harmful content, polarizing narratives, and conspiracy theories. Many of these channels emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, initially centering on conspiracy theories related to the virus, vaccination skepticism, and opposition to pandemic-related measures. Over time, these channels have expanded their thematic focus, incorporating broader conspiracy narratives that foster general distrust toward experts, political decision-makers, and "mainstream media". Empirical research has shown that belief in conspiracy theories is more prevalent among middle-aged and older individuals than among younger age groups (for Germany see Zick and Küpper, 2021). Given the thematic focus of the selected Telegram channels and the way these topics are framed within them, it is reasonable to assume that our dataset effectively captures content that resonates with the 45–65 age group.

The Daily Mail user comments provide a dataset in which the middle-aged demographic is clearly overrepresented, based on available demographic data regarding the Daily Mail readership. This makes the user comments a particularly valuable data source for analyzing how individuals in this age group engage with online discussions, particularly in relation to polarizing content, conspiracy narratives, and emotionally charged discourse. Given this demographic composition, the Daily Mail user comments offer unique insights into the topics that resonate most with middle-aged individuals, the emotions that drive their engagement, and the moral frames through which they interpret and respond to societal issues. This dataset is particularly well-suited for identifying how moral concerns shape discussions in this age group, as well as for examining the mechanisms through which disinformation and conspiracy theories gain traction among middle-aged audiences.

6. Results of the Social Network Analysis

6.1. The Network among Telegram Channels

As described in section 5.1, we collected all messages and the corresponding channel metadata from the top 100 English- and German language Telegram channels by subscriber count for the period between September 2023 and September 2024.

Figure 3 lists the top 20 (out of the 100) English-language Telegram channels ranked by the aggregated views of their messages during the period from September 25, 2023, to September 24, 2024. It also includes the number of messages posted by the channel in the same period.

Rank	Channel	Messages	Views	Messages Pct	Views Pct
1	Amir Tsarfati	13.883	2.516.601.962	3,1%	26,2%
2	Midnight Rider Channel US	51.058	1.223.409.006	11,4%	12,8%
3	Noticias Rafapal	10.619	421.643.963	2,4%	4,4%
4	CNA	3.107	335.392.409	0,7%	3,5%
5	Phil Godlewski 3.0	4.698	326.762.040	1,0%	3,4%
6	Jack Posobiec	15.649	308.389.597	3,5%	3,2%
7	Lin Wood	8.564	292.321.082	1,9%	3,0%
8	We The Media	13.155	280.632.869	2,9%	2,9%
9	Sergeant News Network US	21.050	267.957.266	4,7%	2,8%
10	David Avocado Wolfe	18.098	257.055.097	4,0%	2,7%
11	Resist the Mainstream	8.004	202.261.275	1,8%	2,1%
12	Donald J. Trump	949	194.617.710	0,2%	2,0%
13	il Donaldo Trumpo	6.043	185.430.907	1,3%	1,9%
14	Freedom Force Battalion US	17.459	184.579.195	3,9%	1,9%
15	Q) The Storm Rider /Official Page	5.816	182.124.398	1,3%	1,9%
16	ULTRA Pepe Lives Matter 🐸	3.290	177.682.717	0,7%	1,9%
17	Charlie Kirk	4.455	143.664.762	1,0%	1,5%
18	Tommy Robinson News	6.418	143.597.851	1,4%	1,5%
19	Q NEWS OFFICIAL TV #WWG1WGA ♡ US	32.836	134.573.109	7,3%	1,4%
20	WarRoom: Official Telegram Channel	28.224	127.558.044	6,3%	1,3%

Figure 3 – Top-20 English-language Telegram channels sorted by messages views (2023/09/25 - 2024/09/24, N = 449,621 messages).

The 20 channels can be described as follows:

1. **Amir Tsarfati**: A prominent Christian speaker, Amir Tsarfati focuses on biblical prophecy and Middle Eastern geopolitical events. His channel offers news updates and spiritual in-sights, particularly on Israel and global developments through a Christian lens.

2. **Midnight Rider Channel US**: This channel shares U.S. conservative content, often with a focus on pro-Trump narratives and political conspiracy theories. It includes discussions on U.S. politics, protests, and critiques of media and government.

3. **Noticias Rafapal**: Run by Rafael Palacios, this Spanish-language channel promotes a range of conspiracy theories, often covering global politics, health, and social issues, with a focus on narratives not widely reported in mainstream media.

4. **CNA (Catholic News Agency)**: A news outlet focused on providing coverage related to the Catholic Church, CNA shares content on religious news, Catholic teachings, and global events affecting Catholic communities worldwide.

5. **Phil Godlewski 3.0**: Phil Godlewski is a QAnon influencer who shares a mix of speculative content and conspiracy theories. His channel discusses political issues and the deep state, often engaging followers with unverified or hypothetical scenarios.

6. **Jack Posobiec**: A right-wing commentator, Jack Posobiec's channel promotes far-right political narratives and conspiracy theories, often critiquing mainstream media and U.S. government actions. His content focuses on political activism, election fraud, and national security.

7. **Lin Wood**: Lin Wood, a lawyer and activist, is known for his involvement in promoting election fraud conspiracy theories. His Telegram channel reflects far-right content, QAnon beliefs, and critiques of mainstream media and the U.S. government.

8. **We The Media**: A collective channel that shares QAnon-related content, emphasizing narratives about the deep state, media manipulation, and global conspiracies. It promotes political activism within pro-Trump communities.

9. **Sergeant News Network US**: A conservative-leaning news channel that shares content related to U.S. politics, often promoting conspiracy theories and critiques of mainstream media. It covers a range of issues from global conflicts to domestic political topics

10. **David Avocado Wolfe**: Known for advocating alternative medicine and wellness, David Wolfe's channel focuses on conspiracy theories related to the medical industry, anti-vaccine sentiment, and holistic health practices.

11. **Resist the Mainstream**: A conservative news outlet that shares content critical of mainstream media and U.S. government actions. It promotes narratives about media bias, corruption, and conservative values, often aligning with pro-Trump ideologies.

12. **Donald J. Trump**: The official channel for former President Donald Trump shares his statements, political commentary, and updates about his activities. The content focuses on U.S. politics, election fraud claims, and the MAGA movement.

13. **il Donaldo Trumpo**: A parody account of Donald Trump, this channel mixes humor and pro-Trump content, offering satirical takes on current political events, global issues, and U.S. governance.

14. **Freedom Force Battalion US**: This channel promotes far-right narratives and conspiracy theories, frequently discussing religious prophecies, political issues, and anti-government sentiments. It often critiques the Biden administration and supports end-times narratives.

15. **Q) The Storm Rider /Official Page**: A channel dedicated to QAnon content, it shares speculative updates about global elites, deep state operations, and conspiracy theories. The channel often discusses world events from a QAnon perspective, including U.S. politics, the pandemic, and more.

16. **ULTRA Pepe Lives Matter** 🐸: This channel promotes memes, political commentary, and conspiracy theories in the context of QAnon and the far-right movement. It focuses on themes like patriotism, distrust in the media, and the deep state.

17. **Charlie Kirk**: Charlie Kirk, the founder of Turning Point USA, uses his Telegram channel to promote conservative political ideas, critique left-wing politics, and support free-market ideologies. The content often covers topics related to education, media bias, and U.S. politics.

18. **Tommy Robinson News**: This channel is run by Tommy Robinson, a controversial British far-right activist. It focuses on anti-immigration sentiments, free speech issues, and critiques of Islam, often promoting nationalist and populist messages.

19. **Q NEWS OFFICIAL TV #WWG1WGA 💛US**: A QAnon-affiliated channel that promotes conspiracy theories about global elites, deep state operations, and political corruption. It uses slogans like "WWG1WGA" (Where We Go One, We Go All) and pushes narratives related to QAnon ideologies.

20. **WarRoom Official Telegram Channel**: Associated with Steve Bannon, this channel discusses U.S. politics, promoting conservative and populist viewpoints. It often features political commentary, critiques of the Biden administration, and election-related content.

The listed Telegram channels can be grouped into four main categories:

(1) Channels focusing on Christian prophecy and spiritual insight (such as Amir Tsarfati and Freedom Force Battalion)
(2) Conservative and pro-Trump political content (like Jack Posobiec, WarRoom, and Charlie Kirk),
(3) QAnon and conspiracy theory-driven channels (e.g., Phil Godlewski 3.0, Q NEWS OFFICIAL TV)
(4) Alternative medicine and esoteric wellness (such as David Avocado Wolfe).

These channels present themselves tapping into a growing demand for alternative narratives that challenge mainstream media and government institutions. Many followers of these channels are drawn to content that aligns with their skepticism towards traditional authority figures, media, or scientific/medical establishments. Their focus on conspiracy theories makes them appealing to audiences looking for explanations of global events that are different from conventional narratives, feeding into concerns about media manipulation, government corruption, and global elites.

Figure 4 presents the top 20 German-language Telegram channels by views for the period from 2023/09/25 to 2024/09/24.

Rank	Channel	Messages	Views	Messages Pct	Views Pct
1	Eva Herman Offiziell	27.151	1.003.589.773	6,8%	12,5%
2	Mäckle macht gute Laune	15.654	837.972.080	3,9%	10,4%
3	Veikko aka Son Go Q	27.149	585.367.529	6,8%	7,3%
4	AUF1	3.284	362.176.906	0,8%	4,5%
5	Oliver Janich & Team	17.757	329.762.255	4,4%	4,1%
6	Antiilluminaten TV	16.711	306.537.606	4,2%	3,8%
7	Uncut-News.ch	12.246	301.470.237	3,1%	3,8%
8	reitschuster.de	2.728	284.177.028	0,7%	3,5%
9	Vivoterra	12.326	215.153.003	3,1%	2,7%
10	Alles Ausser Mainstream	5.703	199.037.755	1,4%	2,5%
11	Neues aus Russland 📢 Alina Lipp	2.797	180.562.007	0,7%	2,2%
12	Ken Jebsen - Aufklärung und Information	3.177	162.160.220	0,8%	2,0%
13	HAINTZ.media	8.008	156.191.488	2,0%	1,9%
14	🔓Unzensiert🔓	10.720	152.225.065	2,7%	1,9%
15	BITTEL TV - EINFACH ANDERS	3.921	137.243.170	1,0%	1,7%
16	Gerhard Wisnewski&Team	8.254	133.460.066	2,1%	1,7%
17	Freie Sachsen	1.976	131.146.222	0,5%	1,6%
18	RABBIT RESEARCH	3.090	126.266.900	0,8%	1,6%
19	Freie Medien	4.119	121.034.953	1,0%	1,5%
20	⚖Rechtsanwältin Beate Bahner	4.977	119.543.812	1,2%	1,5%

Figure 4 - Top-20 German-language Telegram channels sorted by messages views (2023/09/25 - 2024/09/24, N = 399,201 messages).

These channels can be characterized as follows:

1. **Eva Herman Offiziell**: This channel, associated with former German television presenter Eva Herman, shares content often aligned with conspiracy theories and disinformation, including narratives critical of mainstream media, government policies, and public health measures. Topics frequently include skepticism of pandemic-related information and support for alternative interpretations of political and societal issues.

2. **Mäckle macht gute Laune**: This channel (whose name loosely translates to "Mäckle Makes You Happy") presents a mix of humor and commentary, interspersed with conspiracy-leaning and anti-establishment content. It often includes critiques of mainstream media narratives, societal changes, and governmental policies, aimed at an audience skeptical of official sources.

3. **Veikko aka Son Go Q**: This channel, run by an individual using the alias "Son Go Q," disseminates content that aligns with the QAnon movement and related conspiracy theories. It frequently includes anti-government, anti-media messages, as well as themes common within the broader far-right and conspiracy theory communities.

4. **AUF1** is an Austrian-based media outlet and channel known for sharing content critical of mainstream narratives, particularly around public health, government authority, and global political developments. It often presents "alternative" viewpoints that question established institutions and promote skepticism regarding government and media information. Leading members of the right-wing populist parties FPÖ and AfD regularly appear on AUF1, and the channel reaches audiences across the entire German-speaking region.

5. **Oliver Janich & Team**: This channel, led by controversial figure Oliver Janich, shares a range of conspiracy theories, often focused on anti-government and anti-establishment perspectives. Content includes critiques of mainstream media, narratives about global

elites, and support for theories tied to far-right ideologies. Janich's channel is known for promoting a distrust of institutions and established sources of information.

6. **Antiilluminaten TV**: Antiilluminaten TV is a channel that shares content centered around anti-establishment and conspiracy theories, often promoting narratives that oppose perceived global elites and secretive power structures. The channel frequently questions mainstream information sources, government institutions, and global organizations, presenting an alternative view that emphasizes distrust toward established authorities. It frequently draws on themes related to the "Illuminati" and other secret societies, suggesting hidden agendas in global and national politics.

7. **Uncut-News.ch**: Uncut-News.ch is a Swiss-based alternative media platform known for sharing unfiltered news and opinions that often challenge official narratives. Its content covers a wide range of topics, including public health (especially and still the Covid-19 pandemic, vaccines, and measures), politics, and global developments, often with a skeptical or critical stance toward mainstream media and governmental institutions. The platform appeals to a German-speaking audience seeking information beyond traditional media, with particular emphasis on controversial or fringe perspectives.

8. **reitschuster.de**: reitschuster.de, run by German journalist Boris Reitschuster, is a platform that frequently critiques government policies, mainstream media, and public health measures, particularly in Germany. Known for its independent journalism, the channel often emphasizes issues of freedom of speech and government accountability, while promoting alternative viewpoints on current events. The platform has a significant following among individuals critical of mainstream German media and is known for challenging official narratives, especially around public health and politics.

9. **Vivoterra**: Vivoterra is a channel that combines wellness, alternative health, and spirituality with content often critical of mainstream medicine and science. The channel promotes alternative healing methods, natural remedies, and self-empowerment themes, occasionally intersecting with conspiracy theories regarding the pharmaceutical industry and conventional healthcare systems. It appeals to an audience interested in holistic health and skeptical of conventional medical practices, often framing its content as empowering and enlightening.

10. **Alles Ausser Mainstream**: Alles Ausser Mainstream (translated as "Anything but Mainstream") is a channel that curates content and opinions outside of conventional media perspectives, frequently focusing on alternative narratives about societal, political, and health-related issues. The channel promotes skepticism toward established institutions, "mainstream media", and public policy, encouraging viewers to explore "unfiltered" information sources. It has a broad appeal among audiences looking for non-mainstream viewpoints, often fostering distrust of traditional news outlets and official narratives.

11. **Neues aus Russland 📢 Alina Lipp**: Run by Alina Lipp, a German-Russian blogger and activist known for her pro-Russian stance, this channel shares news and commentary focused on Russia, often providing a perspective sympathetic to Russian policies and critical of Western narratives. Content tends to challenge mainstream Western media portrayals of Russia, appealing to audiences seeking alternative viewpoints on international relations and Russian affairs.

12. **Ken Jebsen - Aufklärung und Information**: This channel, associated with Ken Jebsen, a former German journalist known for his alternative views, disseminates content questioning mainstream media, government policies, and global institutions. It emphasizes "clarification and information" from a critical standpoint, often challenging established narratives on politics, public health, and global events.

13. **HAINTZ.media**, associated with activist Markus Haintz, focuses on critiques of government measures, especially those related to public health and individual freedoms. The channel appeals to audiences skeptical of official policies and often promotes narratives supporting civil liberties and questioning governmental authority.

14. 🚨**Unzensiert**🚨: This channel brands itself as "uncensored" and presents alternative views on current events, politics, and social issues, frequently taking a critical stance on mainstream narratives and emphasizing free speech. Content typically resonates with audiences distrustful of traditional media and seeking unrestricted viewpoints.

15. **BITTEL TV - EINFACH ANDERS**: BITTEL TV positions itself as a platform for perspectives that are "simply different," offering content on various topics that often challenges conventional viewpoints. The channel focuses on alternative opinions in news and social issues, appealing to viewers interested in unorthodox or non-mainstream content.

16. **Gerhard Wisnewski & Team**: This channel, associated with journalist and author Gerhard Wisnewski, shares content focused on conspiracy theories and alternative interpretations of political and social events. It appeals to audiences critical of mainstream media and interested in uncovering alleged hidden agendas in global and national affairs.

17. **Freie Sachsen**: Freie Sachsen is a radical regional nationalist channel from Saxony, Germany, promoting content related to far-right and separatist ideologies. The channel frequently critiques government policies and mainstream media, appealing to those aligned with nationalist and anti-establishment viewpoints in Germany.

18. **RABBIT RESEARCH**: This channel presents itself as an investigative platform, often sharing conspiracy-related content and questioning mainstream narratives. Its focus spans topics in politics, global events, and public health, appealing to audiences interested in alternative research and unfiltered information.

19. **Freie Medien**: Freie Medien (translated as "Free Media") shares news and commentary that emphasizes freedom of speech and challenges mainstream narratives. It promotes independent journalism and alternative viewpoints on societal and political issues, attracting audiences critical of traditional media outlets.

20. **Rechtsanwältin Beate Bahner**: This channel, run by attorney Beate Bahner, focuses on legal critiques of public health measures and government policies, particularly around civil liberties and individual rights. Known for her opposition to pandemic restrictions, Bahner appeals to audiences concerned with legal rights and government overreach.

To sum up, these channels focus on spreading narratives that question, criticize, and oppose "mainstream" information sources, government policies, and public health measures. They can be broadly classified into three groups based on their content focus: anti-establishment and conspiracy-driven media, alternative health and wellness perspectives, and nationalist or right-wing platforms.

(1) **Anti-establishment and conspiracy-driven media**: The first group comprises channels like "Eva Herman Offiziell," "AUF1," "Oliver Janich & Team," and "Ken Jebsen - Aufklärung und Information," which share anti-establishment and conspiracy-driven narratives. These channels often critique governmental authority, media credibility, and public health interventions, offering "alternative" information sources and framing mainstream perspectives as manipulative or dishonest. Their content often draws from far-right ideologies and promotes skepticism regarding public institutions and global organizations.

(2) **Alternative health and wellness channels**: The second group, focused on alternative health and wellness, includes channels such as "Vivoterra" and "Alles Ausser Mainstream." These channels provide content critical of conventional medicine, promoting alternative health remedies, natural healing, and self-empowerment. Often intersecting with conspiracy theories, they target audiences that are skeptical of the pharmaceutical industry and established healthcare systems, appealing to individuals interested in holistic wellness and empowerment outside of mainstream medical practices.

(3) **Nationalist or right-wing platforms**: The third group consists of nationalist and regionally specific right-wing channels like "Freie Sachsen" and "Neues aus Russland 📢 Alina Lipp," which emphasize nationalist narratives, regional sovereignty, and opposition to Western media and policies. These channels resonate with audiences aligned with nationalist ideologies, frequently showcasing perspectives sympathetic to Russian viewpoints or promoting separatist movements, particularly within Germany.

The following Figure 5 depicts the network of Telegram channels connected through mutual hyperlinks. The visualization includes only connections where two channels referenced each other at least three times during the study period (September 2024 – September 2025). Connections consisting of fewer than three mutual hyperlinks were excluded from the network map. Furthermore, the network analysis focuses on the main component, which is the largest connected sub-network identified. This main component highlights the area of the network where German-speaking and English-speaking channels are interlinked. Other, smaller network components—comprised solely of either German- or English-speaking channels that are not connected to one another—are not included in the figure. The network distinguishes between German-speaking channels, shown in blue, and English-speaking channels, depicted in green.

English Conspiracy and Far-right Channels

German Conspiracy and Far-right Channels

macklemachtgutelaune

Demotermine

rechtsanwältin_beate_bahner oliverjanich

LKNewsZ

saraslightfight

DanielPrinzOffiziell

AllesAusserMainstream

PepeMatter

WeTheMedia

realKarliBonne
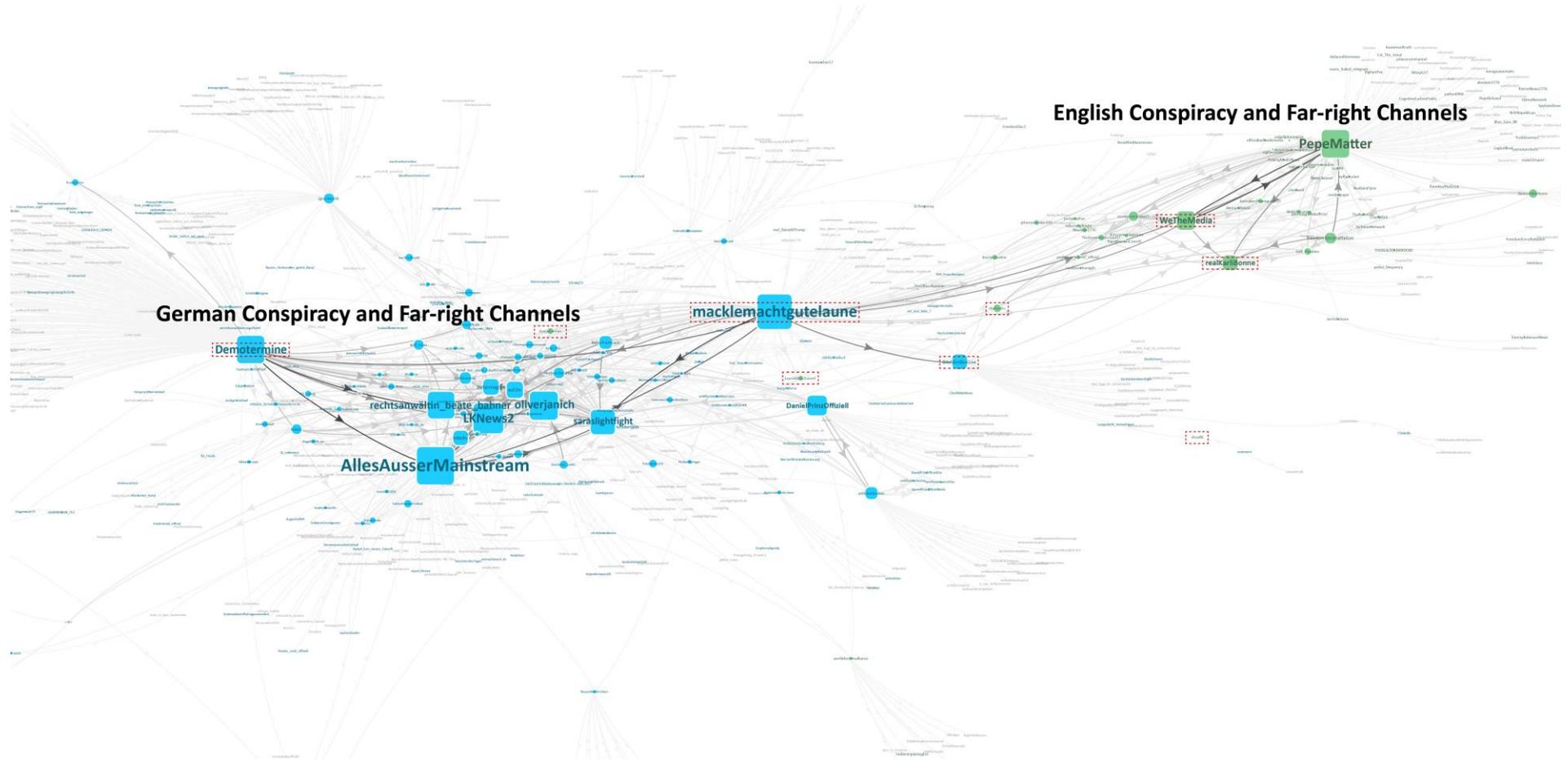
Figure 5 – Network of Telegram channels (2023/09/25 - 2024/09/24, main component, N = 833 channels).

The size of the nodes in the network is determined by two centrality measures: betweenness and closure centrality (Burt, 2007).

Betweenness centrality, or brokerage, measures the extent to which a node serves as a bridge connecting otherwise unlinked nodes or clusters within the network. It emphasizes the role of nodes in facilitating inter-cluster connectivity. In contrast, closure reflects the extent to which a node is embedded in triadic relationships, or triangular connections, indicating its integration into cohesive cliques or tightly-knit groups. The combination of these two measures determines the size of each node, providing insights into both its inter-group connectivity (brokerage) and intra-group cohesion (closure).

Additionally, the strength of the arrows, represented by their darkness, reflects the intensity of community-building interactions. A darker connection indicates a higher number of shared third-party links between two nodes, underscoring their role in fostering network cohesion. This visualization method is commonly used in network analysis to identify communities or cliques and to analyze the interplay between inter-group connectivity and intra-group cohesion.

Figure 6 presents the ranking of the top 15 English-speaking Telegram channels, ranked by network centrality, which is the sum of brokerage and closure centrality. The number of subscribers as of January 13, 2025, is also included in the tables.

	Name	Subscribers	Brokerage	Closure	Total
1	ULTRA Pepe Lives Matter 🐸	197.456	38,0	64,0	102,1
2	We The Media	179.297	6,7	40,2	46,9
3	Midnight Rider Channel ᴜs	225.566	6,9	24,7	31,6
4	Freedom Force Battalion ᴜs	88.673	0,0	17,4	17,4
5	StormyPatriotJoe🇺🇸 Channel	91.637	0,8	12,8	13,6
6	WarRoom: Official Telegram Channel	66.235	4,6	6,8	11,4
7	Disclose.tv	382.438	0,0	9,8	9,8
8	Jack Posobiec	156.272	0,2	7,4	7,7
9	Danijel_Sheran17 🐿	18.598	0,0	6,4	6,4
10	TheStormHasArrived17	119.485	0,0	6,2	6,2
11	LauraAboli	176.217	0,0	4,7	4,7
12	BioClandestine	150.264	0,0	4,7	4,7
13	Q) The Storm Rider /Official Page	192.214	2,0	2,3	4,3
14	Defender of the Republic ᴜs	18.192	0,0	4,3	4,3
15	Gateway Pundit	112.708	0,0	3,6	3,6

Figure 6 - Top 15 English-speaking Telegram channels by network centrality (brokerage and closure combined)

These channels can be described as follows (some of them have already been mentioned before). The descriptions are based on information available on TGStat.com and a review of messages from the research period.

1. **ULTRA Pepe Lives Matter** 🐸: The channel shares a mix of political commentary, memes, and content often aligned with conservative ideologies. It frequently uses the "Pepe the Frog" meme as a symbol of political and cultural expression.

2. **We The Media**: A collective of QAnon-affiliated influencers who distribute conspiracy theories and politically charged content. The channel emerged as a key communication platform for this group after being removed from other social media platforms.

3. **Midnight Rider Channel US**: This channel provides politically themed content, commentary, and news updates. It often promotes conservative and patriotic messages, with a strong focus on American values.

4. **Freedom Force Battalion US**: A channel centered around political discussions from a conservative Christian perspective. It combines interpretations of current events with biblical prophecy, aiming to inspire and inform its audience.

5. **StormyPatriotJoe Channel**: Known for sharing conspiracy theories and political commentary, this channel often focuses on QAnon narratives and themes supporting right-wing viewpoints.

6. **WarRoom**: Official Telegram Channel: The official channel for Steve Bannon's "War Room" podcast. It delivers nationalist and conservative political analysis and commentary, discussing current events and strategies to influence public discourse.

7. **Disclose.tv**: A channel that posts breaking news, viral stories, and conspiracy theories. It frequently features controversial or unverified claims, often framed to provoke discussions among its audience.

8. **Jack Posobiec**: This is the official channel of Jack Posobiec, an US-american political commentator known for his conservative views. The channel shares news updates, opinions, and analysis on various current events and issues.

9. **Danijel_Sheran17** ✨: Little publicly available information exists about this channel. Its content may focus on personal or niche interests and may appeal to a specific audience group. The number 17 signifies affiliation with the QAnon movement.

10. **TheStormHasArrived17**: A channel also dedicated to sharing QAnon-related content, conspiracy theories, and political narratives that are often pro-Trump and critical of mainstream political and media institutions.

11. **LauraAboli**: This channel is managed by entrepreneur, public speaker, and writer Laura Aboli and features content that includes political commentary, personal development ideas, health advice, and discussions emphasizing freedom and individual rights.

12. **BioClandestine**: A channel that frequently discusses conspiracy theories related to biological research, global politics, and world events. Its content often aligns with QAnon ideologies and speculative narratives.

13. **Q) The Storm Rider/Official Page**: This channel is heavily focused on sharing QAnon-related theories and interpretations of global political and social events through a conspiratorial framework.

14. **Defender of the Republic US**: A conservative political channel dedicated to upholding constitutional principles. It shares news, opinions, and commentary aimed at protecting individual freedoms and national sovereignty.

15. **Gateway Pundit**: The official channel of The Gateway Pundit, a far-right news and opinion outlet. Known for its controversial content, the channel frequently promotes conspiracy theories, unverified claims, and politically charged narratives.

Based on the content of the messages, these channels can be grouped into three categories:

1. **QAnon and Conspiracy Theory Channels**: These channels are dedicated to sharing QAnon-related content, conspiracy theories, and speculative interpretations of global events. They often focus on narratives involving secret power structures, hidden agendas, and global conspiracies, using symbolic language and memes to convey their messages. By offering alternative explanations of political and social developments, these channels appeal to audiences skeptical of mainstream narratives and seeking insider-like knowledge. Channels: ULTRA Pepe Lives Matter 🐸, We The Media, StormyPatriotJoe Channel, TheStormHasArrived17, BioClandestine, Q) The Storm Rider/Official Page.

2. **Political Commentary, News, and Sensationalism Channels**: This group includes channels that focus on providing political commentary, news updates, and sensational headlines, often from a nationalist or conservative perspective. These channels aim to influence public discourse by critiquing mainstream narratives, sharing alternative viewpoints, and offering analysis of current events. Their content often includes breaking news and provocative claims, sometimes incorporating religious or constitutional themes. Designed to mobilize support or provoke reactions, these channels cater to audiences who seek alternative sources of information or validation of their political ideologies. Channels: Midnight Rider Channel US, Freedom Force Battalion US, WarRoom: Official Telegram Channel, Jack Posobiec, Defender of the Republic US, Disclose.tv, Gateway Pundit.

3. **Personal and Niche Interest Channels**: This category consists of channels centered on individual creators or specialized content. These channels often explore topics such as personal development, health, or freedom of expression, presenting a more personalized approach compared to broader political or news-focused channels. By emphasizing individual perspectives, they appeal to niche audiences interested in self-improvement or specific interests. Channels: LauraAboli, Danijel_Sheran17 ✨.

Figure 7 refers to the Top-15 German-language channels according to network centrality:

	Name	Subscribers	Brokerage	Closure	Total
1	Alles Ausser Mainstream	131.021	100,0	81,3	181,3
2	Mäckle macht gute Laune	119.353	75,5	79,8	155,3
3	LK News für ein Leben in Freiheit	41.620	58,5	60,4	118,9
4	Oliver Janich & Team	113.704	60,9	44,3	105,1
5	Demo-Termine & Kontakte	32.739	0,0	100,0	100,0
6	Rechtsanwältin Beate Bahner	94.860	40,9	54,0	94,9
7	Sara Bennett Lightfight	56.260	32,0	47,7	79,7
8	Daniel Prinz News	43.032	32,6	21,1	53,7
9	AUF1	300.941	2,1	35,7	37,9
10	Stefan Magnet	3.556	0,0	34,7	34,7
11	Veikko aka Son Go Q	72.338	11,4	19,1	30,5
12	BITTEL TV - EINFACH ANDERS	100.848	4,3	25,7	30,0
13	Reiner Fuellmich DE/AT/CH	108.182	0,0	23,6	23,6
14	Antiilluminaten TV	95.215	7,1	14,0	21,1
15	Gerhard Wisnewski&Team	51.495	0,4	18,9	19,3

Figure 7 - Top 15 English-speaking Telegram channels by network centrality (brokerage and closure combined)

1. **Alles Ausser Mainstream**: Managed by ENT doctor Dr. Bodo Schiffmann, this channel provides information, interviews, and news related to the "Querdenker" movement, supporting conspiracy theories – among others – in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. **Mäckle macht gute Laune:** This channel, managed by Friedemann Mack, is a prominent platform for spreading far-right ideologies, QAnon propaganda, and conspiracy theories. It delivers a mix of content to its large audience, including baseless claims about global elites, anti-vaccine rhetoric, and antisemitic conspiracy theories. The channel also promotes merchandise aligned with extremist views, such as QAnon-themed items, "Reichsbürger" symbols, and pro-Trump and pro-Putin memorabilia.

3. **LK News für ein Leben in Freiheit**: This channel presents itself as a satirical platform, sharing content that critiques government policies and societal issues. It often disseminates politically charged narratives, including conspiracy theories and alternative viewpoints, under the guise of satire.

4. **Oliver Janich & Team:** Managed by journalist and conspiracy theorist Oliver Janich, this channel shares political commentary, conspiracy theories, and content critical of government policies. Janich is known for promoting libertarian views and far-right ideologies, often disseminating unverified claims and controversial narratives.

5. **Demo-Termine & Kontakte:** This channel provides information on upcoming demonstrations and events, primarily associated with the "Querdenker" movement, right-wing political activists, and conspiracy theorists. It focuses on organizing protests against government policies and often promotes narratives critical of what is "mainstream" from their perspective.

6. **Rechtsanwältin Beate Bahner:** Operated by attorney Beate Bahner, this channel focuses on legal commentary and advice, particularly in opposition to COVID-19 measures. Known for her criticism of pandemic-related government policies, Bahner has been associated with controversial views and conspiracy narratives.

7. **Sara Bennett Lightfight:** Managed by singer Sara Bennett, this channel combines content on "spiritual growth" and "personal development" with criticism of COVID-19 measures and vaccinations.

8. **Daniel Prinz News**: Managed by author and conspiracy theorist Daniel Prinz, the channel shares news, articles, and commentary on geopolitical events, alternative perspectives, and conspiracy theories.

9. **AUF1:** AUF1 is a far-right Austrian media platform known for disseminating conspiracy theories, misinformation, and nationalist narratives. Its content includes news, interviews, and documentaries, frequently promoting anti-democratic, anti-immigration, and anti-vaccine views while positioning itself as an alternative to "mainstream media".

10. **Stefan Magnet**: Operated by journalist Stefan Magnet, the founder of AUF1, this channel offers political commentary, analysis, and news, from a right-wing perspective.

11. **Veikko aka Son Go Q**: This channel shares content related to conspiracy theories, political commentary, and discussions aligned with the QAnon movement.

12. **BITTEL TV - EINFACH ANDERS**: A media channel run by the priest and "Querdenker" Roger Bittel that similar to the others provides news, interviews, and discussions in the context of "alternative facts". He also promotes cryptocurrencies.

13. **Reiner Fuellmich DE/AT/CH:** Managed by "Querdenker" defending attorney Reiner Fuellmich, this channel shares legal commentary and updates, often focused on lawsuits and narratives critical of governmental actions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fuellmich, a prominent figure in the "Querdenker" movement, has faced accusations of fraud and mismanagement, including allegations related to financial irregularities in the context of his activities against COVID-19 measures.

14. **Antiilluminaten TV**: This channel is dedicated to spreading conspiracy theories about secret societies and alleged global elites. Its content frequently promotes unverified claims and speculative narratives, framing itself as a platform for uncovering "hidden truths."

15. **Gerhard Wisnewski & Team:** Managed by journalist and author Gerhard Wisnewski, this channel shares content that includes investigative journalism, documentaries, and political commentary. Known for his skepticism of official narratives, Wisnewski frequently promotes conspiracy theories and alternative perspectives on historical and current events.

These Telegram channels collectively serve as platforms for disseminating a mix of far-right ideologies, COVID-19 skepticism, "Querdenker" narratives, and conspiracy theories. Many of them, such as Alles Ausser Mainstream, Rechtsanwältin Beate Bahner, and Reiner Fuellmich DE/AT/CH, are closely tied to the "Querdenker" movement, which opposes government measures related to COVID-19, including vaccines, lockdowns, and mask mandates. These channels frequently blend legal arguments, pseudoscience, and rhetoric about personal freedom to challenge public health policies. Others, like Mäckle macht gute Laune, Antiilluminaten TV, Veikko aka Son Go Q, and Oliver Janich & Team, expand this narrative by promoting broader

conspiracy theories, including QAnon propaganda, antisemitic tropes, and anti-globalist rhetoric. They often position themselves as uncovering "hidden truths" about secret societies and alleged global elites.

Additionally, channels like AUF1, Stefan Magnet, and Daniel Prinz News act as far-right media outlets, presenting nationalist and anti-immigration perspectives under the guise of alternative journalism. These platforms critique mainstream media and democratic institutions, often promoting divisive and anti-democratic narratives. Channels such as Demo-Termine & Kontakte and LK News für ein Leben in Freiheit serve as organizational hubs for protests and demonstrations, particularly those associated with the "Querdenker" movement and right-wing political activists, further reinforcing their influence in real-world mobilization.

A recurring theme across these channels is the strategic use of emotionally charged content, such as anti-vaccine rhetoric, opposition to perceived authoritarianism, and claims of suppressed truths. While some, like BITTEL TV - EINFACH ANDERS and Sara Bennett Lightfight, incorporate pseudoscientific health advice and spirituality into their messaging, others, such as Gerhard Wisnewski & Team, emphasize investigative journalism and alternative historical perspectives, often promoting skepticism of official narratives. Together, these channels form a network of influence that blends far-right ideologies, conspiracy theories, COVID-19 skepticism, and anti-democratic sentiments, significantly contributing to the spread of misinformation and the polarization of public discourse.

The following table (Figure 8) lists the 20 most significant Telegram channels connecting German-speaking and English-speaking platforms. The measure of brokerage corresponds to betweenness centrality, which quantifies a node's ability to link otherwise disconnected actors within the network. This centrality was calculated exclusively for the network consisting solely of links between German-speaking and English-speaking channels, excluding intra-language connections. The number of subscribers again reflects data as of January 13, 2025. The first 10 channels that mediate between German-speaking and English-speaking channels are highlighted with a red frame in Figure 5.

	Name	Brokerage	Subscribers	Language
1	macklemachtgutelaune	100,0	119.353	German
2	danijelsheran	54,3	18.598	English
3	LauraAbolichannel	38,3	176.217	English
4	BitchBotBoiiLive	24,9	72.338	German
5	Demotermine	16,4	32.739	German
6	disclosetv	10,4	382.438	English
7	NetzwerkkritischerExperten	8,8	13.097	English
8	drue86	8,3	60.250	English
9	realKarliBonne	8,3	225.566	English
10	oliverjanich	8,1	113.704	German
11	booomaktuell	6,9	45.346	German
12	bioclandestine	5,7	150.264	English
13	rechtsanwaeltin_beate_bahner	3,9	94.860	German
14	davebrych_public	3,9	32.744	German
15	kaibrenner	1,7	45.892	German
16	saraslightfight	1,7	56.260	German
17	professor_patriot_official	1,6	14.827	English
18	PepeMatter	1,6	197.456	English
19	AllesAusserMainstream	0,9	131.021	German
20	real_DonaldJTrump	0,7	675.380	English

Figure 8 – Telegram channels connecting English- and German-language platforms (Sept. 2023 – Sept. 2024).

The table provides insights into the Telegram channels that act as bridges between English- and German-language networks within the far-right and conspiracy theory ecosystem. By examining the brokerage scores, subscriber numbers, and the thematic focus of these channels, we gain indications of their role in fostering transnational connections and spreading shared ideologies.

Key Connectors Across Languages:

High Brokerage Scores. The brokerage column highlights channels that are central to the network of cross-language links, meaning they connect otherwise separate English- and German-language communities. The highest brokerage scores belong to macklemachtgutelaune, danijelsheran, and LauraAbolichannel, with macklemachtgutelaune standing out as the most significant broker in this network. These channels play pivotal roles in facilitating the flow of information, ideas, and narratives between English-speaking and German-speaking audiences within this network. This ability to connect diverse audiences suggests their strong influence on shaping the discourse across national and linguistic boundaries.

macklemachtgutelaune (Brokerage: 100.0, Subscribers: 119,353, German): This channel, managed by Friedemann Mack, is deeply embedded in the far-right and QAnon ecosystems, disseminating conspiracy theories, antisemitic rhetoric, and anti-vaccine content. Its high brokerage score reflects its critical role in linking German-language conspiracy networks to English-language counterparts, amplifying shared ideologies and cross-pollinating far-right narratives. With the second-highest subscriber count among German-language channels, it wields significant influence both within the German-speaking community and across linguistic boundaries.

danijelsheran (Brokerage: 54.3, Subscribers: 18,598, English): This channel, known as Danijel_Sheran17, shares content that includes political commentary, conspiracy theories, and

discussions aligned with the QAnon movement. Its relatively high brokerage score suggests that it acts as a key intermediary, bridging German-speaking channels with larger English-language hubs. Despite its smaller audience, the channel's strategic position enables it to facilitate the flow of information and narratives between English and German far-right communities.

LauraAbolichannel (Brokerage: 38.3, Subscribers: 176,217, English): Managed by political activist and commentator Laura Aboli, this channel combines content on personal development, spiritual themes, and criticism of COVID-19 policies. Its high subscriber count and brokerage indicate that it is a notable actor in connecting English-speaking audiences to German-language channels, likely contributing to the spread of transnational conspiracy narratives. Aboli's activism in the context of what conspiracy theorists call "transhumanism" centers on warning against the perceived dehumanization and spiritual erosion brought about by technological advancements, which she views as part of a global agenda to control humanity. She emphasizes a return to spirituality, natural living, and individual sovereignty as countermeasures to what she perceives as the existential threat posed by transhumanist goals.

Other Notable Brokers: Mid-Tier Brokerage Scores

Channels with mid-tier brokerage scores, such as BitchBotBoiiLive, Demotermine, and disclosetv, highlight the diversity of content and functions within this network. While their brokerage scores are lower than the top three channels, they still play meaningful roles in fostering cross-language connections.

BitchBotBoiiLive (Brokerage: 24.9, Subscribers: 72,338, German): This channel, run by an individual using the alias "Son Go Q," disseminates content that aligns with the QAnon movement and related conspiracy theories. It frequently includes anti-government, anti-media messages, as well as themes common within the broader far-right and conspiracy theory communities. This channel also serves as a notable broker, connecting German-speaking audiences to English-speaking networks.

Demotermine (Brokerage: 16.4, Subscribers: 32,739, German): This channel, as already mentioned, is primarily focused on organizing demonstrations, particularly in the context of the "Querdenker" movement. Its brokerage score reflects its role as a mobilization hub that links German-language activism to English-speaking supporters and networks.

disclosetv (Brokerage: 10.4, Subscribers: 382,438, English): As a large English-language news channel frequently disseminating conspiracy theories, disclosetv has a strong influence within the network. Its mid-tier brokerage score suggests that while it is primarily oriented towards an English-speaking audience, it still contributes to cross-language discourse, possibly by being referenced or followed by German-speaking channels.

Channels with Lower Brokerage but High Subscriber Counts

Some channels, such as realKarliBonne (8.3 brokerage, 225,566 subscribers) and biodandestine (5.7 brokerage, 150,264 subscribers), have relatively low brokerage scores but high subscriber counts. These channels primarily serve as content hubs within their respective linguistic communities rather than as bridges between languages. However, their influence in shaping

the overall discourse cannot be ignored, as their content may be shared and amplified by higher-brokerage channels.

All in all, the table provides evidence of how far-right activists, conspiracy theorists, and their associated networks operate across linguistic and national boundaries. The identified channels include a mix of:

- News and Commentary Channels: For example, disclosetv, LauraAbolichannel, and macklemachtgutelaune present themselves as alternative media platforms, offering news and analysis while promoting far-right ideologies and conspiracy theories.
- Organizational Channels: Channels like Demotermine and BITTEL TV - EINFACH ANDERS focus on mobilization, whether for protests, activism, or community-building within the "Querdenker" movement.
- Personality-Driven Channels: Influencers like danijelsheran, LauraAbolichannel, and Oliver Janich use their platforms to build personal brands while disseminating ideological content.
- QAnon and Conspiracy Theory Hubs: Channels like macklemachtgutelaune, Veikko aka Son Go Q, and Antiilluminaten TV explicitly promote QAnon narratives and other global conspiracy theories.

The data suggests that the network of English- and German-language Telegram channels serves as a transnational network for far-right and conspiratorial narratives. High-brokerage channels play critical roles in integrating these communities, enabling the spread of shared ideologies and strategies. This interconnectedness amplifies the impact of disinformation, as content can rapidly cross linguistic and national boundaries, reaching diverse audiences. Moreover, the variety of channel types—ranging from news outlets to activist organizers and personality-driven hubs—demonstrates the multifaceted nature of this network. While some channels focus on traditional news and commentary, others leverage spiritual themes and also cryptocurrencies to appeal to specific audience segments.

Summary

Our analysis reveals a network structure that cannot be directly compared to the one examined in the Progress Report D4.1, given differences in the observation period and, more importantly, in the selection criteria. This time, the analysis focused on the 100 Telegram channels with the highest subscriber counts for both English- and German-language networks. Nevertheless, the results are strikingly similar: two distinct clusters—one German-speaking and one English-speaking—are clearly identifiable. Additionally, several key channels identified in earlier analyses reappear here. The findings indicate a cohesive network of Telegram channels disseminating disinformation and conspiracy theories, with significant cross-references between the German-speaking and English-speaking ecosystems. This interconnectedness underscores the existence of a far-right and conspiracy-driven channel ecosystem.

However, we have to assume that the dynamics of this network have shifted over the past two years. While Telegram once served as a refuge for disinformation channels displaced from

other platforms due to content moderation, its unique role as a "fringe network" is diminishing. Elon Musk's acquisition of X (formerly Twitter) and the cessation of external content moderation and fact checking at Meta (parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) suggest that disinformation and conspiracy channels may increasingly migrate back to mainstream platforms in the near future. The long-term implications of these changes remain to be seen, but Telegram's status as a primary hub for disinformation is likely to erode in the coming years.

6.2. External Domains in Telegram Messages

The following section investigates the domains outside Telegram to which Telegram channels in the context of disinformation and conspiracy theories frequently link. Specifically, it explores the external platforms that these channels reference, thereby leaving the Telegram ecosystem. These external platforms may include other hubs of disinformation and conspiracy theories, but also platforms that are considered "mainstream" from the perspective of conspiracy theorists. The latter category includes platforms that attract a broader audience, including individuals who are less radicalized or do not primarily engage in sharing disinformation or conspiracy content.

The analysis is again based on the Telegram messages collected over the period from September 2023 to September 2024. From the original sample of 200 Telegram channels, we identified 167 channels with links pointing to external domains. Among these, 82 channels operate primarily in English, while 85 are German-language channels. In total, the dataset includes references to 9,679 distinct domains.

The 82 English-language channels link to external domains a total of 233,240 times, while the 85 German-language channels generate 261,469 external links. This study leverages these links to uncover patterns of interaction between Telegram channels and external platforms, aiming to better understand the cross-platform propagation of disinformation and conspiracy narratives.

The network visualization of Figure 9 depicts Telegram channels and their references to external domains, focusing on links that were shared at least 50 times between September 2023 and September 2024. Nodes in the network represent either Telegram channels or external domains, with the size of each node corresponding to its level of connectivity. Larger nodes signify either Telegram channels that link to external domains more frequently or external domains that are referenced more often by Telegram channels.
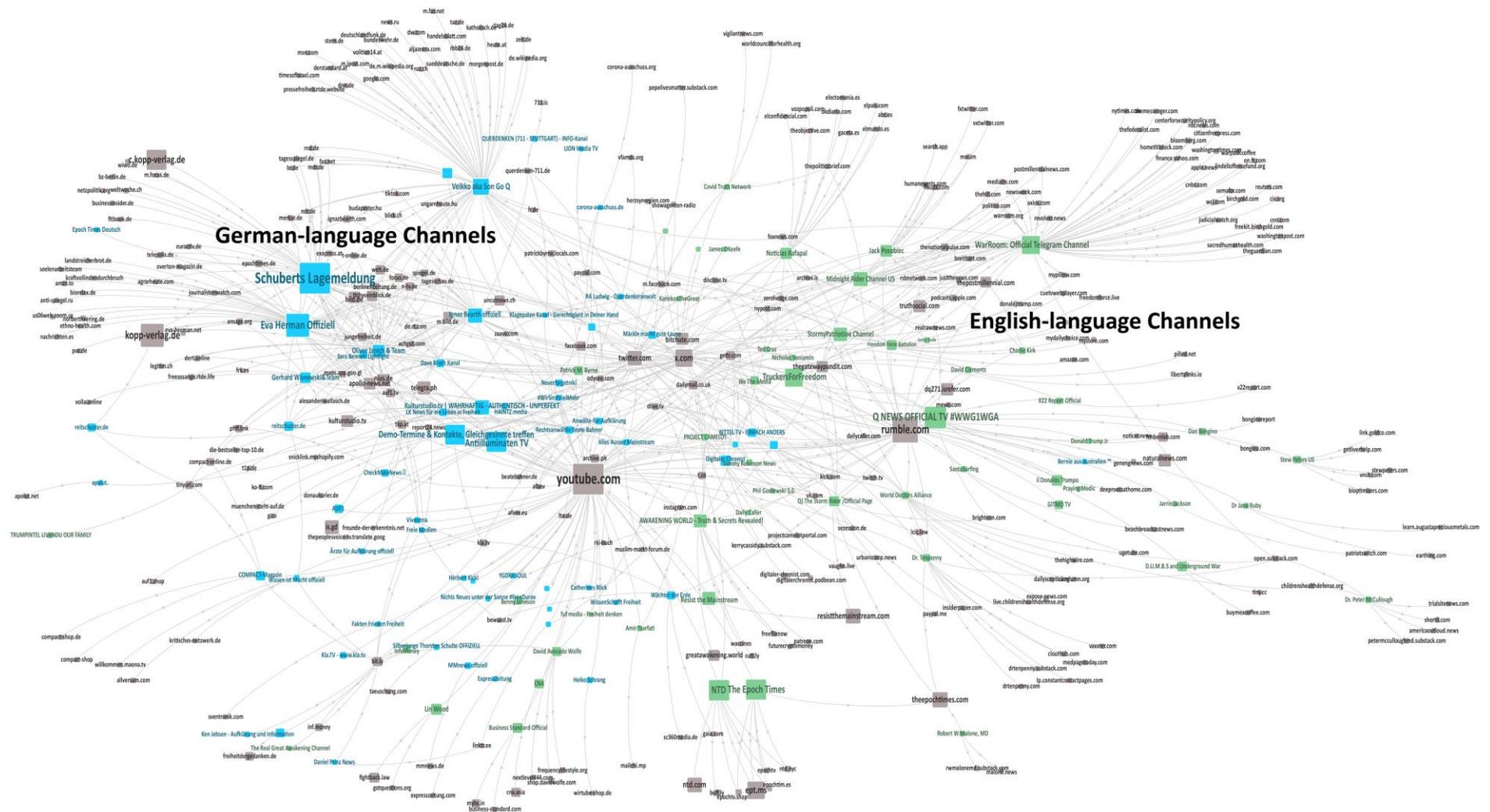
Figure 9 – Network visualization of Telegram channels and their references to external domains (Sept. 2023 – 2024)

The visualization is divided into two clear sections based on language. On the left side, the blue nodes represent German-language Telegram channels, while on the right side, the green nodes represent English-language Telegram channels. Gray nodes throughout the visualization denote external domains. Arrows indicate the directional relationship between Telegram channels and the domains they reference.

Distinct patterns are visible within the network. On the left, certain external domains are characteristic of the German-language channels, such as those associated with the Kopp-Verlag (a German publishing house with tendencies toward far-right esotericism, pseudoscientific content, and conspiracy-theoretical publications). On the right, external domains typical for English-language channels emerge, including the video-sharing platform rumble.com (a platform with less strict content management) and truthsocial.com (Donald Trump's social media platform).

In the center of the network, overlapping nodes represent external domains referenced by both German- and English-language Telegram channels. These shared domains include platforms like YouTube, which is by far the most prominent central node, as well as Twitter/X, Facebook, BitChute (a far-right video hosting service), and others.

Rank	Channel	Links	
1	Q NEWS OFFICIAL TV #WWG1WGA 🤍 us	21.133	
2	NTD	18.733	
3	The Epoch Times	18.197	
4	WarRoom: Official Telegram Channel	14.469	
5	TruckersForFreedom	14.309	
6	Midnight Rider Channel us	8.705	
7	StormyPatriotJoe🇺🇸 Channel	7.818	
8	Resist the Mainstream	7.235	
9	AWAKENING WORLD - Truth & Secrets Revealed!	7.090	
10	Jack Posobiec	5.681	
11	Noticias Rafapal	5.201	
12	Lin Wood	4.710	
13	il Donaldo Trumpo	4.435	
14	Q) The Storm Rider /Official Page	3.961	
15	Freedom Force Battalion us	3.831	
16	Business Standard Official	3.653	
17	D.U.M.B.S and Underground War	3.532	
18	CNA	3.209	
19	David Avocado Wolfe	3.037	
20	Patrick M. Byrne	2.851	

Figure 10 – Top-20 English-language Telegram channels by number of links to external domains (Sept. 2023 – Sept. 2024)

Figure 10 presents the top 20 English-language Telegram channels with the highest number of links to external domains, indicating their significant role in disseminating content beyond the Telegram platform.

1. **Q NEWS OFFICIAL TV #WWG1WGA 💛US**: This channel is associated with the QAnon movement, known for promoting conspiracy theories and disinformation. It disseminates content aligned with the "Where We Go One, We Go All" (WWG1WGA) slogan, a hallmark of QAnon supporters. Mainly refers to naturalnews.com, YouTube, and rumble.com

2. **NTD (New Tang Dynasty)** is a media organization linked to the Falun Gong movement. It positions itself as an independent news source but has been criticized for promoting biased narratives and conspiracy theories. Main external domains: ntd.com, URL-shortening services ept.ms and buff.ly (so that target domains cannot be identified), furthermore YouTube and the online shop of the Epoch Times.

3. **The Epoch Times**: An international news organization also associated with the Falun Gong movement, The Epoch Times is known for its critical stance against the Chinese Communist Party. While it claims to provide independent journalism, it has faced scrutiny for disseminating conspiracy theories and misinformation, particularly in relation to political events and public health issues. Mainly refers to the theepochtimes.com website, YouTube, and the Epoch Times online shop.

4. **WarRoom - Official Telegram Channel**: This channel serves as the official outlet for Steve Bannon's "War Room" podcast. Steve Bannon, a former strategist for President Donald Trump, uses this platform to discuss political strategies and opinions. The channel has been noted for spreading controversial content and conspiracy theories. Main external domains: x.com (formerly Twitter), gettr.com ("alternative" social media platform), and rumble.com

5. **TruckersForFreedom**: Associated with the "Truckers for Freedom" movement, this channel emerged during protests against COVID-19 mandates, particularly in Canada. It shares content related to the protests and has been linked to the spread of misinformation regarding the pandemic and governmental policies. Domains: dq271.isrefer.com (referral tracking link for affiliate marketing, promoting products or campaigns), rumble.com, and Facebook.

In the same way, Figure 11 presents the top 20 German-language Telegram channels with the highest number of links to external domains, highlighting their significant role in spreading content outside the Telegram platform.

Rank	Channel	Links	
1	Schuberts Lagemeldung - Stefan Schubert Offiziell	59.459	
2	Eva Herman Offiziell	23.907	
3	Antiilluminaten TV	17.991	
4	Demo-Termine & Kontakte, Gleichgesinnte treffen	17.611	
5	Veikko aka Son Go Q	11.159	
6	Ignaz Bearth offiziell	8.773	
7	Kulturstudio.tv | WAHRHAFTIG - AUTHENTISCH - UNPERFEKT	8.721	
8	Oliver Janich & Team	5.867	
9	Gerhard Wisnewski&Team	4.468	
10	Digitaler Chronist	4.166	
11	Uncut-News.ch Das OriginalCH	3.750	
12	COMPACT-Magazin	3.097	
13	🌀Freiheit der Gedanken🌀	2.593	
14	AUF1	2.474	
15	BITTEL TV - EINFACH ANDERS	2.394	
16	Wächter der Erde	2.114	
17	Reiner Fuellmich DE/AT/CH	2.097	
18	Sara Bennett Lightfight	2.078	
19	reitschuster.de	2.009	
20	Dave Brych Kanal	1.970	

Figure 11– Top -20 German-language Telegram channels by number of links to external domains (Sept. 2023 – Sept. 2024)

Characterisation of the top 5 Channels:

1. **Schuberts Lagemeldung - Stefan Schubert Offiziell**: Operated by Stefan Schubert, a former police officer turned author, this channel provides regular updates on security, migration, and political topics. Schubert is known for his books and public commentary, which often critique German government policies and mainstream media narratives, particularly focusing on issues of law enforcement and national security. His channel is a central hub for followers seeking alternative perspectives on these subjects. Mainly refers to kopp-verlag.de (the publishing house where his books are published), nius.de (a far-right news platform run by former *Bild* editor-in-chief Julian Reichelt), and apollo-news.net (another alternative German-language news platform).

2. **Eva Herman Offiziell**: Managed by Eva Herman, a former news anchor and author, this channel emphasizes traditional family values while critiquing modern societal changes such as feminism, gender politics, and globalization. Herman is a polarizing figure in German-speaking media, often accused of promoting conservative and conspiratorial views. Her Telegram channel serves as a platform for disseminating these perspectives to a broad audience. Also mainly refers to kopp-verlag.de, nius.de, and apollo-news.net.

3. **Antiilluminaten TV**: This channel – as its name indicates - focuses on uncovering alleged global conspiracies and hidden agendas. Its content frequently challenges mainstream narratives and offers alternative explanations for political, social, and historical events. The channel has become a prominent voice in the German conspiracy-theory space, appealing to an audience skeptical of established institutions and media. Uses URL-shortening services is.gd and t.co (refers to X/Twitter), furthermore telegra.ph (Telegram publishing tool), nius.de, and odysee.com (video sharing platform using

blockchain technology with fewer limitations than common platforms such as YouTube).

4. **Demo-Termine & Kontakte, Gleichgesinnte treffen**: This channel functions as a networking and organizational hub for demonstrations and events. It provides information on protest dates and locations, catering to individuals with shared political and ideological beliefs. The channel fosters connections among like-minded individuals and promotes participation in activities that align with its audience's perspectives. Often refers to YouTube (videos presenting demonstrations), bitchute.com (another alternative to YouTube), and kla.tv (alternative news platform).

5. **Veikko aka Son Go Q**: Veikko operates this channel, sharing content that aligns with QAnon narratives and other conspiracy theories. The channel includes commentary on political and societal developments, often framing them within a larger narrative of alleged global manipulation. Veikko's content appeals to audiences seeking alternative explanations for current events and perceived injustices. Often refers to YouTube and X.com, but also to bild.de (a German tabloid known for its sensationalist headlines and wide readership) and welt.de (conservative German newspaper and platform). Both platforms are part of Axel Springer SE, one of the largest publishing houses in Europe, allowing them to reach a broad and diverse audience.

Rank	Domain	Links from TG Channels			Percentages		Description
		English	German	Total	English%	German%	
1	youtube.com	13.632	29.419	43.051	32%	68%	Video-sharing platform
2	rumble.com	28.294	1.369	29.663	95%	5%	Alternative video-sharing platform emphasizing free speech
3	kopp-verlag.de	0	23.871	23.871	0%	100%	German publishing house known for conspiracy theories
4	c.kopp-verlag.de	0	17.968	17.968	0%	100%	A subdomain of Kopp-Verlag for specific content
5	ept.ms	13.500	0	13.500	100%	0%	URL shortener used by The Epoch Times
6	x.com	8.797	4.632	13.429	66%	34%	Social media platform (formerly Twitter)
7	theepochtimes.com	10.038	0	10.038	100%	0%	Media outlet associated with Falun Gong
8	resistthemainstream.com	9.495	0	9.495	100%	0%	Alternative news site promoting conservative views
9	ntd.com	9.176	0	9.176	100%	0%	Media outlet tied to Falun Gong, critical of CCP
10	twitter.com	5.908	3.070	8.978	66%	34%	Social media platform owned by X Corp
11	is.gd	0	8.199	8.199	0%	100%	Simple URL-shortening service
12	telegra.ph	0	7.277	7.277	0%	100%	Publishing tool for anonymous articles by Telegram
13	naturalnews.com	6.482	0	6.482	100%	0%	Website known for health misinformation
14	dq271.isrefer.com	6.357	0	6.357	100%	0%	Affiliate tracking domain for marketing links
15	truthsocial.com	6.316	0	6.316	100%	0%	Social media platform (D. J. Trump)
16	nius.de	0	6.146	6.146	0%	100%	German news site often associated with right-wing views
17	bitchute.com	1.857	4.238	6.095	30%	70%	Video-sharing platform with minimal moderation policies
18	kulturstudio.tv	0	5.825	5.825	0%	100%	German alternative media site focusing on conspiracy theories
19	apollo-news.net	0	5.755	5.755	0%	100%	German news platform emphasizing "free speech"
20	bild.de	0	5.304	5.304	0%	100%	German tabloid known for sensationalist reporting
21	thegatewaypundit.com	4.946	313	5.259	94%	6%	News platform known for promoting conspiracy theories
22	greatawakening.world	4.863	0	4.863	100%	0%	Platform sharing content aligned with QAnon narratives
23	thepostmillennial.com	4.750	0	4.750	100%	0%	Conservative Canadian news outlet
24	tichyseinblick.de	0	4.360	4.360	0%	100%	German opinion magazine focusing on politics and economics
25	uncutnews.ch	0	4.078	4.078	0%	100%	Swiss alternative news site promoting controversial narratives
26	fightback.law	3.780	0	3.780	100%	0%	Website for attorney Lin Wood's legal advocacy group
27	welt.de	0	3.333	3.333	0%	100%	German news platform
28	fenbenlab.com	3.276	0	3.276	100%	0%	Website promoting alternative cancer treatments
29	facebook.com	2.884	368	3.252	89%	11%	Social media platform owned by Meta
30	bit.ly	2.126	1.008	3.134	68%	32%	Popular URL-shortening service
31	cna.asia	3.080	0	3.080	100%	0%	Asian news agency with a focus on global events
32	reitschuster.de	0	3.079	3.079	0%	100%	German journalist critical of "mainstream" narratives
33	gettr.com	1.756	1.209	2.965	59%	41%	Social media platform emphasizing "free speech"
34	dailymail.co.uk	2.630	274	2.904	91%	9%	British tabloid known for sensationalist stories
35	auf1.tv	0	2.840	2.840	0%	100%	Austrian far-right news site and online TV platform
36	jungefreiheit.de	0	2.707	2.707	0%	100%	German weekly newspaper with a right-wing conservative slant
37	tkp.at	0	2.635	2.635	0%	100%	Austrian independent media platform
38	focus.de	0	2.598	2.598	0%	100%	German news magazine covering a wide range of topics
39	n-tv.de	0	2.548	2.548	0%	100%	German television news channel
40	freiheitdergedanken.de	0	2.504	2.504	0%	100%	German platform promoting "alterenative"perspectives

Figure 12 – Top-40 external domains referenced by English- and German-language Telegram channels (Sept. 2023 – Sept. 2024)

Figure 12 illustrates the 40 most frequently referenced domains by both English- and German-speaking Telegram channels. It provides the total number of links and the percentage break-down between English- and German-language channels. A key observation is that some domains are referenced by both English- and German-speaking channels, which can be divided into two distinct categories. The first includes platforms that are widely used by a broader audience and are not exclusively associated with disinformation or conspiracy theories. Examples include major platforms like YouTube, as well as large social media sites such as Facebook. While these platforms – at least for now – employ content moderation and fact-checking mechanisms, they also host content linked to disinformation and conspiracy theories.

The second category among shared domains includes platforms that aim to create an alternative media ecosystem, serving as substitutes for "mainstream" media often criticized from the alternative perspective. Platforms like Rumble.com exemplify this trend, offering a space for alternative media narratives to flourish. Alongside these shared platforms, there are also domains referenced exclusively by either English- or German-speaking Telegram channels. For English-speaking channels, this includes alternative news platforms such as The Epoch Times, Resist the Mainstream, and NaturalNews.com. On the German side, notable examples include Kopp-Verlag, a publishing house known for its focus on alternative medicine, spirituality, esotericism, right-wing conservative ideologies, and conspiracy theories.

Another noteworthy observation is the prominence of online shops and e-commerce platforms referenced in this ecosystem. This highlights the economic dimension of the disinformation and conspiracy theory scene, where monetization occurs through the sale of publications, products, and other merchandise, as well as through advertising revenue by spreading disinformation, conspiracy theories, and other emotionally charged content. This economic model underlines the integration of ideological dissemination with commercial activity (Carlos Diaz Ruiz, 2023).

The network of Telegram channels and domains reveals that the disinformation and conspiracy theory ecosystem operate on multiple levels. (1) On one hand, it relies on **mainstream platforms** like YouTube to reach a broader audience, even as these platforms attempt to moderate content. (2) On the other hand, it actively fosters the growth of **alternative media platforms**, which emerged in response to content management and restrictions on established platforms. Over time, the focus appears to have shifted increasingly towards building an autonomous alternative media ecosystem that eschews content moderation, fact-checking, and limitations entirely. (3) Moreover, the influence of this alternative ecosystem is becoming more pronounced, with signs of a **convergence between mainstream and alternative platforms**. Policy changes of X include introducing "Community Notes" for crowd-sourced instead of external fact-checking, modifying stances on certain content categories, and maintaining core moderation practices[11]. The further development, given the fact that Elon Musk seems to have significant influence on Donald Trump's presidency, remains to be seen, but there are indications of

---

[11] https://www.hiig.de/en/policy-changes-of-x-under-musk/, last accessed 2025/01/16.

an increase in hate speech, disinformation, and conspiracy theories on the platform[12]. Concerns about content moderation changes at Meta, including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, has grown after CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced plans to eliminate external fact-checking in January 2025. At the time of writing this report (January 2025), there were rumors that Elon Musk might acquire the U.S. division of TikTok[13]. Although unconfirmed and even if this might not happen, such developments suggest a potential consolidation of media platforms under the influence of actors aligned with alternative and right-wing conservative agendas. These trends signal a significant shift in the media landscape, with the boundaries between mainstream and alternative ecosystems becoming increasingly blurred, while simultaneously leading to greater polarization between them.

6.3. YouTube Video Analysis in Telegram Messages

We now turn to the YouTube channels and videos referenced in German-speaking Telegram posts. The primary objective is to analyze the content of these videos, distinguishing between "mainstream" content—which appeals to a broad audience—and videos that cater to a more specific, from an "alternative" perspective driven viewership. A crucial aspect of this investigation is identifying thematic differences in the shared videos. While some videos contain general entertainment, music, or mainstream news content, others focus on alternative perspectives that criticize narratives which are regarded as dominant from their perspective. These latter videos are often directed at an audience already engaged in alternative political or social discourses, including content that promotes distrust in mainstream institutions, conspiracy theories, or disinformation. The analysis aims to detect topic patterns of content dissemination and assess the degree to which these videos contribute to radicalization within Telegram communities. By categorizing the types of videos shared, we can gain insight into the informational ecosystem shaping discussions in these digital spaces. As outlined in section 5.3, this investigation is based on 4,668 YouTube videos for which metadata was collected. These videos were shared within German-speaking Telegram channels between September 2023 and September 2024, providing a snapshot of the content landscape that circulates within these communities.

To systematically categorize and analyze the YouTube videos shared in German-speaking Telegram channels, we employed a large language model (LLM)-based approach to process and interpret the dataset. The analysis was conducted using natural language processing (NLP) techniques, leveraging the model's ability to recognize patterns, extract semantic meaning, and classify content based on video titles, channel names, and contextual indicators. This method ensures a structured and reproducible classification process, allowing for the differentiation between mainstream content and videos that cater to more niche or ideologically driven audiences.

The main topics of the YouTube channels and videos can be described as follows:

---

[12] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/article/2024/sep/05/racism-misogyny-lies-how-did-x-become-so-full-of-hatred-and-is-it-ethical-to-keep-using-it, last accessed 2025/01/15.
[13] https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/14/business/dealbook/china-musk-tiktok.html, last accessed 2025/01/15.

(1) **Music and Entertainment Videos**: A large portion of the dataset consists of music videos, live performances, and entertainment content, shared primarily for personal enjoyment. Many feature classic rock and pop hits, such as *The Final Countdown* by Europe, *Californication* by The Red Hot Chili Peppers, or *The Earth Song* by Michael Jackson. While not inherently political, their presence in politically motivated Telegram channels suggests a cultural function. Music, especially nostalgic anthems, reinforces group identity, evokes shared emotions, and can serve as an ideological marker. *The Final Countdown*, originally about space exploration, has been repurposed in various contexts as a symbol of political upheaval or impending crisis. Its triumphant tone aligns with mobilization narratives, making it a potent soundtrack for groups anticipating major societal shifts.

(2) **Geopolitical conflicts and Global Crises**: A significant portion of the content appears to focus on global political developments, conflicts, and economic crises. Titles often mention keywords like "Krieg" (war, Russia/Ukraine, Israel and the Middle East), "Deutschland" (Germany), and "USA," suggesting a focus on international relations, national sovereignty, and military conflicts. These videos frequently discuss geopolitical realignments, economic recessions, and energy crises, often framed in a way that implies mainstream media is misleading the public or concealing critical information.

(3) **Covid-19, Health, and Alternative Medicine Narratives**: Many titles refer to health topics, alternative medicine, and narratives surrounding pandemics. Some videos appear to discuss COVID-19, vaccine skepticism, and purported alternative treatments. Others emphasize holistic healing, "natural" medicine, and claims that mainstream medicine suppresses certain cures. This thematic block is strongly associated with distrust in pharmaceutical companies and government health agencies. This again highlights how important the topic of COVID remains, even after the end of the pandemic.

(4) **Conspiracy Theories and "Hidden Agendas"**: A recurring theme in the dataset is content suggesting that global elites, secret societies, or governments are manipulating world events. Titles contain terms related to "Deep State," "Great Reset," and covert operations. These videos often present alternative explanations for historical or current events, portraying mainstream narratives as deceptive while implying that only select sources provide the "real" truth.

(5) **Criticism of Mainstream Media and Political Establishments**: Many titles reflect criticism of mainstream media and political institutions, with frequent mentions of "Zensur" (censorship), "Manipulation," and media-related terms. These videos often frame traditional news sources as biased or controlled, promoting alternative media as more reliable. The content suggests distrust in official narratives and a belief that important information is being withheld or distorted.

(6) **Migration, Cultural and Social Identity:** Many titles focus on migration, national identity, and demographic changes, often framing migration as a crisis or a challenge to cultural cohesion. Videos discuss topics like refugee policies, border control, and the impact of migration on Germany and Europe. Some titles suggest dissatisfaction with government responses, portraying migration as a source of social or economic strain.

This content reflects concerns about national sovereignty and the consequences of immigration policies, often questioning their long-term effects on society.

(7) **Financial System Critiques and Economic Collapse Predictions**: There is a notable presence of videos discussing economic instability, critiques of central banks, and predictions of financial collapse. Titles reference inflation, the Euro, and alternative economic systems like cryptocurrencies or gold-backed currencies. These videos often suggest that the global financial system is rigged against ordinary citizens and controlled by elite interests, promoting alternative economic strategies as a safeguard against impending collapse.

(8) **Science, Technology, and Artificial Intelligence Skepticism:** Some content focuses on technological advancements, particularly artificial intelligence, digital surveillance, and transhumanism. Videos in this category often express concerns about mass surveillance, loss of privacy, and AI-driven societal changes. There is a strong overlap with conspiracy narratives, particularly regarding claims that AI and digital technologies are tools for elite control rather than progress.

A closer examination of the YouTube videos in the dataset reveals that the most-viewed content primarily consists of music videos, as previously described. However, a clearer understanding of the other prevalent themes emerges when focusing on videos with the highest number of likes relative to their views. This metric highlights content that has resonated particularly strongly with its audience. The following is a list of YouTube videos with the highest like-to-view ratios. Their titles provide valuable insight into the topics that generate the most engagement. These are the titles of the most liked videos:

1. Im Verborgenen tobt ein erbitterter Informations-Krieg (A bitter information war is raging in the shadows).
2. Wie Nancy Faeser die Bevölkerung täuscht (How Nancy Faeser [former German Minister of the Interior (ed. note)] deceives the population).
3. Peter Boehringer über das Corona-Regime: „Es wurde nie aufgearbeitet!" (Peter Boehringer on the Corona regime: "It was never addressed!").
4. Österreich. Ost-Wahlen. Verfassungsschutz. Wohin steuert Deutschland? (Austria. Eastern elections. Constitutional protection. Where is Germany heading)?
5. Der globale Angriff auf die Meinungsfreiheit (The global attack on freedom of speech).
6. 💥 Exklusiv BKA-Lagebild: Über 2,4 Millionen Straftaten durch Zuwanderer (💥 Exclusive BKA report: Over 2.4 million crimes committed by immigrants).
7. Gekaufte Wahlen? Wie der Mainstream freie Wahlen bekämpft! (Rigged elections? How the mainstream fights free elections!).
8. Gefahr für Freiheit, Gesundheit und Selbstbestimmung: der WHO-Pandemievertrag (Threat to freedom, health, and self-determination: the WHO pandemic treaty).
9. Karsten Hilse (AfD): „Das ist Sabotage und grenzt an Verrat" (Karsten Hilse (AfD): "This is sabotage and borders on treason.")
10. Rücktritt fällig! Die Skandal-Akte von Nancy Faeser (Time to resign! The scandal file of Nancy Faeser).
11. Die unfassbaren Entgleisungen von Olaf Scholz (The unbelievable missteps of Olaf Scholz).

12. BEWEIS: STAATLICHE SENDER POLITISCH UNTERWANDERT! (PROOF: State broadcasters politically infiltrated)!

13. Deutschland am Abgrund. Unfähigkeit oder steckt dahinter ein Plan? (Germany on the brink. Incompetence or a hidden plan?)

14. BlackRock-Merz und BlackRock-Habeck bereiten Regierung vor (BlackRock-Merz and BlackRock-Habeck are preparing the government).

15. Grüner Wasserstoff ist NICHT die Rettung (Green hydrogen is NOT the solution).

16. Grenzkontrollen: Was Politik und Medien verschweigen (Border controls: What politics and the media are hiding).

17. Die Asyl-Lüge (The asylum lie).

18. Das droht jetzt jedem Bürger! (This now threatens every citizen!).

19. EILT: Der nächste Attentatsversuch auf Donald Trump! Was bisher bekannt ist (URGENT: The next assassination attempt on Donald Trump! What is known so far).

20. Vernichtendes Urteil über die deutsche Presse (Devastating verdict on the German press).

These titles reveal a strong focus on political and societal crises, characterized by a deep skepticism toward government actions, media narratives, and institutional policies. Several recurring themes emerge, including Covid-19, government deception, media manipulation, immigration concerns, threats to civil liberties, and international political conflicts. The framing of these issues in the video titles suggests an atmosphere of urgency, distrust, and resistance. A significant portion of the videos conveys accusations against German political leaders, highlighting figures such as Nancy Faeser and Olaf Scholz. The language used—words like Täuschung (deception), Skandal-Akte (scandal file), and Entgleisungen (missteps)—suggests an attempt to discredit these politicians, portraying them as incompetent, corrupt, or acting against the interests of the public. This aligns with a broader anti-establishment sentiment, which is reinforced by titles claiming proof of politische Unterwanderung (political infiltration) of state broadcasters, suggesting that mainstream media cannot be trusted. The theme of migration appears prominently, framed as a crisis or a security threat. Titles referencing crime statistics related to immigrants and the notion of an Asyl-Lüge (asylum lie) indicate a narrative of perceived societal destabilization due to migration policies. Beyond national politics, there is strong opposition to international institutions and agreements, particularly the WHO pandemic treaty, which is described as a "Gefahr für Freiheit, Gesundheit und Selbstbestimmung" (threat to freedom, health, and self-determination). This title reflects broader anti-globalist narratives, where international organizations are depicted as entities that undermine national sovereignty and impose authoritarian measures. Emotionally, the titles frequently convey alarm, urgency, and indignation. Words like EILT (urgent), Vernichtendes Urteil (devastating verdict), and BlackRock-Merz und BlackRock-Habeck bereiten Regierung vor (BlackRock-Merz and BlackRock-Habeck are preparing the government) suggest a sense of looming danger or hidden control. The repeated implication that policies are secretly orchestrated by elite interests fosters a perception of powerlessness and injustice, which can strengthen group cohesion among those who feel excluded from mainstream discourse, by constructing—typical of populist discourse—a contrast between the ordinary, deceived people on one side and a corrupt, deceptive elite on the other. The strong engagement with these videos suggests that crisis-

driven narratives resonate deeply with their audience, reinforcing feelings of alienation and distrust toward political, media, and global institutions. The framing of issues in stark, confrontational terms fosters a binary worldview—dividing society into a manipulated majority and a minority that seeks to expose the truth.

Now, let's take a look at the YouTube channels that distribute the videos with the highest number of likes in relation to views. If you sort the list of YouTube videos by the number of likes per view, extract the top 20 channels, and add their follower count, you arrive at the following list:

1. **COMPACTTV** (461,000 followers): The video arm of the COMPACT magazine journal, run by former far-left, now far-right journalist and political activist Jürgen Elsässer. The channel regularly promotes nationalist narratives, anti-globalist rhetoric, and theories critical of democracy and mainstream institutions (www.compact-online.de).

2. **Boris Reitschuster** (376,000): Hosted by journalist Boris Reitschuster, this channel positions itself as an investigative platform but frequently adopts an anti-mainstream and polarizing stance, often framing issues in a way that aligns with far-right narratives (reitschuster.de).

3. **AfD TV** (314,000): The official media channel of the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland), which serves as a propaganda outlet for the party, emphasizing anti-immigration, anti-EU, and nationalist narratives (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq2rogaxLtQFrYG3X3KYNww).

4. **Deutschland Kurier** (276,000): The video platform of the Deutschland Kurier, a publication aligned with right-wing populist and nationalist narratives. It frequently promotes anti-elite and anti-mainstream media sentiments (deutschlandkurier.de).

5. **POLITIK SPEZIAL - Stimme der Vernunft** (266,000) :A political commentary channel that positions itself as a voice of reason but often promotes far-right populist, anti-elite, and anti-mainstream media rhetoric, sometimes incorporating conspiracy theories (politik-spezial.de).

6. **Tichys Einblick** (257,000): The video platform of Tichys Einblick, a conservative-liberal magazine led by journalist Roland Tichy that often features right-wing populist perspectives, critical of mainstream politics, climate policies, and migration (www.tichyseinblick.de).

7. **achse:ostwest** (235, 000): A political commentary channel with a strong nationalist and anti-globalist orientation, frequently criticizing Western political institutions and mainstream narratives (www.youtube.com/channel/UCWOVvQzsJj5O-CxDAeon-Vw).

8. **Carsten Jahn - TEAM HEIMAT** (213,000): A channel operated by online content creator Carsten Jahn with strong nationalist and anti-immigration themes, frequently criticizing government policies and emphasizing a traditionalist, patriotic agenda (www.youtube.com/hashtag/teamheimat).

9. **LION Media** (193,000): A German-language QAnon-channel[14] with a frequent focus on conspiratorial narratives, anti-establishment rhetoric, and skepticism toward mainstream

---

[14] https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/wdr/qanon-influencer-social-media-verschwoerungstheorien-trump-putin-deepstate-100.html, last accessed 2025/02/03.

journalism and political institutions (https://www.youtube.com/chan-nel/UCXXoX3D69mN75vF89jvW9bg).

10. **Landwirtschaft erLEEben mit Anthony Lee** (171,000): A channel run by the German farmer and political activist Anthony-Robert Lee[15] focused on agriculture, but often incorporating nationalist, anti-EU, and climate change skepticism, particularly in the context of farming policies (www.youtube.com/@AnthonyRobertLee).

11. **Digitaler Chronist** (114,000): A right-wing populist commentary channel that presents itself as an independent news source but frequently spreads anti-elite, anti-mainstream media, and conspiracy-driven narratives (www.digitaler-chronist.com).

12. **Kai Stuht - Project Fovea** (112,000): A media and documentary-style channel run by photographer and organizer of Covid protests Kai Stuht presenting itself as critical activist and frequently promoting anti-establishment, conspiratorial, and nationalist viewpoints (kai-stuht.com/de/alle-videos/project-fovea).

13. **RTV Privatfernsehen** (106,000): A private media outlet based in Upper Austria that frequently disseminates content critical of mainstream politics and media. It often promotes nationalist, anti-elite, and right-wing populist narratives (regionaltv.at).

13. **Politik im Fokus** (106,000): A channel that presents itself as an alternative news source, often criticizing government policies and mainstream media. The content is typically aligned with far-right populist viewpoints (politikimfokus.my.canva.site/news).

15. **warum.kritisch** (65,100): A channel run by German business economist and coach Lil Korfmacher-Finke that positions itself as critical of mainstream narratives and also frequently amplifies anti-elite rhetoric and skepticism toward established institutions, bordering on or supporting conspiracy theories (korfmachertraining.com).

16. **Utopia TV Deutschland** (62,100): A YouTube channel with a far-right perspective, covering demonstrations in Germany, politics, history, corruption, and nationalist themes, claiming to reveal what mainstream media conceals (www.youtube.com/chan-nel/UCh7UU4jFZWKzu1KxqDic_Og).

17. **Kilez More** (61,600): A channel run by Austrian rapper and conspiracy theorist Kilez More, known for blending music with political activism ("Canceled by the mainstream, Censored by Big Tech, Approved by Julian Assange"[16]). Content often includes anti-establishment, libertarian, and conspiracy-oriented narratives (www.youtube.com/@KilezMoreTV).

18. **Kopp Verlag** (59,500): The video branch of Kopp Verlag, a publishing house known for distributing conspiracy theories, anti-globalist rhetoric[17], and books aligned with nationalist and far-right ideologies (www.youtube.com/@koppverlag).

---

[15] https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony-Robert_Lee, last accessed 2025/02/03.
[16] https://truthrap.de, last accessed 2025/02/03.
[17] https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kopp_Verlag, last accessed 2025/02/03.

19. **Peter Boehringer** (48,700): Hosted by AfD politician and author Peter Boehringer[18], this channel presents strong euroskeptic, nationalist, and populist views, often questioning financial and economic policies from a conspiratorial angle.

20. **Schuberts Lagemeldung** (33,000): A political commentary channel operated by former police officer and now author Stefan Schubert with a conservative to far-right perspective[19]. Content is often emotionally charged and critical of mainstream politics, media, and migration policies (www.youtube.com/@SchubertsLagemeldung).

All in all, the YouTube videos analyzed in this dataset reflect the same themes and emotional dynamics observed in our other data sources. While a significant portion consists of music videos, the remaining content is heavily focused on crisis narratives. These include geopolitical crises—particularly the wars in Ukraine, Israel, and Gaza, as well as tensions involving Russia and Hezbollah. Economic crises are also a recurring theme, with concerns about deindustrialization, inflation, financial instability, and the decline of cash. Migration is another dominant topic, often framed as a threat to national stability. Additionally, the dataset highlights the enduring relevance of COVID-19, with strong criticism of pandemic policies, vaccine skepticism, and discussions of alleged vaccine-related harm. Overall, these videos express deep distrust toward political leaders, experts, and mainstream media, conveying emotions of fear, anger, and skepticism. This aligns closely, as we will see with the narratives observed in the Telegram messages under investigation.

---

[18] https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Boehringer, last accessed 2025/02/03.
[19] https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stefan_Schubert_(Autor), last accessed 2025/02/03.

7. Results of the Text Analysis

7.1. The English-language Telegram Messages

7.1.1. Topics

In the English-language Telegram channels, by calculating the word embeddings and clustering messages with semantic similarity, we had identified the following semantic key clusters in the messages and posts from 2019 until 2022 (method and approach see D4.1, p. 33ff., result see D4.1, p. 60ff.):

(1) **Cluster 1 - COVID-19 Pandemic Scepticism**: This cluster revolves around scepticism towards COVID-19 vaccines and public health policies, often invoking conspiracy theories. The narrative emphasizes distrust in authorities, highlighting concerns over personal freedoms and ethical practices in healthcare.

(2) **Cluster 2 - Vaccine Scepticism and Anti-Government**: Focused on anti-vaccine sentiment, this cluster connects distrust in vaccines to broader resistance against government measures, portraying protests and civil unrest as a defense against perceived overreach by authorities and pharmaceutical companies.

(3) **Cluster 3 – Divisions in U.S. Politics**: This cluster covers a wide range of U.S. political issues, highlighting partisan divides and discussions on electoral integrity, media bias, and international relations, reflecting a critical stance on U.S. governance.

(4) **Cluster 4 - January 6 United States Capitol Attack**: Centered around conservative critiques of the January 6th Capitol riot, this cluster questions media coverage and fact-checking, while praising political figures associated with the event.

(5) **Cluster 5 – The 2020 U.S. Presidential Election**: This cluster discusses claims of electoral fraud during the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, referencing legal challenges and accusations against political figures and institutions.

(6) **Cluster 6 – The Polarized U.S. Political Discourse**: Focusing on the political polarization under Joe Biden's presidency, this cluster contrasts Biden's administration with the glorification of Donald Trump, reflecting deep political divisions and cynicism towards the establishment.

(7) **Cluster 7 – Russia's War on Ukraine**: This cluster discusses Russia's war on Ukraine, often from a pro-Russian perspective, criticizing NATO's role and focusing on the economic impact of sanctions on Russia and Europe.

(8) **Cluster 8 - Trump-Branded Financial Products**: This cluster involves marketing campaigns promoting Trump-branded items, leveraging political loyalty and creating a sense of exclusivity and urgency to drive sales.

(9) **Cluster 9 - Cryptocurrency and Finance**: Focusing on cryptocurrency, this cluster reflects interest in financial markets, often criticizing government policies and expressing scepticism towards economic decisions by major corporations.

(10) **Cluster 10 - Hackers and Cybersecurity**: This cluster discusses hacking techniques and online anonymity, delving into potentially illegal activities and the manipulation of digital vulnerabilities, emphasizing evasion and forensic security tactics.

(11) **Cluster 11 - Christian Spirituality**: This cluster highlights Christian spiritual discourse, focusing on themes of faith, personal growth, and community, often emphasizing resilience through religious beliefs.

(12) **Cluster 12 - QAnon and Deep State**: Centered on QAnon narratives, this cluster propagates conspiracy theories about global cabals and deep-state actors, while criticizing big tech and social media censorship.

(13) **Cluster 13 - Heterogeneous Cluster 1**: Global Conflicts and Crises: This cluster covers various global conflicts and crises, blending geopolitical tensions with public health scepticism, including messages in German, English, and Spanish.

(14) **Cluster 14 - Heterogeneous Cluster 2**: Fringe Narratives and Activism: This cluster includes fringe narratives on public health, technology, and activism, challenging mainstream scientific consensus and promoting scepticism towards governmental and media actions.

(15) **Cluster 15 - Heterogeneous Cluster 3**: Political and Societal Discourse: This cluster covers conspiracy theories and political criticism, often reflecting racial and ethnic tensions and addressing controversial societal issues such as abortion, human rights, and gun control.

To identify the key topics in the additional Telegram messages collected for the period September 2023 to September 2024 (see section 5.1), we proceeded as follows: We randomly selected a sample of 1,000 messages from the complete dataset and applied an advanced natural language processing (NLP) tool based on a large-scale transformer model to analyze the textual content (OpenAI et al., 2023). The sample size of 1,000 messages was chosen because this represents a dataset large enough to capture the range of topics present in the messages while remaining within the processing capacity of our NLP tool. This balance ensures that the analysis remains both computationally feasible and methodologically robust in identifying recurring moral frames and thematic patterns. The NLP tool was employed to identify and categorize the most prominent themes and topics discussed within the sample. This method allowed for the extraction of key topics by utilizing deep learning techniques for contextual understanding and topic modeling. The following topics were found in the random sample of English-language Telegram posts 2023/2024:

Election Integrity / Cheating Allegations: This topic focuses on claims of widespread election fraud, particularly surrounding Donald Trump's 2020 presidential loss. Supporters allege that the election was stolen through rigged voting systems and orchestrated by a "deep state" conspiracy. Discussions include recounts, legal challenges, and ongoing investigations, with references to figures like Trump, Mike Lindell, and Kamala Harris. The US presidential election in 2024 is also viewed with suspicion, and concerns persist about similar manipulation.

COVID-19 and Vaccination: This topic revolves around skepticism toward the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination efforts. Participants frequently share concerns about vaccine injuries, doubts about vaccine efficacy, and opposition to mandates. "Alternative treatments" like ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine are discussed, and there is distrust toward public health institutions like the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Conspiracy theories regarding vaccine rollout and its ties to global control are prevalent.

Globalist / Deep State Conspiracies: This topic centers on a belief in a shadowy global elite, often referred to as the "deep state" or "cabal," manipulating world events for personal gain. These elites are believed to control politics, pandemics, wars, and economies. The World Economic Forum, the Great Reset, and organizations like the UN and WHO are often mentioned as key players in a global agenda. Participants accuse these entities of committing crimes against humanity, including orchestrating the COVID-19 pandemic ("plandemic") and rigging elections.

Donald Trump and Political Support: Because many channels in our dataset are based in the United States, there is a strong focus on Donald Trump, portraying him as a victim of political persecution and the target of ongoing legal battles. Supporters celebrate his policies, re-election campaign, and his ongoing influence on the Republican Party. Trump is often framed as a defender against the "deep state" and corruption within the government, while opponents are portrayed as part of an effort to suppress his leadership.

Israel-Palestine Conflict: This topic discusses the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, focusing on military actions, political developments, and the broader implications for the Middle East. The conflict between Israeli forces and groups like Hamas and Hezbollah is frequently highlighted, with attention on airstrikes, civilian casualties, and the role of international actors. There is also a focus on the geopolitical consequences for the region and beyond.

Big Tech Censorship / Free Speech: Many posts express distrust because of the perceived censorship by large tech companies and social media platforms, particularly the alleged suppression of conservative views. These discussions criticize platforms like Facebook, Twitter (before its acquisition by Elon Musk and its transformation into 'X'), and others for silencing topics such as COVID-19 skepticism, election fraud, and right-wing political views. Claims of government collusion with Big Tech to control public discourse are also common.

Media Bias and Misinformation: This topic addresses accusations against the so-called mainstream media outlets for spreading "biased information" and "propaganda". Discussions often claim that these media companies are complicit in pushing the agendas of the "deep state" or other elites. Alternative media sources are promoted as more reliable, and media lies or misrepresentation of facts are frequently called out, especially in relation to politics, COVID-19, and global events.

Immigration and Border Issues: The rejection of "illegal immigration" and "border security" are prominent, particularly regarding the US southern border. Discussions emphasize the perceived failures of the Biden administration in handling immigration laws and the "influx" of migrants. There is often a focus on the impact of illegal immigration on national security, jobs, and social services, and strong support for stricter border control measures, or deportation.

US-China Relations: This topic focuses on China's growing global influence, especially in relation to the US. Discussions include concerns about Chinese espionage, trade tensions, the role of China in global markets, and accusations of interference in US affairs, including COVID-19's origins. Additionally, there are frequent mentions of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) geopolitical ambitions, particularly in Taiwan and the South China Sea.

Hunter Biden and Biden Family Scandals: This topic centers on allegations of corruption and illegal activities involving Hunter Biden and the Biden family. Discussions often revolve around claimed foreign business dealings, including those in Ukraine and China, and claims of bribery and influence peddling by the Biden family.

Middle East Conflicts (Beyond Israel-Palestine): Apart from the Israel-Palestine conflict, posts also focus on other military and political tensions in the Middle East, particularly involving countries like Iran, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon. Discussions cover US involvement, Iran-backed militias, Houthi rebels, and broader regional instability. Airstrikes, proxy wars, and military interventions are frequently mentioned in this context.

Climate Change and Environmental Issues: This topic involves debates over climate change and environmental policies. Participants express deep skepticism and rejection about global climate initiatives, such as green energy transitions and carbon emissions reduction efforts. There are accusations that the climate change agenda is a tool for global control, with opposition to initiatives like the Paris Agreement. Discussions frequently cast doubt on the science behind climate change.

Economic Concerns / Inflation: Posts about the economy focus on fears of inflation, economic collapse, and rising energy prices. There are concerns about the impact of recession on housing affordability, job markets, and overall financial stability. Discussions also touch on the potential collapse of the traditional banking system and the role of green energy policies in exacerbating economic problems. Cryptocurrency and alternative financial systems are mentioned as potential solutions.

US Military and Defense: This topic covers discussions about US military actions, troop deployments, and defense spending. Posts highlight the military's role in international conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, and concerns about the Biden administration's military policies. There are also mentions of veterans' issues and the use of advanced technologies like drones and missile defense systems.

Pedophilia and Human Trafficking Allegations: Posts here discuss claims of global child trafficking networks and pedophilia rings involving high-profile figures, often linked to conspiracy theories such as QAnon. Accusations against elites, Hollywood, and government officials for involvement in these crimes are frequent, with references to Jeffrey Epstein's case and secret investigations or tribunals being conducted to expose these networks.

When comparing these topics to those from 2019 to 2022, the following aspects become evident: Many topics remain highly salient, including U.S. politics, Russia's attack on Ukraine, deep distrust toward various elite factions (political, media, medical, scientific communities in general, Big Tech, and Big Pharma), child abuse and pedophilia, and especially COVID, which still appears to be particularly effective at mobilizing strong emotions in many individuals. Newly added topics primarily include the war in the Middle East, China, and the economic crisis and inflation. Overall, the messages are characterized by intense emotions, as we will see, sometimes involving the expression of personal feelings, but more often by the continuous, staccato-like dissemination of an enormous volume of alarming, propagandistic claims

and messages that stoke emotions (primarily hatred, fear, and disgust), aligning with Steve Bannon's strategic directive, "Flood the zone with shit," as a tool of political activism.

Conspiracy Theories

It is apparent that many of the topics are linked to conspiracy theories (election fraud, "plandemic", deep state, censorship, climate change, child trafficking, etc.). To identify the most frequent conspiracy theories in the dataset, we applied a structured methodology using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques and machine learning-based text analysis. The dataset was cleaned and normalized by removing special characters, lowercasing text, and filtering out stopwords. We ensured linguistic consistency and focused on German-language messages, though in a few cases, English messages were also present. Then we applied tokenization, lemmatization, and Named Entity Recognition (NER) to extract key terms and identify significant entities. Using term frequency analysis and Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) for topic modeling, we detected recurring themes and structured narratives. Extracted topics and keywords were cross-referenced with known conspiracy theories, combining automated classification with manual verification to avoid misinterpretation. Messages containing general political discussions or neutral content were excluded. Conspiracy theories were grouped into key domains and finally each category was described based on direct textual evidence from the dataset.

Within the random sample of Telegram posts, the following conspiracy theories are particularly prominent:

Election Fraud (2020 U.S. Presidential Election): This theory posits that the 2020 U.S. Presidential election was manipulated to ensure Joe Biden's victory, with widespread allegations of voter fraud, particularly in key battleground states. Proponents claim that voting machines and fraudulent ballots played a central role in "stealing" the election from Donald Trump. Legal challenges and recounts are often cited as evidence of irregularities.

COVID-19 Vaccination and Health-related Conspiracies: These messages assert that COVID-19 vaccines are part of a broader, sinister agenda aimed at harming or controlling the population. There are frequent claims linking vaccines to serious health issues, such as heart disease and cancer, and accusations that pharmaceutical companies, governments, and media are complicit in hiding the dangers of vaccination. Some discussions include alternative treatments and theories about 5G's involvement in health issues.

QAnon and Deep State Conspiracy: This theory suggests that a secret, powerful group referred to as the "Deep State" is orchestrating global events to maintain control over governments and societies. The group is allegedly involved in activities such as human trafficking, pedophilia, and Satanic rituals. Donald Trump is portrayed as a key figure fighting against this cabal, with followers of QAnon interpreting world events as part of this ongoing battle.

5G and EMF Radiation: These conspiracies claim that 5G networks and other electromagnetic fields (EMF) cause severe health risks, including cancer and neurological disorders. Some messages suggest that 5G is used for mind control or government surveillance, linking its

deployment to a larger plot of societal manipulation and population control. Protective measures against 5G are often promoted as a way to safeguard against these perceived dangers.

Hunter Biden's Laptop and Corruption: This theory revolves around Hunter Biden's laptop, which allegedly contains incriminating evidence of corrupt business dealings involving the Biden family, particularly with foreign nations like China and Ukraine. Proponents claim that President Joe Biden is implicated in these activities, which are supposedly being covered up by law enforcement and media in an effort to protect the political elite.

Great Reset / Globalist Agenda: Messages within this topic suggest that global elites, particularly those associated with the World Economic Forum, are using crises like the COVID-19 pandemic to initiate a "Great Reset." This reset is viewed as a plan to create a global government, impose digital currencies, and increase mass surveillance, all with the ultimate goal of controlling the population and dismantling national sovereignty.

Human Cloning and Genetic Manipulation: This theory claims that human cloning technology is far more advanced than publicly acknowledged and is being used by elites for clandestine purposes. Allegations include the use of clones for manipulation, control, and even harvesting. Some suggest that this secret technology is hidden in underground labs and is part of a larger plot involving genetic experimentation on humans.

9/11 Inside Job: According to this theory, the 9/11 attacks were orchestrated by the U.S. government or powerful hidden groups, rather than foreign terrorists. It is believed that the event was a "false flag" operation designed to justify military interventions in the Middle East and erode civil liberties within the U.S. Evidence for this theory often includes claims about controlled demolitions and strategic government involvement.

UFOs and Alien Conspiracies: These messages claim that governments, especially the U.S., are concealing the existence of extraterrestrial life and advanced alien technology. Conspiracy theorists argue that secret programs experiment on humans and communicate with extraterrestrial civilizations, but this knowledge is hidden from the public to maintain control or leverage advanced technologies.

Weather Manipulation: This theory suggests that governments or global elites are using technology, such as HAARP or chemtrails, to manipulate weather patterns for political, military, or economic gain. Allegations include the use of geoengineering to control populations or to create natural disasters as weapons, all under the guise of fighting climate change or furthering globalist agendas.

7.1.2. Interwoven Conspiracy Narratives
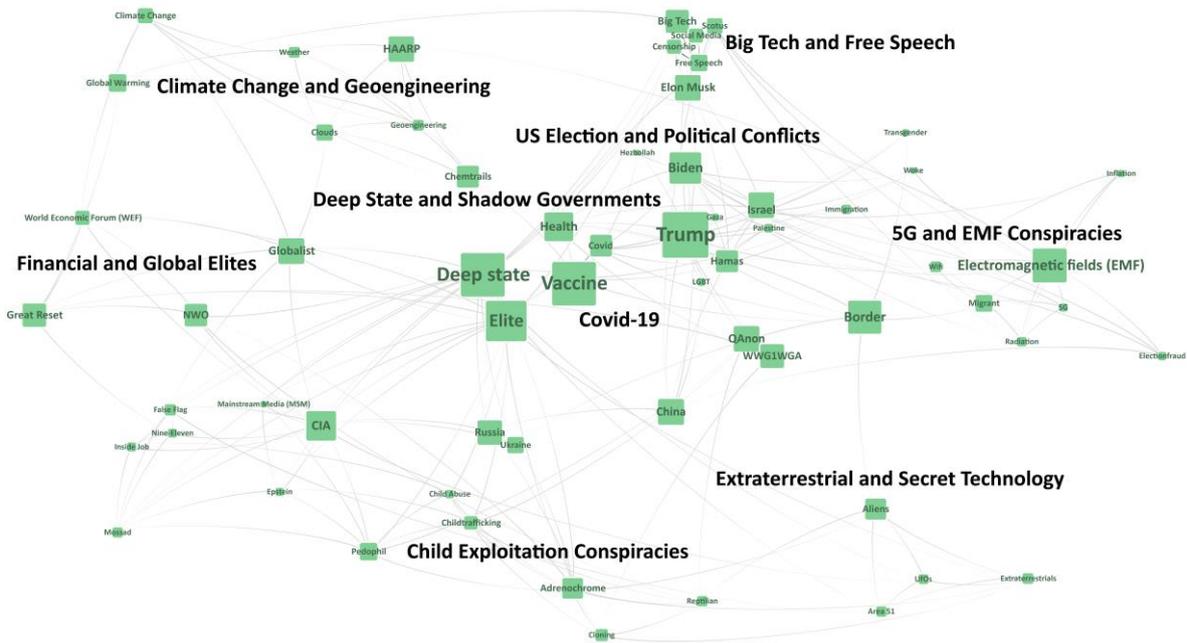
Figure 13 - Semantic network of keywords co-occurring in English-language Telegram messages (Sept. 2023 to Sept. 2024)

We can assume that conspiracy theories are interconnected, with themes often overlapping or substituting for one another. People who are inclined to believe in one conspiracy theory frequently extend this belief to encompass a wide range of unrelated topics (Miani et al., 2022). To better understand the interconnections between conspiracy theories in current English-language Telegram messages, we conducted a systematic analysis with the English-language Telegram messages from September 2023 to September 2024.

To map these interconnections, we identified 66 keywords representing the recurring themes and prominent conspiracy theories in the dataset described above. These keywords were selected based on their relevance to the topics and conspiracy narratives and their frequency in English-language Telegram messages. Subsequently, we identified all messages containing these keywords and calculated the co-occurrence of the keywords across the dataset.

Co-occurrence was measured using the Pearson correlation coefficient, which evaluates the likelihood that if one keyword appears in a Telegram message, another keyword will also be present. A stronger Pearson correlation indicates a higher probability of co-occurrence between two keywords. This allowed us to create a co-occurrence network, where nodes represent keywords and edges represent the strength of their correlation. To simplify the network and enhance interpretability, we applied the Proportional Strength Method (de Nooy et al., 2011, pp. 169ff.). This method normalizes connections based on the relative importance of each edge to its connected nodes, retaining edges with the highest proportional strength. Specifically, for each node, we retained only the five strongest connections. The resulting network highlights the most significant relationships between keywords while reducing noise from less

relevant connections. In the visualized network (Figure 13), the nodes represent keywords, with their size reflecting betweenness centrality. Betweenness centrality measures the extent to which a node serves as a bridge between clusters (de Nooy et al., 2011, pp. 150ff.). Larger nodes indicate keywords that connect distinct clusters and themes, functioning as "breaching keywords" or "breaching narratives" that integrate disparate conspiracy theories.

The analysis reveals distinct clusters of conspiracy narratives, as well as central keywords that act as connectors between these clusters. The network clearly highlights dominant conspiracy theories within English-language Telegram messages from September 2023 to September 2024. At the core of the network are two primary themes: COVID-19 and Anti-Elite/Deep State narratives. The keywords "Vaccine," "Deep State," and "Elite" occupy central positions, emphasizing their bridging role between clusters. This provides empirical evidence for the observation that the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a major catalyst for conspiracy theories, a process that has continued even after the end of the pandemic and persists to this day. Many of these theories link the pandemic to a secretive global elite or a "Deep State" orchestrating events from behind the scenes. These two themes form the nucleus around which other current conspiracy narratives revolve.

Surrounding this central cluster are distinct thematic groupings of conspiracy theories:

Climate Change and Geoengineering: Located in the upper left of the network, this cluster includes narratives about climate change being a hoax or manipulated, often linked to theories about geoengineering and weather manipulation (e.g., HAARP).

Big Tech and Free Speech: Another prominent cluster focuses on censorship, framed as an attack on free speech. Keywords such as "Big Tech" and "Social Media" highlight the frequent framing of content moderation and fact-checking as censorship by conspiracy theorists.

5G and Electromagnetic Fields (EMF): This cluster revolves around fears of harmful effects from 5G and other digital technologies, with "radiation" and "WiFi" as recurring keywords. These theories often link technological advances to health risks or government control.

Extraterrestrials and Secret Technology: Aliens, UFOs, and secret government programs feature prominently in this cluster, reflecting long-standing conspiracy narratives about extraterrestrial life and hidden technologies.

Child Exploitation and QAnon: A significant cluster focuses on child exploitation, pedophilia, and related theories such as adrenochrome harvesting. These narratives are often propagated by the QAnon movement, which alleges widespread child abuse orchestrated by elites. Adrenochrome, in particular, is tied to a belief that elites harvest the chemical from children for its purported life-extending properties.

Financial and Global Elites: Conspiracy theories about a "New World Order" and the "Great Reset" appear in this cluster, often linking global financial institutions and organizations like the World Economic Forum to plans for world domination. This narrative overlaps significantly with anti-elite and Deep State theories at the network's center.

The betweenness centrality of keywords like "Vaccine," "Deep State," and "Elite" illustrates their bridging role between otherwise distinct thematic clusters. These keywords function as "bridging narratives," connecting disparate conspiracy theories into a cohesive worldview. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic is not only central in its own right but also acts as a gateway to anti-elite narratives, claims about secret societies, and theories about technological and environmental manipulation. This highlights once again the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on distrust toward decision-makers, experts, media, and the state as a whole, as well as its connection to related conspiracy theories. As a result, this topic remains central to the election campaigns of far-right political movements.

This interconnectedness underscores the adaptability of conspiracy theories. Themes such as "Deep State" and "Elite" are particularly versatile, allowing believers to link seemingly unrelated topics like COVID-19, child exploitation, and climate change into a unified conspiracy worldview. The network vividly illustrates how conspiracy theories feed into one another, forming a self-reinforcing ecosystem of belief, driven by digital spaces.

7.1.3. The Expression of Moral Foundations in Telegram Messages

As described in section 5.1.1, the English-language Telegram dataset comprises a total of 449,621 posts collected over a one-year period, from September 2023 to September 2024. For the purposes of the Moral Foundations analysis, we filtered the dataset to include only text-based messages containing a minimum of 10 words, resulting in a subset of 170,117 messages, originating from 85 different Telegram channels. These messages were subsequently analyzed and classified according to the Moral Foundations Theory framework, using the methodological approach outlined in Section 4.2.

7.1.3.1. The Overall Moral Framing

Of the 170,117 messages, a total of 82,158 messages (48.3%) were assigned to at least one moral foundation, while 87,859 messages (51.7%) were not associated with any moral foundation.
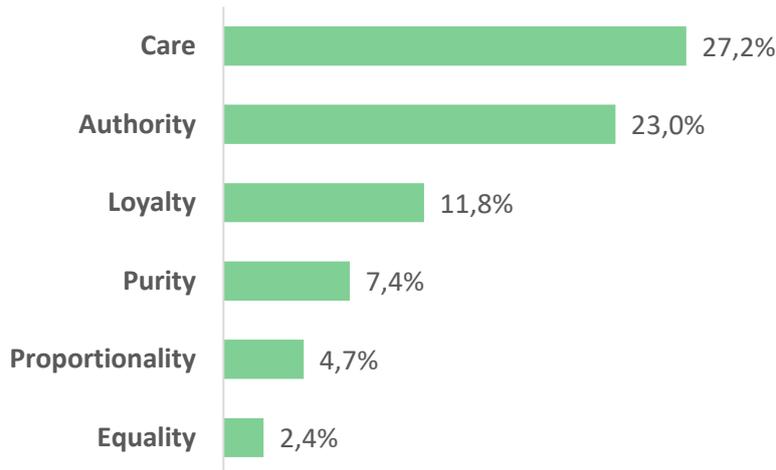
Figure 14 - Proportion of Moral Foundations in all text messages in percent (N = 170,017, Sept. 2023 to Sept. 2024)

Figure 14 illustrates the percentage distribution of text messages assigned to specific moral foundations within our dataset. Specifically, 27.2% of the 170,017 messages in the corpus were categorized under the Care Foundation, meaning that these messages, in some form, address themes related to care or the violation of care (e.g., harm or suffering). This makes the Care Foundation the most frequently occurring moral foundation in our dataset. It is followed by Authority (23.0%), Loyalty (11.8%), Purity (7.4%), Proportionality (4.7%), and Equality (2.4%).

The predominance of the Care Foundation aligns with findings from studies on moral foundations, which often highlight the universality of this dimension (Haidt, 2013, pp. 153ff.). Violations of care resonate widely across a broad range of topics, making it a versatile moral category that frequently appears in diverse forms of discourse. However, an interesting observation in this dataset is the prominence of Authority and Loyalty, ranking second and third, respectively. In contrast, Proportionality and Equality, which are sometimes grouped together under the broader category of Fairness, are the least frequent moral foundations discussed in the messages.

This distribution is noteworthy because Equality, a key aspect of Fairness, is traditionally associated with liberal or left-leaning political ideologies (ibid., 2013, pp. 158ff.). Conversely, Authority and Loyalty are more often linked to conservative or right-leaning ideologies, according to the framework proposed by Jonathan Haidt (ibid., pp. 153ff.). Given that the analyzed dataset originates predominantly from Telegram channels associated with conservative and far-right political spheres, the high frequency of Authority and Loyalty aligns with this ideological context. Overall, this distribution tends to underscore the robustness of our classification methodology in assigning moral foundations to the messages. The universal relevance of the Care Foundation explains its high prevalence, while the prominence of Authority and Loyalty reflects the political leanings of the data corpus.

7.1.3.2. The Moral Framing of Messages with specific Keywords

To explore whether Telegram messages addressing specific topics correlate with particular moral foundations, we analyzed messages containing at least one of 66 predefined keywords. Messages were grouped based on the presence of these keywords, and subsequently, the distribution of these messages across six moral foundations (Care, Proportionality, Equality, Authority, Loyalty, and Purity) was examined. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 15, Figure 16, and Figure 17.

Figure 15 reports the absolute number of Telegram messages associated with each keyword and their respective assignment to the six moral foundations. For example, there are 1,077 messages that contain the keyword "NWO" (New World Order). Among these, 170 messages were assigned to the Care foundation, 44 to Proportionality, 51 to Equality, 297 to Authority, 182 to Loyalty, and 58 to Purity. The remaining rows of the table similarly detail the distribution of messages for all other keywords. Table 16 presents the same data but expressed as row percentages. This allows for a comparative interpretation of the proportional assignment of moral foundations within each keyword group. Using "NWO" as an illustrative example, 15.8% of all messages containing this keyword were associated with the Care foundation, while 27.6% were linked to Authority. This perspective highlights the relative significance of each moral foundation within the keyword's specific context. Figure 16 illustrates the relationship between keywords and moral foundations in terms of overrepresentation or underrepresentation. This is achieved by calculating the difference between the percentage values in Figure 16 and the total percentage distribution of moral foundations (found in the bottom row "Total" of Figure 16). Positive values in Figure 17, represented by green bars, indicate that a particular keyword is associated with a given moral foundation more frequently than expected based on the overall distribution. Conversely, negative values, depicted with gray bars, indicate underrepresentation of the moral foundation for the respective keyword.

Cl.	Keyword	Care	Proport.	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Messages
1	NWO	170	44	51	297	182	58	1.077
1	Extraterrestrials	9	2	1	11	11	2	69
2	Free Speech	338	65	48	334	111	97	1.025
2	Mainstream Media (MSM)	547	74	49	430	190	170	1.593
2	Social Media	772	104	68	606	234	216	2.188
2	Big Tech	128	17	17	121	42	31	394
2	Hamas	2.700	370	178	1.867	826	724	7.431
2	Elite	635	105	99	594	275	198	2.128
2	Gaza	2.131	251	149	1.439	645	533	5.913
2	Israel	6.067	786	402	4.232	1.955	1.633	17.334
2	Electionfraud	164	24	15	159	67	52	554
2	Mossad	149	29	19	161	75	41	567
2	Elon Musk	764	118	61	599	284	213	2.484
2	Palestine	529	78	82	434	232	133	1.825
2	Censorship	389	64	52	365	135	120	1.402
2	China	3.319	430	157	2.616	1.224	878	10.902
2	Nine-Eleven	238	28	19	219	89	70	840
2	Scotus	237	32	11	188	79	65	782
2	Health	2.281	365	147	1.581	863	602	7.586
2	Globalist	814	164	99	879	458	242	3.514
2	Deep state	663	112	60	689	327	185	2.698
2	Epstein	804	106	76	666	290	246	2.915
2	Adrenochrome	158	22	46	178	85	57	734
2	World Economic Forum (WEF)	265	52	57	306	119	85	1.200
2	Immigration	506	79	47	415	220	135	1.905
2	Immigration	1.579	307	223	1.497	719	413	6.983
2	CIA	649	101	79	704	313	221	2.878
2	Covid	2.328	350	163	1.732	797	572	8.293
2	False Flag	89	14	13	94	37	23	378
2	Vaccine	1.861	286	113	1.350	622	440	6.568
2	Border	2.006	358	159	1.869	823	522	8.123
2	Ukraine	1.580	269	153	1.468	839	441	6.784
2	Russia	1.709	264	179	1.676	960	463	7.848
2	Inside Job	35	4	6	54	15	8	183
2	Inflation	296	66	30	273	122	80	1.313
2	Weather	166	20	5	118	50	51	655
2	Biden	7.380	1.289	576	6.569	3.266	1.969	33.926
2	Trump	13.510	2.396	870	12.096	6.602	3.741	67.536
2	Chemtrails	67	22	5	57	30	28	376
2	Clouds	76	20	4	56	35	25	407
3	Hezbollah	1.069	103	34	633	222	290	1.948
3	Pedophil	532	75	82	403	148	223	1.340
3	Child Abuse	152	12	11	93	37	41	327
3	Childtrafficking	447	73	68	334	137	149	1.144
4	Great Reset	62	16	31	86	35	22	270
4	LGBT	210	38	74	159	66	76	700
4	Transgender	308	53	86	224	99	113	998
4	Global Warming	36	12	9	37	16	18	152
4	Woke	362	71	81	315	149	102	1.353
4	Climate Change	249	73	39	184	93	68	899
4	Aliens	417	108	60	438	184	100	1.782
4	Twitter	4.086	1.646	1.302	5.603	3.257	1.100	28.329
5	Geoengineering	41	7	8	29	21	11	194
5	Cloning	115	19	22	155	102	36	832
5	Ufos	45	13	2	59	43	17	454
5	HAARP	12	3	2	22	16	7	160
5	5G	459	304	52	891	642	81	6.636
5	Reptilian	21	5	5	52	47	6	374
5	Electromagnetic fields (EMF)	458	310	49	898	676	84	6.817
5	Radiation	387	296	51	892	639	90	6.611
5	QAnon	100	28	6	186	184	28	1.519
5	Wifi	324	282	46	860	635	73	6.425
5	WWG1WGA	137	28	15	274	280	39	2.241
5	Area 51	7	0	1	1	3	0	40
6	**Total**	**46.142**	**7.994**	**4.011**	**39.094**	**20.011**	**12.587**	**169.893**

Figure 15 - Moral Foundations across Keywords – absolute numbers of Telegram posts (Sept. 2023-Sept. 2024, N = 169,893).

Cl.	Keyword	Care	Proport.	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Average
1	NWO	15,8%	4,1%	4,7%	27,6%	16,9%	5,4%	12,4%
1	Extraterrestrials	13,0%	2,9%	1,4%	15,9%	15,9%	2,9%	8,7%
2	Free Speech	33,0%	6,3%	4,7%	32,6%	10,8%	9,5%	16,1%
2	Mainstream Media (MSM)	34,3%	4,6%	3,1%	27,0%	11,9%	10,7%	15,3%
2	Social Media	35,3%	4,8%	3,1%	27,7%	10,7%	9,9%	15,2%
2	Big Tech	32,5%	4,3%	4,3%	30,7%	10,7%	7,9%	15,1%
2	Hamas	36,3%	5,0%	2,4%	25,1%	11,1%	9,7%	14,9%
2	Elite	29,8%	4,9%	4,7%	27,9%	12,9%	9,3%	14,9%
2	Gaza	36,0%	4,2%	2,5%	24,3%	10,9%	9,0%	14,5%
2	Israel	35,0%	4,5%	2,3%	24,4%	11,3%	9,4%	14,5%
2	Electionfraud	29,6%	4,3%	2,7%	28,7%	12,1%	9,4%	14,5%
2	Mossad	26,3%	5,1%	3,4%	28,4%	13,2%	7,2%	13,9%
2	Elon Musk	30,8%	4,8%	2,5%	24,1%	11,4%	8,6%	13,7%
2	Palestine	29,0%	4,3%	4,5%	23,8%	12,7%	7,3%	13,6%
2	Censorship	27,7%	4,6%	3,7%	26,0%	9,6%	8,6%	13,4%
2	China	30,4%	3,9%	1,4%	24,0%	11,2%	8,1%	13,2%
2	Nine-Eleven	28,3%	3,3%	2,3%	26,1%	10,6%	8,3%	13,2%
2	Scotus	30,3%	4,1%	1,4%	24,0%	10,1%	8,3%	13,0%
2	Health	30,1%	4,8%	1,9%	20,8%	11,4%	7,9%	12,8%
2	Globalist	23,2%	4,7%	2,8%	25,0%	13,0%	6,9%	12,6%
2	Deep state	24,6%	4,2%	2,2%	25,5%	12,1%	6,9%	12,6%
2	Epstein	27,6%	3,6%	2,6%	22,8%	9,9%	8,4%	12,5%
2	Adrenochrome	21,5%	3,0%	6,3%	24,3%	11,6%	7,8%	12,4%
2	World Economic Forum (WEF)	22,1%	4,3%	4,8%	25,5%	9,9%	7,1%	12,3%
2	Immigration	26,6%	4,1%	2,5%	21,8%	11,5%	7,1%	12,3%
2	CIA	22,6%	3,5%	2,7%	24,5%	10,9%	7,7%	12,0%
2	Covid	28,1%	4,2%	2,0%	20,9%	9,6%	6,9%	11,9%
2	False Flag	23,5%	3,7%	3,4%	24,9%	9,8%	6,1%	11,9%
2	Vaccine	28,3%	4,4%	1,7%	20,6%	9,5%	6,7%	11,9%
2	Border	24,7%	4,4%	2,0%	23,0%	10,1%	6,4%	11,8%
2	Ukraine	23,3%	4,0%	2,3%	21,6%	12,4%	6,5%	11,7%
2	Immigration	22,6%	4,4%	3,2%	21,4%	10,3%	5,9%	11,3%
2	Russia	21,8%	3,4%	2,3%	21,4%	12,2%	5,9%	11,2%
2	Inside Job	19,1%	2,2%	3,3%	29,5%	8,2%	4,4%	11,1%
2	Inflation	22,5%	5,0%	2,3%	20,8%	9,3%	6,1%	11,0%
2	Weather	25,3%	3,1%	0,8%	18,0%	7,6%	7,8%	10,4%
2	Biden	21,8%	3,8%	1,7%	19,4%	9,6%	5,8%	10,3%
2	Trump	20,0%	3,5%	1,3%	17,9%	9,8%	5,5%	9,7%
2	Chemtrails	17,8%	5,9%	1,3%	15,2%	8,0%	7,4%	9,3%
2	Clouds	18,7%	4,9%	1,0%	13,8%	8,6%	6,1%	8,8%
3	Hezbollah	54,9%	5,3%	1,7%	32,5%	11,4%	14,9%	20,1%
3	Pedophil	39,7%	5,6%	6,1%	30,1%	11,0%	16,6%	18,2%
3	Child Abuse	46,5%	3,7%	3,4%	28,4%	11,3%	12,5%	17,6%
3	Childtrafficking	39,1%	6,4%	5,9%	29,2%	12,0%	13,0%	17,6%
4	Great Reset	23,0%	5,9%	11,5%	31,9%	13,0%	8,1%	15,6%
4	LGBT	30,0%	5,4%	10,6%	22,7%	9,4%	10,9%	14,8%
4	Transgender	30,9%	5,3%	8,6%	22,4%	9,9%	11,3%	14,7%
4	Global Warming	23,7%	7,9%	5,9%	24,3%	10,5%	11,8%	14,0%
4	Woke	26,8%	5,2%	6,0%	23,3%	11,0%	7,5%	13,3%
4	Climate Change	27,7%	8,1%	4,3%	20,5%	10,3%	7,6%	13,1%
4	Aliens	23,4%	6,1%	3,4%	24,6%	10,3%	5,6%	12,2%
4	Twitter	14,4%	5,8%	4,6%	19,8%	11,5%	3,9%	10,0%
5	Geoengineering	21,1%	3,6%	4,1%	14,9%	10,8%	5,7%	10,1%
5	Cloning	13,8%	2,3%	2,6%	18,6%	12,3%	4,3%	9,0%
5	Ufos	9,9%	2,9%	0,4%	13,0%	9,5%	3,7%	6,6%
5	HAARP	7,5%	1,9%	1,3%	13,8%	10,0%	4,4%	6,5%
5	5G	6,9%	4,6%	0,8%	13,4%	9,7%	1,2%	6,1%
5	Reptilian	5,6%	1,3%	1,3%	13,9%	12,6%	1,6%	6,1%
5	Electromagnetic fields (EMF)	6,7%	4,5%	0,7%	13,2%	9,9%	1,2%	6,1%
5	Radiation	5,9%	4,5%	0,8%	13,5%	9,7%	1,4%	5,9%
5	QAnon	6,6%	1,8%	0,4%	12,2%	12,1%	1,8%	5,8%
5	Wifi	5,0%	4,4%	0,7%	13,4%	9,9%	1,1%	5,8%
5	WWG1WGA	6,1%	1,2%	0,7%	12,2%	12,5%	1,7%	5,7%
5	Area 51	17,5%	0,0%	2,5%	2,5%	7,5%	0,0%	5,0%
6	**Total**	**27,2%**	**4,7%**	**2,4%**	**23,0%**	**11,8%**	**7,4%**	**12,7%**

Figure 16 - Moral Foundations across Keywords – row percentages of Telegram posts (Sept. 2023-Sept. 2024, N = 169,893).

Cl.	Keyword	Care	Proport.	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Average
1	NWO	-11,4%	-0,6%	2,4%	4,6%	5,1%	-2,0%	-0,3%
1	Extraterrestrials	-14,1%	-1,8%	-0,9%	-7,1%	4,2%	-4,5%	-4,0%
2	Free Speech	5,8%	1,6%	2,3%	9,6%	-0,9%	2,1%	3,4%
2	Mainstream Media (MSM)	7,2%	-0,1%	0,7%	4,0%	0,1%	3,3%	2,5%
2	Social Media	8,1%	0,0%	0,7%	4,7%	-1,1%	2,5%	2,5%
2	Big Tech	5,3%	-0,4%	2,0%	7,7%	-1,1%	0,5%	2,3%
2	Hamas	9,2%	0,3%	0,0%	2,1%	-0,7%	2,3%	2,2%
2	Elite	2,7%	0,2%	2,3%	4,9%	1,1%	1,9%	2,2%
2	Gaza	8,9%	-0,5%	0,2%	1,3%	-0,9%	1,6%	1,8%
2	Israel	7,8%	-0,2%	0,0%	1,4%	-0,5%	2,0%	1,8%
2	Electionfraud	2,4%	-0,4%	0,3%	5,7%	0,3%	2,0%	1,7%
2	Mossad	-0,9%	0,4%	1,0%	5,4%	1,4%	-0,2%	1,2%
2	Elon Musk	3,6%	0,0%	0,1%	1,1%	-0,3%	1,2%	0,9%
2	Palestine	1,8%	-0,4%	2,1%	0,8%	0,9%	-0,1%	0,9%
2	Censorship	0,6%	-0,1%	1,3%	3,0%	-2,1%	1,2%	0,6%
2	China	3,3%	-0,8%	-0,9%	1,0%	-0,6%	0,6%	0,4%
2	Nine-Eleven	1,2%	-1,4%	-0,1%	3,1%	-1,2%	0,9%	0,4%
2	Scotus	3,1%	-0,6%	-1,0%	1,0%	-1,7%	0,9%	0,3%
2	Health	2,9%	0,1%	-0,4%	-2,2%	-0,4%	0,5%	0,1%
2	Globalist	-4,0%	0,0%	0,5%	2,0%	1,3%	-0,5%	-0,1%
2	Deep state	-2,6%	-0,6%	-0,1%	2,5%	0,3%	-0,6%	-0,2%
2	Epstein	0,4%	-1,1%	0,2%	-0,2%	-1,8%	1,0%	-0,2%
2	Adrenochrome	-5,6%	-1,7%	3,9%	1,2%	-0,2%	0,4%	-0,3%
2	World Economic Forum (WEF)	-5,1%	-0,4%	2,4%	2,5%	-1,9%	-0,3%	-0,5%
2	Immigration	-0,6%	-0,6%	0,1%	-1,2%	-0,2%	-0,3%	-0,5%
2	CIA	-4,6%	-1,2%	0,4%	1,5%	-0,9%	0,3%	-0,8%
2	Covid	0,9%	-0,5%	-0,4%	-2,1%	-2,2%	-0,5%	-0,8%
2	False Flag	-3,6%	-1,0%	1,1%	1,9%	-2,0%	-1,3%	-0,8%
2	Vaccine	1,2%	-0,4%	-0,6%	-2,5%	-2,3%	-0,7%	-0,9%
2	Border	-2,5%	-0,3%	-0,4%	0,0%	-1,6%	-1,0%	-1,0%
2	Ukraine	-3,9%	-0,7%	-0,1%	-1,4%	0,6%	-0,9%	-1,1%
2	Immigration	-4,5%	-0,3%	0,8%	-1,6%	-1,5%	-1,5%	-1,4%
2	Russia	-5,4%	-1,3%	-0,1%	-1,7%	0,5%	-1,5%	-1,6%
2	Inside Job	-8,0%	-2,5%	0,9%	6,5%	-3,6%	-3,0%	-1,6%
2	Inflation	-4,6%	0,3%	-0,1%	-2,2%	-2,5%	-1,3%	-1,7%
2	Weather	-1,8%	-1,7%	-1,6%	-5,0%	-4,1%	0,4%	-2,3%
2	Biden	-5,4%	-0,9%	-0,7%	-3,6%	-2,2%	-1,6%	-2,4%
2	Trump	-7,2%	-1,2%	-1,1%	-5,1%	-2,0%	-1,9%	-3,1%
2	Chemtrails	-9,3%	1,1%	-1,0%	-7,9%	-3,8%	0,0%	-3,5%
2	Clouds	-8,5%	0,2%	-1,4%	-9,3%	-3,2%	-1,3%	-3,9%
3	Hezbollah	27,7%	0,6%	-0,6%	9,5%	-0,4%	7,5%	7,4%
3	Pedophil	12,5%	0,9%	3,8%	7,1%	-0,7%	9,2%	5,5%
3	Child Abuse	19,3%	-1,0%	1,0%	5,4%	-0,5%	5,1%	4,9%
3	Childtrafficking	11,9%	1,7%	3,6%	6,2%	0,2%	5,6%	4,9%
4	Great Reset	-4,2%	1,2%	9,1%	8,8%	1,2%	0,7%	2,8%
4	LGBT	2,8%	0,7%	8,2%	-0,3%	-2,4%	3,4%	2,1%
4	Transgender	3,7%	0,6%	6,3%	-0,6%	-1,9%	3,9%	2,0%
4	Global Warming	-3,5%	3,2%	3,6%	1,3%	-1,3%	4,4%	1,3%
4	Woke	-0,4%	0,5%	3,6%	0,3%	-0,8%	0,1%	0,6%
4	Climate Change	0,5%	3,4%	2,0%	-2,5%	-1,4%	0,2%	0,4%
4	Aliens	-3,8%	1,4%	1,0%	1,6%	-1,5%	-1,8%	-0,5%
4	Twitter	-12,7%	1,1%	2,2%	-3,2%	-0,3%	-3,5%	-2,7%
5	Geoengineering	-6,0%	-1,1%	1,8%	-8,1%	-1,0%	-1,7%	-2,7%
5	Cloning	-13,3%	-2,4%	0,3%	-4,4%	0,5%	-3,1%	-3,7%
5	Ufos	-17,2%	-1,8%	-1,9%	-10,0%	-2,3%	-3,7%	-6,2%
5	HAARP	-19,7%	-2,8%	-1,1%	-9,3%	-1,8%	-3,0%	-6,3%
5	5G	-20,2%	-0,1%	-1,6%	-9,6%	-2,1%	-6,2%	-6,6%
5	Reptilian	-21,5%	-3,4%	-1,0%	-9,1%	0,8%	-5,8%	-6,7%
5	Electromagnetic fields (EMF)	-20,4%	-0,2%	-1,6%	-9,8%	-1,9%	-6,2%	-6,7%
5	Radiation	-21,3%	-0,2%	-1,6%	-9,5%	-2,1%	-6,0%	-6,8%
5	QAnon	-20,6%	-2,9%	-2,0%	-10,8%	0,3%	-5,6%	-6,9%
5	Wifi	-22,1%	-0,3%	-1,6%	-9,6%	-1,9%	-6,3%	-7,0%
5	WWG1WGA	-21,0%	-3,5%	-1,7%	-10,8%	0,7%	-5,7%	-7,0%
5	Area 51	-9,7%	-4,7%	0,1%	-20,5%	-4,3%	-7,4%	-7,7%
6	Total	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%

Figure 17 - Moral Foundations across Keywords – difference to average, (Sept. 2023-Sept. 2024, N = 169,893 posts).

To gain a clearer understanding of which keywords, and by extension the Telegram messages containing these keywords, exhibit similar patterns in the distribution of moral foundations, we reorganized the keywords in the tables. This was done by clustering the keywords based on their similarity in the distribution of values across the six moral foundations. The result is a table where keywords with similar moral foundation profiles are grouped together, making patterns and connections easier to interpret.

To achieve this reorganization, we employed a hierarchical clustering algorithm, specifically using the Ward method. The steps involved in this process are as follows:

- **Data Preparation**: The six moral foundation columns were extracted as features, with each keyword treated as an observation.
- **Normalization**: Values in each column were standardized using z-score normalization, ensuring all columns had a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1, removing scale bias.
- **Similarity Measurement**: We calculated Euclidean distances between keywords based on their standardized moral foundation values, measuring their similarity.
- **Hierarchical Clustering**: Using the Ward linkage method, keywords were grouped into clusters by minimizing variance within each cluster, based on total within-cluster sum of squares.
- **Cluster Assignment**: The optimal number of clusters was set to five, based on visual inspection of the dendrogram and interpretability. Each keyword was assigned to one of these clusters.
- **Rearrangement**: Keywords were reordered based on cluster assignments and their similarity within clusters, placing similar moral foundation profiles consecutively.
- **Result**: The reorganized table highlights thematic patterns and moral framing across keywords, facilitating comparative analysis and identifying relationships based on moral foundation distributions.

The clusters and their moral framing can be described as follows:

Cluster 1: The posts with the keywords NWO (New World Order) and Extraterrestrials demonstrate a strong correlation with the moral foundations of Authority and Loyalty. Messages containing the keyword "NWO" frequently reference global power structures, control, and the undermining of national sovereignty. These narratives resonate strongly with the Authority foundation, as they evoke concerns about legitimate governance, respect for traditional hierarchies, and challenges to perceived global elites. Simultaneously, these messages often frame their rhetoric in terms of allegiance to one's nation, culture, or ideological in-group, activating the Loyalty foundation by emphasizing solidarity against external threats or conspiratorial forces. Discussions about extraterrestrials often intersect with notions of belonging and unity, particularly when framed within conspiratorial contexts that highlight humanity's collective identity or threats from "outsiders." This aligns with the Loyalty foundation, as such narratives foster a sense of in-group cohesion against perceived external (even intergalactic) entities, reinforcing bonds within the group promoting the message.

Cluster 2 contains keywords associated with Care and Authority which span a wide range of topics, many of which are interconnected through narratives of social concern, power

structures, and moral dilemmas. These keywords can be grouped into several thematic categories, each revealing a distinct relationship between the moral foundations they address.

Keywords related to media and technology, such as "Free Speech," "Mainstream Media (MSM)," "Social Media," "Big Tech," and "Censorship," reflect a common narrative often found in conservative rhetoric: the belief that mainstream and public media, as well as large platforms, actively suppress free speech and restrict non-liberal opinions. These messages frame these entities as not only biased but also as wielding their authority to silence dissenting voices. This appeals to the moral foundation of Authority by challenging the legitimacy of these institutions and portraying them as betraying their responsibility to uphold fairness and open discourse, while also engaging Care by emphasizing the harm caused to those whose voices are marginalized.

Second, geopolitical and conflict-related keywords such as "Hamas," "Gaza," "Israel," "Palestine," "Ukraine," and "Russia" reflect discussions of war, displacement, and international relations. Messages referencing these terms often invoke the Care foundation by emphasizing human suffering, humanitarian crises, and the need for protection, while also appealing to Authority through discussions of political sovereignty, power dynamics, and geo-politics at a global level.

Another prominent category includes keywords related to conspiracy theories and elite power, such as "Deep State," "Globalist," "World Economic Forum (WEF)," "Epstein," and "Adrenochrome". These terms are commonly used in messaging that frames elites or secret organizations as abusing their authority, which resonates strongly with the moral foundation of Authority. At the same time, the framing often appeals to Care by presenting these figures or groups as oppressors of the vulnerable or ordinary people.

Public health and crisis-related terms, including "Covid," "Vaccine," "Health," "Inflation," and "Weather," tie into fears and concerns for personal well-being and collective safety, directly engaging the Care foundation. These topics often overlap with Authority when discussing and criticizing government policies and measures, perceived overreach, or failures to protect the public.

Finally, keywords referring to US politics such as "Biden," "Trump," "Election Fraud," "CIA," "Nine-Eleven," "Scotus," "False Flag," and "Inside Job" illustrate how **Authority** plays a significant role in narratives that critique the legitimacy of leadership and institutional power. These discussions often emphasize the perceived harm and threat posed by these institutions, with messages frequently framing them as undermining democracy and societal stability—particularly through alleged election fraud attributed to the Democrats during the 2020 US presidential election.

Cluster 3 includes keywords that, like those in Cluster 2, strongly engage the moral foundations of Care and Authority, but to a significantly greater extent. These keywords are the most morally charged in the dataset, meaning they exhibit the highest overall connection to moral foundations and moral framing. The four primary keywords in this cluster are Pedophile, Child Abuse, Child Trafficking, and references to the conflicts between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon following the Gaza War of 2014.

The keywords **Pedophile**, **Child Abuse**, and **Child Trafficking** are particularly notable for their extremely strong association with both the **Care** and **Authority** foundations. This is unsurprising given their thematic content. The connection to **Care** is evident, as these keywords focus on the harm, threat, or victimization of children, specifically addressing issues such as abuse, injury, death, or abduction. These are among the most emotionally charged topics, triggering a deep moral concern for the well-being of vulnerable individuals. The strong link to **Authority** stems from the narratives frequently found in the dataset, which often frame these issues as part of larger conspiracies involving powerful elites (a narrative typically for the QAnon movement), such as accusations against the US Democrats or other influential groups. These conspiracy-laden messages portray a betrayal of societal trust and a misuse of institutional power, further emphasizing the moral foundation of Authority. Additionally, the **Purity** foundation is notably engaged with these keywords. The focus on the violation of children's bodily integrity, often framed as an ultimate moral transgression, intensifies the emotional and moral response. The emphasis on purity reflects the symbolic importance placed on the sanctity and protection of children, amplifying the moral charge of these narratives.

The fourth keyword, which pertains to **conflicts between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon following the Gaza War of 2014**, also displays a strong connection to the Care and Authority foundations. Messages referencing this topic frequently highlight harm and suffering, particularly among civilians, thereby resonating with the **Care** foundation. Simultaneously, the **Authority** foundation is invoked in discussions about governance, military actions, and the broader implications of power and sovereignty in the context of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The emotional intensity of this topic further aligns it with the moral framing observed in this cluster.

Cluster 4 contains keywords such as Great Reset, LGBT, Transgender, Global Warming, Woke, Climate Change, and Aliens, which primarily address the Authority and Care foundations. Additionally, the first three keywords—LGBT, Transgender, and Woke—are strongly connected to the Equality foundation. The keywords in this cluster can be divided into two distinct thematic groups: conspiracy theories and "gender debate" from a conservative perspective, each engaging the moral foundations in unique ways. The first theme centers on conspiracy theories, including Great Reset, Global Warming, Climate Change, and even Aliens. These keywords align with the Authority foundation by critiquing or challenging institutional powers, such as governments, global organizations, and scientific institutions. Narratives surrounding the "Great Reset" often depict a secretive elite attempting to reshape societal structures, which resonates with a distrust of authority figures and questions their legitimacy. Similarly, the discussion of climate-related topics, such as Global Warming and Climate Change, often positions these issues within a conspiratorial framework, suggesting manipulation or exaggeration by governments or organizations to exert control over populations. These narratives also engage the Care foundation by emphasizing perceived harm—either by presenting climate change as a fabricated crisis diverting attention from other issues or by framing institutional responses as harmful to ordinary people's livelihoods or freedoms. Aliens, as a recurring trope, can similarly evoke Care by presenting external threats and Authority by questioning official narratives or governmental secrecy. The second theme revolves around discussions of "wokeness" in its broadest sense, including LGBT, Transgender, and Woke, primarily from a conservative

perspective. These keywords engage the Care foundation by focusing on perceived societal harm, often framing these issues as a threat to traditional family values, cultural norms, or children's well-being. The Authority foundation is also prominent in these narratives, as they critique institutions—such as governments, educational systems, or corporations—for promoting or enforcing progressive policies that conservatives perceive as overreach or as undermining traditional structures. Furthermore, these keywords are tied to the Equality foundation in the sense that they are based on a perceived injustice toward traditional gender norms.

Cluster 5: The rest of the keywords are characterized by a comparatively weaker association with moral framing than those in other clusters. However, when moral framing does appear, it is primarily linked to the **Authority** foundation. This aligns with the broader theme in Telegram messages involving disinformation and conspiracy theories, where distrust in authorities plays a central role. These messages frequently portray authorities as sources of conspiracies, harm, and responsibility for current negative developments, reinforcing the significance of the Authority foundation even within this cluster. In the case of keywords such as "Geoengineering," the **Care** foundation also comes into play, as the harm and damage attributed to geoengineering technologies are explicitly discussed. Despite these instances, the overall moral framing associated with the keywords and messages in Cluster 5 is relatively subdued compared to other clusters, making it the least morally charged group in the dataset.

7.1.3.3. Preliminary Conclusions

The analysis of Telegram messages containing specific keywords and their relationship to moral foundations reveals significant connection. This demonstrates that Telegram messages are not only vehicles for information or narratives but are also embedded within moral framing. These messages actively discuss moral values, highlight perceived violations of those values, and present their content within a moral framework. This moral framing is a critical factor in the emotional resonance of these messages, contributing to their success on social media platforms. Messages with strong emotional appeal are more likely to be read, shared, and amplified, aligning with the engagement-driven business models of social media platforms.

Two primary moral frames dominate the messages in this dataset: the Care/Harm Foundation and the Authority/Subversion Foundation. The Care/Harm Foundation is prominently invoked when the messages discuss events and the harm these events cause to individuals or groups. The Authority/Subversion Foundation, on the other hand, reflects the central role of distrust in authority figures and institutions, a hallmark of conspiracy theories and conspiracy-adjacent narratives. These messages often link harm to perceived conspiracies or deliberate actions by authorities, amplifying distrust in institutional power and governance.

Certain keywords are particularly morally charged. For example, terms related to child abuse, pedophilia, and child trafficking exhibit the strongest moral framing. These keywords not only engage the Care Foundation by addressing the harm inflicted on children but also the Authority Foundation through their association with alleged conspiracies involving elites or powerful groups. Additionally, these keywords strongly connect to the Purity Foundation, as they emphasize violations of the physical sanctity of children, evoking intense moral and emotional

responses. Similarly, keywords such as Transgender, LGBTQ, and Wokeness are highly polarizing and emotionally charged, frequently invoking moral frames that underline their contentious and divisive nature.

The analysis demonstrates that the methodology of assigning Telegram messages to moral frames is both valid and effective, yielding meaningful and relevant results. However, some relationships between keywords and moral foundations remain ambiguous. For example, certain keywords, particularly those in Cluster 5, exhibit weaker moral framing, limiting the interpretive insights that can be drawn. Moreover, some keywords might be expected to engage additional moral frames, but these connections are not as clearly evident in this dataset.

Regarding the broader context of this research, we observed that most Telegram messages analyzed here consist of high-volume news dissemination. The Telegram channels in question primarily function as alternative news platforms, intentionally positioning themselves in opposition to what they label as mainstream media. These messages are rather focused on delivering emotionalizing and polarizing reports rather than commenting on the events or narratives they describe. In Section 7.3.4, we will examine Daily Mail user comments with respect to their moral framing. This analysis is expected to reveal stronger and even more plausible connections between topics and moral framings. The reason for this is that comments written by readers and users tend to express moral emotions and moral framings more directly and to a much greater extent than the news-style dissemination observed in Telegram messages.

7.2. The German-language Telegram Messages

7.2.1. Topics

Within the initial German-language Telegram messages for the 2019 – 2022 period, the following main topics and semantic key clusters had been found (D4.1, p. 60ff.):

(1) **Cluster 1 – Esoteric Cluster**: Cosmos and Energy: This cluster focuses on cosmic activities and energetic frequencies, discussing the influence of solar phenomena and Schumann Resonances on human health and consciousness. It also touches upon the Mayan calendar and astrological themes.

(2) **Cluster 2 – Esoteric Cluster**: Alternative Medicine and Spirituality: This cluster blends alternative medicine with spiritual ideas, discussing natural remedies, the metaphysical significance of health, and esoteric knowledge. It critiques mainstream medicine and combines folklore with spiritual and health perspectives.

(3) **Cluster 3 – Esoteric Cluster**: Harmony and Empowerment: Messages in this cluster focus on spirituality, personal empowerment, and community solidarity. They emphasize self-expression, holistic health, environmental awareness, and the importance of collective action and tradition.

(4) **Cluster 4 – Esoteric Cluster**: Collective Awakening and Societal Critique: This cluster explores spiritual growth and societal critique, emphasizing self-reliance, empowerment, and activism. It adopts a more confrontational stance towards societal structures and calls for collective action and societal change.

(5) **Cluster 5 – Disbelief in COVID-19 and Vaccination Scepticism**: This cluster promotes skepticism towards COVID-19 vaccines and health policies, propagating conspiracy theories related to vaccine safety, 5G, and genetic manipulation. It expresses distrust in governments, media, and health authorities.

(6) **Cluster 6 – Geopolitics and the War in Ukraine**: Centered on the Russia-Ukraine war, this cluster presents a pro-Russian narrative, framing the conflict as a defense against Western influence. It critiques Western media and discusses the geopolitical and economic impacts of sanctions.

(7) **Cluster 7 – U.S. Politics and Elections**: This cluster focuses on U.S. politics, promoting conspiracy theories about the 2020 election, military loyalty, and the "deep state." It criticizes media bias and uses nationalistic rhetoric to emphasize patriotism.

(8) **Cluster 8 – COVID-19 Protest Movements**: This cluster reflects protests against COVID-19 restrictions, focusing on personal freedom and grassroots organization. It critiques government actions and media reporting, emphasizing local and decentralized activism.

(9) **Cluster 9 – Anti-government Protests**: This cluster highlights global anti-government protests, particularly against COVID-19 measures. It discusses civil unrest, police conduct, and broader political dissatisfaction, blending conspiracy theories and political critique.

(10) **Cluster 10 – "Vivoterra"**: This cluster originates from a single channel, "Vivoterra," which spreads a wide range of conspiracy theories including COVID-19, New World Order, and Satanism. It serves as a typical example of conspiracy theory propagation.

(11) **Cluster 11 – Conspiracy Theories, Partly in the Context of QAnon**: This cluster promotes QAnon and deep-state conspiracies, encouraging political activism and community building. It challenges mainstream narratives and emphasizes alternative viewpoints, particularly regarding health policies and global conspiracies.

(12) **Cluster 12 – Heterogeneous Conspiracy Cluster 1**: This cluster contains various conspiracy theories, discussing topics like social media, data privacy, climate change, election fraud, and geopolitical issues. The tone is sensationalist, blending facts with speculative claims.

(13) **Cluster 13 – Heterogeneous Conspiracy Cluster 2**: This cluster opposes COVID-19 restrictions and vaccinations, blending conspiracy theories with political and social dissent. It critiques media, governments, and emphasizes child welfare and economic strategies, advocating for individual rights and resistance.

(14) **Cluster 14 – Messages Removed by Telegram**: This cluster consists of messages removed due to violations of Telegram's terms of service or local laws and cannot be analyzed.

(15) **Cluster 15 – English-language Messages**: This cluster includes English-language messages discussing various topics such as U.S. politics, COVID-19, and the Russia-Ukraine war. Some channels act as brokers between German and English Telegram networks.

As with the English-language Telegram messages, we applied the same NLP tool as in section 7.1.1 to identify the most important topics in a random sample of German-language Telegram posts from September 2023 to September 2024. The following themes emerged:

Geopolitical Tensions and Anti-Western Sentiment: The messages reveal a strong critique of Western powers, especially the U.S., NATO, and the EU, which are portrayed as instigators of global conflicts. The Russia-Ukraine war, particularly, is a focal point where NATO's expansion, Germany's military alignment, and financial support are criticized. Many see Western involvement as destabilizing, with a perceived risk of escalation toward a broader war. This topic also touches on claims that Western media and political structures work to promote a one-sided narrative on these conflicts, amplifying distrust.

COVID-19, Vaccine Skepticism, and Public Health Misinformation: Many messages still express deep suspicion toward COVID-19 vaccination campaigns and broader public health measures. Frequent claims include negative health impacts such as cardiac issues allegedly caused by mRNA vaccines. Some messages present a narrative of governmental and pharmaceutical overreach, portraying pandemic measures as manipulative, while alternative health practices are promoted. This distrust extends into wider conspiracy theories regarding health control by elite groups, further challenging institutional health advisories.

Economic Decline, Inflation, and Policy Critique (mainly) in Germany: Economic hardship is a recurring concern, with messages pointing to Germany's increasing inflation, rising energy costs, and general economic instability. The German automotive sector, heavily impacted by energy policies, is a particular point of concern. These economic challenges are often linked to EU-wide green initiatives and policies on renewable energy, which are portrayed as financially unsustainable and damaging to industrial sectors. Many messages criticize these policies as unrealistic and detrimental to job security and economic growth.

Migration Policy and National Identity: Concerns around immigration, integration, and resource allocation are significant themes. Messages often critique Germany's migration policy, arguing that mass immigration threatens German cultural identity and places undue strain on public resources. Some propose remigration policies as a solution to preserve national identity and social cohesion, with discussions frequently framed from a nationalist perspective, highlighting perceived cultural and security impacts.

Environmental and Climate Policy Criticism: Many messages express skepticism about environmental policies, often labeling them as impractical and financially burdensome. The EU's push for a "Green Agenda" is criticized as a means of over-regulating and imposing constraints on citizens and businesses rather than effectively addressing climate change. There is a common sentiment that these policies disproportionately benefit corporate interests while eroding personal freedoms and increasing taxpayer burdens.

Media Distrust and Alleged Censorship: A profound distrust in mainstream media is evident, with accusations that media outlets are complicit in censoring dissenting voices and promoting state-aligned narratives. Topics such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, COVID-19, and migration policy are perceived as areas where alternative perspectives are marginalized. These messages often advocate for independent journalism and freedom of speech as countermeasures against perceived media manipulation.

Digital Surveillance and Privacy Concerns: Messages reflect fears of increased government surveillance, especially regarding the EU's digital identity initiatives. This topic includes

anxieties around privacy loss and digital monitoring, often viewed as tools for potential population control. Digital IDs and similar technological measures are seen as steps toward a "digital dictatorship" that infringes on individual liberties.

Right-Wing Populism and Nationalist Movements: There is notable support for right-wing populist movements within Germany and across Europe. Many view these movements as responses to socio-economic issues such as migration, economic insecurity, and general dissatisfaction with mainstream political parties. These groups are often portrayed as defenders of traditional values and national sovereignty.

Social and Cultural Shifts: A recurring theme is resistance to progressive social movements, especially those related to gender diversity, family structures, and identity politics. These messages often reflect a sense of cultural disorientation, portraying progressive values as threats to traditional norms and social stability. Discussions also include criticism of media and educational portrayals of gender and diversity, with calls to preserve traditional family roles and values.

Alternative Health Remedies and Modern Medicine Critique: Alongside vaccine skepticism, there is significant support for alternative health practices, such as natural remedies and self-healing approaches. These views often challenge the legitimacy of the pharmaceutical industry and conventional medicine, depicting them as profit-driven rather than genuinely focused on public well-being. The discourse promotes alternative approaches as more aligned with natural and holistic health.

All in all, the messages express a profound sense of distrust toward established institutions, including governments, international alliances, media, and corporations. This skepticism frequently extends to conspiracy theories that suggest hidden agendas and manipulative motives behind global events, public health measures, and economic policies. Many of these messages convey frustration, anger, anxiety, and a sense of cultural disorientation, often rooted in fears of losing national identity, personal freedoms, and traditional values. The overall tone reflects a growing disillusionment and a desire for independence from perceived control by elites and mainstream authorities. Feelings of defensiveness and a call for autonomy resonate throughout, emphasizing a strong resistance to transformation or change imposed by external forces. Between the two periods analyzed, there are notable shifts in thematic focus and intensity in the Telegram messages. While for both periods Covid-19 (scepticism towards vaccines and critique of pandemic measures) still is an important topic, and both corpora of messages contain scepticism toward mainstream medicine, governmental authority, and societal structures, the second period (2023-2024) introduces several distinct topics and amplifies certain themes: A new focus has emerged around economic instability, particularly in Germany, linked to rising inflation, energy costs, and the impacts on the automotive industry. This discussion is tied to criticism of EU-driven green initiatives, perceived as economically damaging and a threat to job security. Furthermore, the 2023-2024 period sees a strong emphasis on migration, with messages expressing concern over immigration's impact on German cultural identity and public resources. Discussions often advocate for remigration policies to preserve national cohesion, framed in nationalist terms. Environmental policies, particularly the EU's "Green Agenda," are criticized as impractical and financially draining, allegedly prioritizing corporate

interests over individual freedoms. This marks a shift from earlier esoteric environmental themes to more politically charged scepticism. Privacy and surveillance concerns, especially around the EU's digital identity initiatives, feature prominently in this period, with fears that digital IDs represent steps toward increased population control and a "digital dictatorship." There is often marked support for right-wing populist movements, viewed as protectors of traditional values and national sovereignty. This theme reflects a response to economic and social dissatisfaction, positioning these movements as alternatives to mainstream politics. The new messages show resistance to progressive social movements, including gender diversity and modern family structures, framing them as destabilizing to traditional norms.

7.2.2. Conspiracy Theories

Many topics in German-language Telegram posts are closely interwoven with conspiracy theories or elements thereof. We determine them with the approach described in section 0. In the random sample of 1,000 messages, the following conspiracy theories appear most frequently:

COVID-19 and Vaccine Conspiracies: Again, the COVID-19 pandemic is frequently portrayed in these messages as a manufactured crisis designed to justify government overreach and population control. A recurring claim suggests that Long-COVID is not a natural consequence of the virus but rather an effect of mRNA vaccines, which are depicted as dangerous and intentionally harmful. Some messages assert that health authorities deliberately misled the public by downplaying severe vaccine side effects. The overarching narrative frames COVID-19 policies as crimes against humanity, accusing governments and pharmaceutical companies of suppressing alternative treatments to maintain their influence. This distrust extends to mainstream media, which is perceived as complicit in silencing critical voices and promoting a false pandemic narrative. These claims align with broader skepticism toward institutional authority and reinforce the belief that citizens must seek out "hidden truths" in alternative media channels.

Global Elite / Deep State Control: A dominant narrative in these messages revolves around the idea that a hidden global elite, including organizations like the World Economic Forum (WEF), BlackRock, and the Illuminati, exerts total control over governments, the media, and financial institutions. This elite is often accused of using crises—whether pandemics, wars, or economic downturns—to advance a premeditated agenda that prioritizes their own power at the expense of ordinary citizens. WEF founder Klaus Schwab's "Great Reset" is frequently referenced as evidence of a long-term plan to restructure society in a way that benefits global corporations and restricts individual freedoms. Many messages express concerns about digital surveillance, claiming that measures such as digital currencies, vaccine passports, and social credit systems are being introduced to establish an authoritarian control grid. There is also a strong belief that free speech is under systematic attack, with mainstream platforms allegedly censoring dissenting opinions to suppress opposition to this elite-driven agenda. The messages encourage followers to seek out alternative news sources and reject mainstream narratives, reinforcing a deep skepticism toward official institutions.

Anti-Government and Censorship Narratives: Another recurring theme in these messages is the belief that governments are actively suppressing dissent and controlling public opinion through censorship and media manipulation. Protest movements are often portrayed as being deliberately undermined, with claims that authorities use legal and technological means to restrict demonstrations and silence opposition. Many messages warn of a future where digital surveillance mechanisms—such as social credit systems or restricted online speech—will be used to monitor and punish those who challenge official narratives. The mainstream media is depicted as a tool of the state, fabricating news and amplifying government propaganda while silencing independent journalists who expose inconvenient truths. Some messages go further, alleging that artificial intelligence is being deployed to generate fake news and manipulate public perception. The concept of "hate speech" is frequently framed as a pretext for censorship, with governments accused of labeling legitimate criticism as dangerous rhetoric to justify crackdowns on free expression. As a result, these messages encourage distrust in traditional news sources and advocate for alternative communication platforms where uncensored discussions can take place.

Financial Conspiracies and Economic Collapse: Some messages suggest that financial crises are not random events but deliberate moves by global powers to introduce new economic control systems. There are frequent warnings about "Black Swan" financial events, predicting an imminent banking collapse that will be used as a pretext for tighter regulations and centralized digital currencies. The European Union is often portrayed as secretly planning a digital financial system to monitor and restrict individual transactions. Some messages claim that BRICS nations are attempting to undermine Western economic dominance, positioning themselves as an alternative to a corrupt global order. Overall, the narrative frames the financial system as a tool for elite control, designed to keep citizens in perpetual debt and dependency.

Climate Change as a Hoax: Further messages claim that climate change is either exaggerated or a fabricated crisis used to justify political control. Activists are often portrayed as tools of the elite, pushing an agenda that benefits global corporations and policymakers rather than the environment. The shutdown of Tesla's factory is framed as a victory, reinforcing the belief that green policies harm ordinary citizens while serving powerful interests. There is frequent mention of the "climate lie," with CO_2 regulations seen as a means to restrict personal freedoms and impose financial burdens. Some messages suggest that climate protests are orchestrated events, used to manufacture public support for policies that primarily serve globalist goals.

Alternative Medicine and Crisis Preparedness: Finally, many messages suggest that governments and pharmaceutical companies deliberately suppress natural remedies to protect Big Pharma's profits. Alternative health products and survivalist supplies are frequently promoted as essential for those seeking to avoid reliance on mainstream medicine. There is a strong link between crisis preparedness and distrust in official institutions, with the idea that self-sufficiency is the only way to stay independent from a corrupt system. Some messages imply that vital health information is being hidden from the public, reinforcing skepticism toward conventional medical advice and encouraging reliance on alternative sources.

The analysis of the German-language Telegram messages reveals a strong focus on conspiracy narratives, particularly around COVID-19, global elite control, government censorship, geopolitical manipulation, financial collapse, climate change, and alternative medicine. These messages again align with well-documented misinformation trends, reinforcing skepticism toward mainstream institutions and promoting alternative information ecosystems. A core theme is the belief that powerful actors—whether governments, corporations, or secret elites—are systematically deceiving the public for their own benefit.

We have to add that Telegram channels in this dataset often function as alternative news platforms, distributing content in a structured, media-like format. Many messages resemble news bulletins, featuring event notifications, article links, and video recommendations from alternative, in some cases also from "mainstream" sources. This networked dissemination of information strengthens the credibility of the narratives by positioning them as legitimate news rather than opinion or speculation.

A defining characteristic of these messages is their highly emotional tone. Many are written in an urgent, dramatic, and sensationalist style, frequently conveying fear, anger, and distrust. They emphasize existential threats—such as government oppression, economic collapse, or health risks—often using alarmist language to provoke strong emotional reactions. This rhetorical style plays a key role in reinforcing engagement, encouraging distrust in official narratives, and fostering a sense of crisis and urgency among readers. We will return to this in D4.3 (sentiment analysis).

7.3. The Dail Mail User Comments

From the complete dataset of Daily Mail comments, we extracted a random sample of 150,000 user comments. This sample size is deemed sufficiently large to capture the breadth of topics, conspiracy theories, sentiments, and moral foundations that we aim to investigate. At the same time, 150,000 comments remain a manageable quantity for the Natural Language Processing (NLP) methods we intend to use for measuring emotions and identifying the relevant moral foundations. This balance between breadth of content and computational feasibility makes the sample appropriate for our analytical objectives.

The following table shows the number of articles and user comments in our analysis sample listed by the Daily Mail's own content categories:

Category	Articles	Articles %	Comments	Comments %
News	33.918	55,7%	99.357	66,2%
Tvshowbiz	11.138	18,3%	18.078	12,1%
Femail	4.584	7,5%	10.237	6,8%
Sport	6.149	10,1%	10.007	6,7%
Debate	1.128	1,9%	4.642	3,1%
Health	1.110	1,8%	2.769	1,8%
Money	1.245	2,0%	2.262	1,5%
Sciencetech	1.276	2,1%	2.101	1,4%
Travel	141	0,2%	182	0,1%
Home	111	0,2%	160	0,1%
Property	78	0,1%	126	0,1%
Columnists	6	0,0%	35	0,0%
Galleries	14	0,0%	20	0,0%
Mailonsunday	1	0,0%	12	0,0%
Ushome	2	0,0%	5	0,0%
Usshowbiz	5	0,0%	5	0,0%
Wires	2	0,0%	2	0,0%
Total	**60.908**	**100,0%**	**150.000**	**100,0%**

Figure 18 – Dail Mail analysis sample

7.3.1. Detection of Key Topics

To ensure a comprehensive identification of topics, we took another random sample of 1,000 messages from the dataset and analyzed them using advanced Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques (topic modelling) (Grootendorst, 2022). This process was repeated ten times to verify the consistency of the results and to ensure that all relevant topics were thoroughly captured. By applying this iterative sampling and analysis, we aimed to account for the diversity of discussions present in the dataset, providing a robust basis for the identification of key themes, conspiracy theories, sentiments, and moral foundations across the user comments. This repeated sampling approach ensures that the topics identified are representative of the broader dataset.

These are the most important topics discussed in the user comments on articles:

1. **Royal Family and Monarchy:** This topic centers on discussions about the British royal family, including individual members and their roles within the monarchy. It involves debates over the relevance and influence of the monarchy in contemporary society, as well as public opinions on various royal figures and their actions. This topic also often touches on broader historical contexts and the symbolism of the royal family as an institution.
2. **Vaccination and COVID-19:** This topic includes discussions about vaccination efforts, the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its impact on public health. It encompasses debates on government responses to the pandemic, vaccine efficacy and safety, public compliance with health measures, and broader societal impacts of the pandemic, such as economic disruptions and restrictions on movement.
3. **Brexit and UK-EU Relations:** This topic addresses the ongoing political, economic, and social implications of the UK's departure from the European Union. Discussions often focus on the effects of Brexit on trade, immigration, and political relationships between the UK

and EU member states. The topic also covers the domestic consequences for the UK, including changes to border controls and shifts in the labor market.

4. **US Politics and the Biden Administration:** This topic examines current events in the United States, particularly focusing on political divisions, policy decisions, and the actions of the Biden administration. It includes discussions of previous administrations and elections, party politics, legislative priorities, and controversies surrounding political leaders. Domestic and foreign policy issues are also central to these discussions.

5. **Immigration and Refugee Crisis:** This topic covers the political and humanitarian aspects of immigration policies and the global refugee crisis. Discussions frequently explore the challenges of managing immigration, including border security, legal frameworks, asylum procedures, and the socioeconomic impact of migration on host countries. It also touches on the ethical dimensions of how migrants and refugees are treated.

6. **Cancel Culture and Free Speech:** This topic focuses on societal debates over the limits of free speech and the consequences of controversial opinions or actions. Discussions often revolve around the practice of "canceling" individuals or organizations deemed to have violated social norms, as well as the broader implications of these actions for democratic discourse, cultural expression, and media representation.

7. **Climate Change and Environmentalism:** This topic involves discussions on global environmental challenges, particularly climate change and efforts to mitigate its effects. It addresses the political, technological, and societal responses to environmental degradation, including debates on sustainable energy, the reduction of carbon emissions, and the responsibility of governments, corporations, and individuals to act on climate issues.

8. **Economic Policies and Inflation:** This topic centers on macroeconomic policies, particularly those affecting inflation, taxation, and employment. It includes discussions on the impacts of government spending, monetary policy, and regulatory frameworks on living costs, wages, and economic growth. Concerns over rising prices, fiscal responsibility, and job market dynamics are prominent.

9. **Media Bias and Journalism:** This topic examines the role of media in shaping public perception, with a focus on accusations of bias, misinformation, and sensationalism in journalism. Discussions often scrutinize how news outlets cover political, social, and economic issues, and the extent to which media influences public discourse. Issues surrounding press freedom and ethical journalism are also explored.

10. **Crime and Law Enforcement:** This topic encompasses discussions on criminal justice, law enforcement practices, and public safety. It includes debates on policing policies, criminal justice reforms, sentencing practices, and responses to crime. The relationship between law enforcement and marginalized communities, as well as broader societal attitudes toward crime and punishment, are key components.

11. **Gender Issues and Feminism:** This topic addresses discussions on gender equality, feminism, and related social justice movements. It covers debates on gender identity, women's rights, and discrimination, as well as broader issues of sexism and societal roles based on gender. The topic also examines how feminist discourse intersects with other social movements and policies.

12. **Sports and Athletes:** This topic covers discussions related to sports events, athletes, and their societal impact. It includes analysis of sportsmanship, the role of athletes as public

figures, and controversies in the world of sports. Topics such as team performance, athletic achievements, and management decisions are commonly explored, along with broader debates on the commercialization and politics of sports.

13. **Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism:** This topic involves discussions of various conspiracy theories and the broader skepticism surrounding political and scientific institutions. It includes debates on the validity of claims about secret agendas, government cover-ups, and mistrust in official narratives. The role of misinformation and the impact of these theories on public discourse are also central to this topic.

14. **Housing and Property Issues:** This topic focuses on the challenges of housing affordability, real estate markets, and property ownership. Discussions include debates over rental prices, housing shortages, urban planning, and government regulations affecting the housing sector. The social and economic impacts of housing inequality and the role of policy in addressing these challenges are frequently explored.

7.3.2. Identification of Conspiracy Theories

We observe that conspiracy theories form a distinct thematic area that emerges within the discussions surrounding Daily Mail articles. An analysis of the connections between thematic areas will reveal which categories of articles and topics provide points of intersection for conspiracy theories. By identifying these links, we can better understand how conspiracy theories are integrated into broader discussions and which specific themes or articles tend to foster or encourage their emergence.

In reviewing user comments, several prominent conspiracy theories emerge, with a strong focus on COVID-19 and global political events. A well-known, recurring theme is the belief that COVID-19 vaccines are not legitimate medical interventions but are instead part of a broader, nefarious plan by global elites to control populations. This theory often characterizes vaccines as "experimental gene therapy" or dangerous medical experiments rather than scientifically approved treatments. Many comments suggest that the vaccines contain harmful components, such as "spike proteins," that purportedly cause long-term health effects, particularly affecting reproductive organs like ovaries and testicles, which leads to fears about mass infertility.

The idea that the pandemic itself was orchestrated or exaggerated is also frequently mentioned, with commenters referring to it as a "plandemic." This term reflects the belief that COVID-19 is part of a deliberate strategy by powerful global players, often identified as elites, to implement widespread control measures. These elites are frequently linked to organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and influential gatherings like the Davos Group. Users express concerns that these entities are manipulating the crisis to extend governmental and corporate control over individual freedoms, and there is often a suspicion that governments are using the pandemic to usher in a "New World Order" (NWO) or similar global governance schemes.

There is also considerable skepticism surrounding government-imposed health measures like mask mandates, lockdowns, and vaccine passports. These are often interpreted not as

necessary responses to a public health crisis but as mechanisms for increasing surveillance and control. Many comments argue that the restrictions were intentionally excessive and pro-longed, with claims that the virus is no more dangerous than the flu. Common terms include "authoritarianism," "control," and "loss of freedom". Some users assert that governments worldwide, particularly in Western democracies, are using the crisis as a pretext to infringe on civil liberties permanently.

Another frequently discussed theory is the idea that COVID-19 was deliberately released by China as part of a covert war strategy. This theory posits that the virus was intentionally de-ployed to weaken the U.S. economy and remove Donald Trump from power. The narrative suggests that China's government aimed to manipulate the global political landscape by re-leasing the virus, and there is often a focus on how the outbreak coincided with U.S. elections. In this context, the virus is seen not as a natural occurrence but as a bioweapon used to un-dermine the West, with particular emphasis on the notion that the Chinese government ben-efited from Trump's electoral defeat.

These conspiracy theories are frequently linked to a broader distrust of mainstream media and official narratives. Many commenters express the belief that the media, along with govern-ments and international health organizations, are actively suppressing "the truth" about COVID-19's origins, the effectiveness of vaccines, and the real motivations behind public health measures. The term "media control" is commonly used to describe what users see as a coor-dinated effort to mislead the public and push certain agendas, including mandatory vaccina-tions and the erosion of individual freedoms. Social media platforms are also often accused of "censorship" for removing content that contradicts official health advice, further fueling dis-trust.

Additionally, the involvement of public figures such as Dr. Anthony Fauci is frequently cited in these conspiracy theories. Dr. Fauci, along with other global health officials, is portrayed as part of the conspiracy, either by allegedly downplaying alternative treatments or by being overly complicit in vaccine campaigns that some commenters claim are unsafe or unnecessary. Fauci is also frequently criticized for his role in previous health crises, and some commenters link him to the supposed ongoing control efforts by global elites.

Overall, the conspiracy theories expressed in the comments reflect a deep mistrust of govern-ments, health organizations, and the media. They paint a picture of a world where the COVID-19 pandemic is being used as a tool to implement long-term societal control, diminish personal freedoms, and reshape global politics under the influence of an elite few. The recurring key-words in this context include "NWO," "plandemic," "control," "freedom," "global elites," "cen-sorship," and "media manipulation." These terms underscore the central belief expressed in some of the comments that the pandemic is an orchestrated event designed to serve the in-terests of powerful groups at the expense of the general population.

7.3.3. Keywords and Keyword Network

The analysis of the Daily Mail user comments dataset has revealed the dominant and particularly virulent topics discussed in these comments. For further analyses, the focus lies on associating the articles with these topics based on their user comments. To achieve this, we defined a specific set of keywords for each identified topic. For instance, in the context of the Royal Family and Monarchy, keywords such as "Harry" and "Meghan" are expected. Similarly, for the topic of Vaccination and COVID-19, keywords include "Vaccines" and "COVID-19." For Brexit, the keyword "Brexit" is naturally central, and so on.

In total, 84 keywords were identified to represent these thematic clusters. The Daily Mail articles corresponding to the user comments were then examined to identify whether these keywords appeared within the comments, allowing for classification of the comments by topic. In total, these keywords can be found in 52,717 articles. The following table displays the keywords based on their frequency of occurrence in the user comments:

Rank	Label	Count	Rank	Label	Count	Rank	Label	Count
1	Vaccine	8.165	30	Sport	599	59	Fake News	179
2	Covid	6.751	31	Female	594	60	Refugees	177
3	Trump	4.091	32	Property	593	61	Big Pharma	177
4	Biden	3.046	33	William	591	62	Athlete	174
5	Women	2.758	34	Charles	541	63	Catherine	154
6	EU	2.480	35	Justice	505	64	Astrazeneca	149
7	Police	2.455	36	Conspiracy	492	65	Globalists	142
8	Health	2.331	37	Obama	458	66	Dictatorship	137
9	Harry	2.295	38	Elite	443	67	UN	133
10	Masks	2.129	39	Pfizer	414	68	Champions League	128
11	Democrats	2.119	40	Kamala	410	69	Global Warming	126
12	Wokeness	1.830	41	Climate Change	406	70	Camilla	123
13	Lockdown	1.639	42	Royals	370	71	Cancel Culture	121
14	Pandemic	1.576	43	Housing	369	72	Great Reset	114
15	NHS	1.528	44	Immigration	366	73	NWO	104
16	Prices	1.525	45	Fauci	347	74	Manipulation	87
17	Brexit	1.517	46	Inflation	342	75	Windsor	85
18	Border	1.416	47	Left Wing	321	76	Gene Therapy	74
19	Queen	1.305	48	MSM	300	77	WEF	73
20	Meghan	1.204	49	Snowflakes	283	78	Big Tech	65
21	Football	1.092	50	WHO	275	79	World Order	55
22	Freedom	1.044	51	Antivaxx	267	80	Spike Protein	48
23	Republicans	988	52	Gender	260	81	Terrorism	43
24	Crime	913	53	Carbon	259	82	Plandemic	40
25	Economy	875	54	Right Wing	242	83	Davos	32
26	Taxes	781	55	PCR	210	84	Feminism	22
27	Immigrant	742	56	Free Speech	201	85	Global Reset	11
28	Prison	631	57	Premier League	187	86	Censorship	2
29	Trade	611	58	Clinton	183			

Figure 19 – Keywords by frequency of occurrence in the Daily Mail user comments (2021, N = 52,717).

Figure 20 illustrates the co-occurrence network of these keywords. In this network, the keywords are represented as nodes, while the connections between them indicate Pearson

correlations. These correlations reflect the probability that two terms appear together in a single user comment. Stronger relationships between terms are indicated by stronger (and darker) connections, signifying a higher likelihood of co-occurrence. To capture only the strongest relationships and identify the key semantic clusters, the five most important connections for each keyword were selected and visualized. The figure, therefore, represents the semantic structure of the network, clearly delineating distinct thematic clusters.

On the left side of the network, we observe a cluster focused on economic topics, including keywords such as "Inflation," "Housing," and "Prices." This cluster is tightly connected to another cluster related to migration. The migration cluster contains terms such as "Immigrant," "Refugees," "EU," and "Border." The keyword "EU" serves as a bridge from this cluster to a further critical cluster dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic cluster includes keywords such as "Vaccines," "Pfizer," "AstraZeneca," and "Masks." Adjacent to the COVID-19 cluster is a cluster centered around conspiracy theories, linked through the keyword "Conspiracy." This conspiracy cluster consists of terms such as "Great Reset," "Davos," "World Economic Forum," and "New World Order." Interestingly, this cluster is directly connected to another dealing with climate change. The keyword "Climate Change" appears frequently in the context of conspiracy theories, often alongside the term "Elite," which acts as a bridge to additional thematic clusters. On the far right of the network, a clearly defined cluster addresses the Royal Family topic. This cluster includes densely interconnected terms such as "Harry," "Meghan," "William," and "Queen." Another cluster focuses on sports, with keywords like "Football," "Champions League," and "Premier League." Interestingly, this cluster forms a connection (via the triad "sport" – "women" – "female") to a cluster addressing gender topics and discussions around (perceived) "wokeness". The gender and "wokeness" cluster includes terms such as "Female," "Women," "Gender," and "Wokeness." The keyword "Wokeness" further bridges this cluster to one dealing with the perceived injustices surrounding "Cancel culture," a term which is strongly connected with "right-wing," whereas "left-wing" is strongly connected with "snowflakes," a term often used pejoratively to describe individuals perceived as overly sensitive or easily offended.

Toward the left of the network lies a cluster focused on U.S. politics, particularly the presidency of Joe Biden. Keywords such as "Trump," "Republicans," and "Democrats" frequently appear in this section. Nearby, another prominent cluster focuses on themes of justice, crime, and law enforcement, incorporating terms such as "Justice," "Crime," "Prison," and "Police."

The semantic structure of this network highlights the thematic interconnections among user comments, providing a foundation for classifying comments by topic. These classifications will enable further investigations into how these themes correlate with discussions around moral foundations and their (perceived) violation as well as to sentiments and moral emotions.
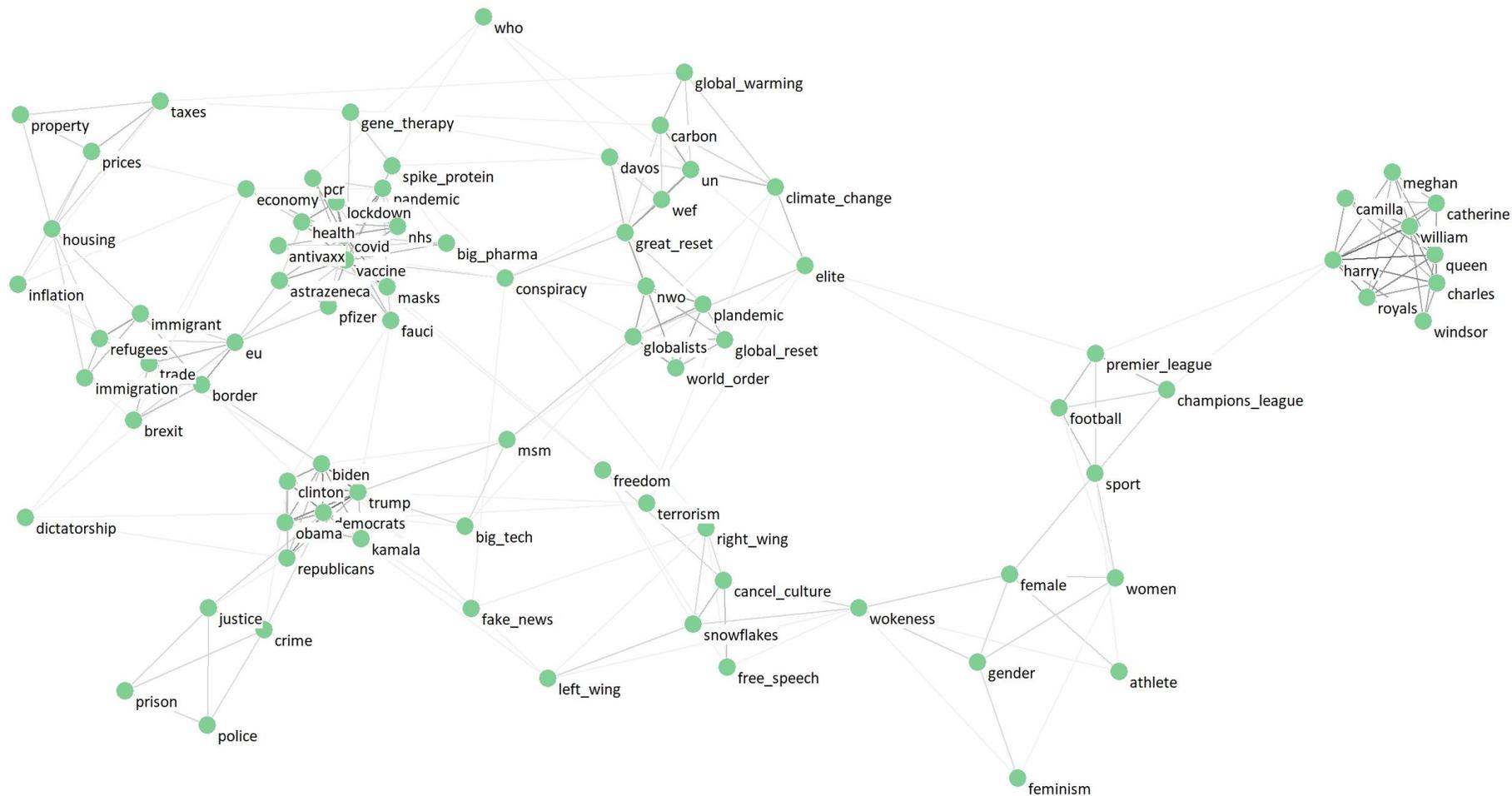
Figure 20 – Co-occurrence network based on Pearson correlations among keywords in Daily Mail user comments (2021, N = 52,717)

7.3.4. The Expression of Moral Foundations in Daily Mail User Comments

7.3.4.1. The Frequencies of Moral Foundations

This section examines the presence and discussion of moral foundations within user comments on articles published on the Daily Mail website. Specifically, we explore which moral foundations are expressed or which violations are discussed in the comments made by readers. As outlined in Section 5.2, the analysis was conducted using a random sample of 150,000 user comments from Daily Mail articles, all posted during the year 2021. These comments are associated with a total of 60,908 articles within the dataset.

User comments on news articles provide a rich and dynamic space where moral foundations are expressed, debated, and contested. These comments often serve as public reactions to the events, issues, and perspectives presented in the articles, offering insight into how individuals interpret and respond to societal and political developments through a moral lens. The expression of moral foundations in user comments can reveal the underlying values, emotional responses, and ideological positions of readers. This makes the analysis of moral foundations in user comments a valuable tool for understanding not only individual moral reasoning but also broader societal trends and collective attitudes toward key issues, especially in the context of polarizing topics, disinformation, or conspiracy theories (Rezapour et al., 2021, Hirschhäuser et al., 2024, Malik et al., 2024).

The six moral foundations examined in this study—Care, Equality, Proportionality, Authority, Loyalty, and Purity—manifest in various ways within user comments, shaping both the emotional tone and the framing of responses to news content. Comments reflecting the **Care foundation** often highlight empathy and concern for the well-being of others, or in many cases anger over harm being caused to others. For instance, in response to an article about child abuse or neglect, a commenter might express outrage at the harm done to vulnerable children and call for stricter protective measures or harsher penalties for perpetrators. **Equality**, while less emphasized in conservative discourse, can still appear in comments addressing perceived unfairness (e.g., towards conservative perspectives due to "cancel culture"), or criticism of favorable treatment for certain groups or demands for equal application of the law, particularly in legal or welfare-related contexts. The **Proportionality foundation** surfaces in comments focused on merit-based fairness and accountability. For example, a commenter reacting to a story about benefit fraud might argue that those who work hard and contribute to society should not be disadvantaged by those who take unfair advantage of the system (a narrative that often shows up in the context of immigration debates). **Authority** is frequently invoked in comments emphasizing respect for tradition, rules, and institutional order. In response to an article about protests or challenges to police authority, a commenter might defend the need for law enforcement and criticize actions seen as disruptive or disrespectful to societal norms. **Loyalty** manifests in comments prioritizing group identity, national pride, and allegiance. For instance, again in reaction to an article about immigration or perceived threats to national sovereignty, a commenter might stress the importance of protecting national values, traditions, and the well-being of native citizens. Lastly, the **Purity foundation** is reflected in comments emphasizing moral cleanliness, sanctity, or the protection of societal and personal

values. For example, a user might react to an article about controversial social changes or sexual exploitation, framing such issues as violations of the moral fabric of society and demanding stricter adherence to traditional norms. By analyzing the presence and distribution of these moral foundations, we gain insight into the moral and ideological dimensions of public discourse, with respect to how readers frame and interpret the news through the lens of their core values.

Using the NLP approach outlined in Section 4.2, the Daily Mail user comments were assigned to one or more of the six moral foundations: Care, Equality, Proportionality, Authority, Loyalty, and Purity. Of the 150,000 user comments, 87,334 comments (58.2%) were successfully classified as relating to at least one moral foundation. The remaining 62,666 comments (41.8%) could not be associated with any specific moral foundation.
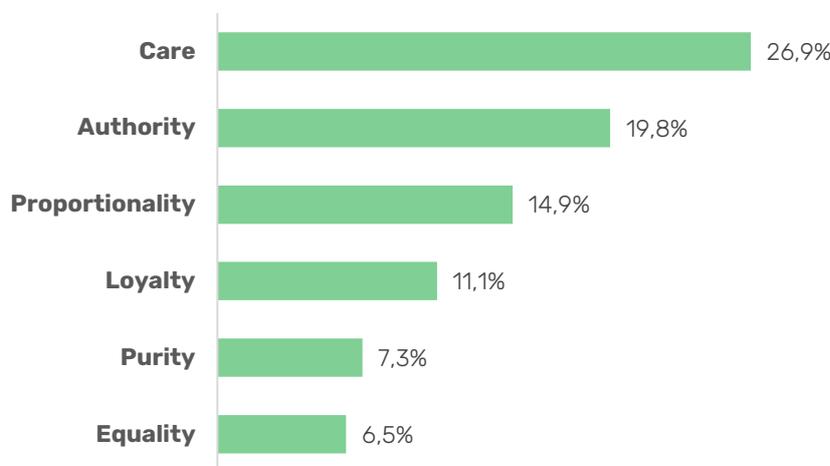
Figure 21 - Proportion of Moral Foundations in Daily mail User Comments in percent (N = 150,000; 2021)

Figure 21 illustrates the distribution of moral foundations identified in the analyzed subset of Daily Mail user comments, categorized by their relative frequency. The figure highlights that the Care Foundation is the most frequently expressed or discussed moral foundation, accounting for 26.9% of all 150,000 comments. This finding underscores the prominence of discussions related to **Care** and the prevention of harm, which are often central to reader engagement on a wide range of topics. Following Care, **Authority** emerges as the second most frequently discussed moral foundation at 19.8%. This reflects a significant focus on themes related to respect for social hierarchies, traditions, and institutional authority within the Daily Mail readership. The **Proportionality** Foundation, accounting for 14.9%, ranks third and highlights an emphasis on fairness as it pertains to merit and contributions. In contrast, **Loyalty**, which represents group solidarity and allegiance, appears in 11.1% of the comments, indicating its moderate presence in the dataset. **Purity**, associated with sanctity and moral cleanliness, is identified in 7.3% of the comments, while **Equality**, often linked to left-leaning or liberal ideologies, constitutes only 6.5% of the analyzed moral foundations, making it the least frequently discussed.

When comparing these findings to the dataset of Telegram messages (Figure 14), several notable similarities and differences emerge. In both datasets, the Care Foundation ranks as the

most frequently expressed moral foundation, with a similar share: 26.9% in the Daily Mail comments and 27.2% in Telegram messages. This consistency reflects the universal importance of the Care Foundation, as themes of compassion, harm prevention, and human well-being resonate broadly across platforms and contexts, regardless of ideological alignment. However, positions 2 and 3 differ between the two datasets. In the Daily Mail comments, Authority ranks second at 19.8%, followed by Proportionality at 14.9%. In contrast, in the Telegram dataset, Authority holds a higher share at 23.0%, and Loyalty takes third place at 11.8%, while Proportionality is significantly lower at 4.7%. The elevated emphasis on Authority in both datasets, but especially in Telegram messages, aligns with the ideological leaning of these platforms, which tend to attract conservative or far-right audiences. Themes of respect for authority, traditional hierarchies, and institutional trust or distrust are central to right-leaning discourse, often manifesting in reactions to perceived threats to societal order or established norms. The presence of Loyalty in the Telegram dataset (11.8%) is nearly identical to its representation in the Daily Mail comments (11.1%), suggesting that group solidarity and ingroup-outgroup dynamics are consistently relevant across both platforms, reflecting a shared emphasis on loyalty and allegiance in their respective discourse. On the other hand, Proportionality, which emphasizes fairness based on merit and contributions, is much more prominent in the Daily Mail comments (14.9%) than in Telegram messages (4.7%). This discrepancy may reflect the differing nature of engagement on these platforms: Daily Mail comments often center on societal debates, economic issues, and resource distribution, where proportional fairness is frequently a topic of discussion. Telegram, in contrast, tends to focus on more polarizing and identity-based topics, which might deprioritize this foundation. Lastly, Equality, which is generally associated with left-leaning ideologies, is consistently the least frequently discussed foundation in both datasets but is slightly more visible in the Daily Mail comments (6.5%) compared to Telegram messages (2.4%). This difference could indicate that Daily Mail articles occasionally touch on themes of fairness and equal opportunity, even within a conservative readership, whereas such themes find less resonance in Telegram's typically more ideologically homogenous far-right user base.

When interpreting the differences between the distribution of moral foundations in Telegram messages and Daily Mail user comments, it is important to consider the distinct nature of the two datasets. Telegram messages primarily consist of news-like broadcasts, where the dissemination of information often blends with expressions of opinion. In contrast, Daily Mail user comments are reactions to news articles, reflecting reader interpretations, emotional responses, and personal perspectives. This distinction likely contributes to the higher prominence of Proportionality and Equality in the Daily Mail comments, as these foundations often emerge in debates over fairness and societal issues in user discussions. Conversely, the slightly greater emphasis on Authority and Loyalty in Telegram messages aligns with the platform's role as a source of ideologically charged narratives, where appeals to tradition, hierarchy, and group identity are more prevalent in the framing of information.

7.3.4.2. Variation of Moral Foundations across Article Categories

We now want to find out how Daily Mail user comments reflect or address the presence and violation of moral foundations across various article categories. The analysis is based on 150,000 user comments linked to 60,908 Daily Mail articles, each categorized under specific categories. The goal is to determine whether and to what extent the user comments from different article categories vary in their engagement with moral foundations.

Category	Articles	Comments		Comment/Article
News	33.918	99.357		2,9
TVshowbiz	11.138	18.078		1,6
Sport	6.149	10.007		1,6
Femail	4.584	10.237		2,2
ScienceTech	1.276	2.101		1,6
Money	1.245	2.262		1,8
Debate	1.128	4.642		4,1
Health	1.110	2.769		2,5
Travel	141	182		1,3
Home	111	160		1,4
Property	78	126		1,6
Others	30	79		-
Total	**60.908**	**150.000**		**2,1**

Figure 22 – Number of Daily Mail Articles and Comments across Article Categories (2021).

Figure 22 provides an overview of the distribution of articles and comments across article categories. The most frequent category is News, followed by TV & Showbiz, Sport, Female, ScienceTech, and others. The table also includes the average number of comments per article for each category. Notably, the categories News and Debate have the highest average number of comments per article, indicating that these topics generate the most discussion among readers. The category "Others" includes articles that could not be clearly assigned to a specific category. This category contains outliers in terms of the average number of comments, which are not displayed in the table for clarity. Furthermore, it is important to note that the dataset represents a random sample of user comments, not a random sample of articles. Therefore, the average number of comments per article is not representative of Daily mail articles and their average comment number in general but just reflects the characteristics within the sampled 150,000 comments.

This analysis sets the foundation for exploring how moral foundations or their violations are discussed in different article categories. By identifying the categories that provoke the most engagement, such as News and Debate, we can better understand how specific types of content shape moral discourse among readers. Later we will analyze which moral foundations are most frequently addressed or violated in relation to specific topics across these article categories.

Figure 23 explores how moral foundations are addressed in Daily Mail user comments across various article categories. Three tables form the basis of this examination. The first table provides the absolute counts of comments linked to each moral foundation within each category. The second table presents relative values, showing the proportion of comments associated with each moral foundation relative to the total number of comments within each category. This allows for comparisons of the prevalence of moral foundations across categories. The

third table identifies moral foundations that are overrepresented in specific categories by calculating the difference between the relative percentages in each category and the overall percentage across all categories (row "Total" in the second table). In this third table, green bars indicate moral foundations that are addressed more frequently than average within a given category.

Category	Care	Proportionality	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Comments
News	28.122	14.778	6.833	23.138	11.109	6.783	99.356
TVshowbiz	5.004	2.590	1.114	1.873	1.708	2.071	18.078
Femail	2.798	1.503	668	1.311	1.245	913	10.237
Sport	1.246	1.742	451	1.241	1.460	432	10.007
Debate	1.258	775	363	1.189	645	302	4.642
Health	954	303	101	474	130	200	2.769
Money	433	398	130	224	165	91	2.262
ScienceTech	449	208	69	226	116	149	2.101
Travel	38	30	10	12	18	11	182
Home	43	14	5	27	21	16	160
Property	26	17	3	9	5	2	126
Total	**40.371**	**22.358**	**9.747**	**29.724**	**16.622**	**10.970**	**149.920**

Category	Care	Proportionality	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Average
News	28,3%	14,9%	6,9%	23,3%	11,2%	6,8%	15,2%
TVshowbiz	27,7%	14,3%	6,2%	10,4%	9,4%	11,5%	13,2%
Femail	27,3%	14,7%	6,5%	12,8%	12,2%	8,9%	13,7%
Sport	12,5%	17,4%	4,5%	12,4%	14,6%	4,3%	10,9%
Debate	27,1%	16,7%	7,8%	25,6%	13,9%	6,5%	16,3%
Health	34,5%	10,9%	3,6%	17,1%	4,7%	7,2%	13,0%
Money	19,1%	17,6%	5,7%	9,9%	7,3%	4,0%	10,6%
ScienceTech	21,4%	9,9%	3,3%	10,8%	5,5%	7,1%	9,7%
Travel	20,9%	16,5%	5,5%	6,6%	9,9%	6,0%	10,9%
Home	26,9%	8,8%	3,1%	16,9%	13,1%	10,0%	13,1%
Property	20,6%	13,5%	2,4%	7,1%	4,0%	1,6%	8,2%
Total	**26,9%**	**14,9%**	**6,5%**	**19,8%**	**11,1%**	**7,3%**	**14,4%**

Category	Care	Proportionality	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Average
News	1,4%	0,0%	0,4%	3,5%	0,1%	0,5%	0,8%
TVshowbiz	0,8%	0,6%	0,3%	9,5%	1,6%	4,1%	-1,2%
Femail	0,4%	0,2%	0,0%	7,0%	1,1%	1,6%	-0,7%
Sport	-14,5%	2,5%	2,0%	7,4%	3,5%	3,0%	-3,5%
Debate	0,2%	1,8%	1,3%	5,8%	2,8%	0,8%	1,8%
Health	7,5%	4,0%	2,9%	2,7%	6,4%	0,1%	-1,4%
Money	7,8%	2,7%	0,8%	9,9%	3,8%	3,3%	-3,8%
ScienceTech	5,6%	5,0%	3,2%	9,1%	5,6%	0,2%	-4,8%
Travel	6,0%	1,6%	1,0%	-13,2%	1,2%	1,3%	-3,5%
Home	0,1%	6,2%	3,4%	3,0%	2,0%	2,7%	-1,3%
Property	6,3%	1,4%	4,1%	-12,7%	7,1%	5,7%	-6,2%
Total	**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**

Figure 23 – Moral Foundations across Daily Mail Article Categories (2021, without "Others", N = 149,920).

The data reveal significant differences in the prevalence of moral foundations across article categories. Among all categories, Debate articles show the highest relative engagement with moral foundations, followed by News, Female, TV & Showbiz, and Money. These categories exhibit a higher propensity to invoke moral foundations in user comments, which aligns with their thematic content. Debate articles, for instance, often focus on contentious or polarizing topics that naturally elicit moral reasoning. Similarly, News articles frequently involve events or issues with societal implications, making them fertile ground for discussions about care,

harm, authority, and other moral dimensions. The reliability of our approach seems to be supported by the plausibly explainable alignment of Moral Foundations with content characteristics. Categories such as Debate and News are expected to generate discussions where moral reasoning plays a prominent role, reinforcing the validity of the methodological approach used to detect moral foundations.

Examining the total row in the second table, it becomes clear that – as already discussed – the **Care** foundation is the most frequently addressed across all categories, followed by **Authority** and **Proportionality**. The prominence of Care likely reflects the human tendency to prioritize issues related to harm prevention and concern for others' well-being. Authority and Proportionality, in turn, often relate to discussions about power dynamics, fairness, and societal order, which are recurrent themes in public discourse.

The prominence of different moral foundations varies across categories, highlighting the unique moral dynamics elicited by each topic:

Comments on **News** articles most frequently address Care and Authority. This is consistent with the fact that news often involves governance, policy decisions, and societal events where power structures and harm prevention are central themes. **TV & Showbiz**: Comments in this category show a higher-than-average focus on Purity, reflecting moral concerns about cultural or social norms often highlighted or violated in entertainment content. Similar to TV & Showbiz, the **Female** category emphasizes Purity but also includes a strong representation of Loyalty, possibly reflecting discussions about relationships, family, and social cohesion, which are common in this genre. User comments in **Sport** articles frequently address Proportionality and Loyalty, likely due to the inherent focus on fairness, competition, and team allegiance within sports narratives. The **Debate** category prominently features discussions about Authority and Proportionality, reflecting the analytical and argumentative nature of debates, where fairness and the legitimacy of power structures are often scrutinized. Finally, the **Health** category is particularly notable for its high prevalence of the Care foundation. This aligns, as we will see, with the thematic focus on well-being and harm prevention, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which dominated health discussions in 2021. The pandemic brought issues of vulnerability, compassion, and collective responsibility to the forefront, making Care a central concern in user comments on health-related articles. The connection between discussions about COVID-19 and related measures and the Care foundation suggests that these debates primarily revolve around accusations directed at political decision-makers for causing harm, failing to show sufficient care, or implementing measures perceived by users as misguided and harmful. This likely served as a significant catalyst for the erosion of trust in political authorities, experts, and the media in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the **Money** category, proportionality is the most frequently addressed moral foundation, reflecting a perspective that those who contribute more should receive more, and claims to equality are rather viewed as inherently unfair. This is particularly evident in discussions around wealth distribution and taxation, where fairness is framed in terms of merit and contribution.

The observed variations in moral foundations across categories highlight the interplay between article content and moral reasoning in user discussions. Our analyses suggest that the connection between emotionally charged discussions and those addressing moral foundations

is particularly evident in certain article categories, especially News and Debate. This is unsurprising, as a crisis-prone world naturally generates more news that both elicits strong emotions and challenges moral foundations. Furthermore, the increasing mediatization of news and debates – through the real-time broadcasting of content across a growing array of digital channels, whether mainstream or alternative – contributes to the intensification of emotional engagement and the prominence of moral foundation discourse. This combination of crisis-driven narratives and expansive mediatization amplifies the emotionalization of public discourse and deepens discussions about moral foundations.

7.3.4.3. The Moral Foundations across Keywords

We expect that the analysis of the Daily Mail user comments, categorized according to the six Moral Foundations, reveals notable distinctions based on the thematic focus of the articles to which these comments respond. As described previously (Section 7.3.3), keywords were assigned to articles, and subsequently, these keywords were linked to specific topics identified as particularly prominent or contentious within the dataset. The following tables classify user comments according to these Moral Foundations, based on the keywords they contain.

Figure 24 presents the absolute frequencies, indicating how often a comment assigned to a specific Moral Foundation also contains a particular keyword. For example, the table shows that there are 683 comments containing the keyword "Harry" that are associated with the Care Foundation. In total, there are 2,295 comments containing the keyword "Harry" within the dataset. The overall dataset includes 52,717 comments containing at least one of the identified keywords. It is important to note that the counts in this table allow for multiple assignments, in the sense that a single comment may contain multiple keywords or be assigned to multiple Moral Foundations.

Figure 25 shifts the focus to relative proportions. Here, the percentages represent the share of comments associated with a particular Moral Foundation among all comments containing a given keyword. For instance, of the 2,295 comments containing the keyword "Harry," 29.8% are assigned to the Care Foundation. This provides a comparative perspective, enabling an assessment of how often each Moral Foundation is invoked relative to the total number of comments containing specific keywords.

Finally, Figure 26 examines whether a Moral Foundation is over- or underrepresented in relation to a particular keyword. This is calculated by comparing the relative proportions from Table 22 with the overall column average for each Moral Foundation. For example, in the case of comments containing the keyword "Harry," 29.8% are associated with the Care Foundation, while 30,1% of all comments in the dataset are associated with the Care Foundation overall. This yields a difference of -0.3 percentage points, indicating that the Care Foundation is slightly underrepresented among comments containing the keyword "Harry."

Key Topic	Keywords	Care	Proportion.	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Comments
Royal Family and Monarchy	Harry	683	336	131	502	633	214	2.295
Royal Family and Monarchy	Meghan	341	182	97	257	282	140	1.204
Royal Family and Monarchy	Royals	65	62	23	116	96	24	370
Royal Family and Monarchy	Queen	336	183	52	462	404	103	1.305
Royal Family and Monarchy	Charles	133	72	19	157	139	40	541
Royal Family and Monarchy	Camilla	39	13	3	26	34	11	123
Royal Family and Monarchy	Catherine	36	22	3	40	35	9	154
Royal Family and Monarchy	William	141	77	20	169	182	36	591
Royal Family and Monarchy	Windsor	13	8	3	26	17	7	85
Vaccination and COVID-19	Covid	2.588	916	327	1.582	475	478	6.751
Vaccination and COVID-19	Vaccine	2.904	1.109	388	1.984	596	561	8.165
Vaccination and COVID-19	Antivaxx	111	54	15	86	26	33	267
Vaccination and COVID-19	Pandemic	654	245	121	473	149	121	1.576
Vaccination and COVID-19	Pfizer	106	40	13	88	25	20	414
Vaccination and COVID-19	Astrazeneca	40	13	4	26	11	4	149
Vaccination and COVID-19	Lockdown	607	222	56	493	140	96	1.639
Vaccination and COVID-19	Masks	735	302	87	619	152	196	2.129
Vaccination and COVID-19	WHO	57	30	15	84	18	14	275
Vaccination and COVID-19	NHS	713	316	126	377	135	80	1.528
Vaccination and COVID-19	Fauci	71	33	14	119	35	27	347
Vaccination and COVID-19	Health	1.272	374	189	608	157	218	2.331
Vaccination and COVID-19	PCR	50	28	0	49	17	9	210
Vaccination and COVID-19	Spike Protein	18	2	2	4	0	4	48
Vaccination and COVID-19	Gene Therapy	32	6	2	14	7	5	74
Vaccination and COVID-19	Big Pharma	61	26	11	61	14	20	177
Brexit and UK-EU Relations	Brexit	290	203	80	366	296	62	1.517
Brexit and UK-EU Relations	EU	485	333	122	628	464	101	2.480
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Trump	831	569	283	1.443	791	293	4.091
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Biden	607	351	180	1.163	449	167	3.046
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Democrats	468	350	260	850	376	133	2.119
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Republicans	222	161	110	360	213	71	988
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Kamala	86	46	39	144	56	27	410
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Obama	73	59	28	164	81	26	458
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Clinton	25	26	14	54	22	18	183
Immigration and Refugee Crisis	Border	384	166	93	527	214	64	1.416
Immigration and Refugee Crisis	Immigration	81	66	39	146	73	17	366
Immigration and Refugee Crisis	Immigrant	247	114	124	223	120	41	742
Immigration and Refugee Crisis	Refugees	78	29	40	45	30	8	177
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Wokeness	410	344	320	471	275	160	1.830
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Cancel Culture	46	25	27	43	25	14	121
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Snowflakes	73	46	37	44	42	26	283
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Free Speech	68	51	63	90	32	17	201
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Left Wing	59	85	38	96	61	20	321
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Right Wing	52	56	37	63	44	20	242
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Censorship	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Climate Change and Environmentalism	Climate Change	153	97	40	65	32	55	406
Climate Change and Environmentalism	Global Warming	34	23	7	12	7	16	126
Climate Change and Environmentalism	Carbon	90	63	23	39	23	38	259
Economic Policies and Inflation	Trade	115	94	62	162	95	27	611
Economic Policies and Inflation	Inflation	75	75	24	71	25	13	342
Economic Policies and Inflation	Economy	294	163	56	279	117	40	875
Economic Policies and Inflation	Prices	377	300	105	239	128	90	1.525
Economic Policies and Inflation	Taxes	211	212	94	215	95	41	781
Media Bias and Journalism	Fake News	27	19	9	48	17	17	179
Media Bias and Journalism	MSM (Mainstream Media)	66	34	17	99	46	15	300
Crime and Law Enforcement	Crime	370	200	95	391	81	91	913
Crime and Law Enforcement	Justice	206	146	104	237	55	49	505
Crime and Law Enforcement	Police	801	404	245	1.126	242	171	2.455
Crime and Law Enforcement	Prison	279	104	60	237	58	62	631
Crime and Law Enforcement	Terrorism	23	11	6	20	7	5	43
Gender Issues and Feminism	Gender	78	52	122	34	14	32	260
Gender Issues and Feminism	Feminism	4	3	13	5	2	3	22
Gender Issues and Feminism	Female	193	104	193	85	53	80	594
Gender Issues and Feminism	Women	1.146	473	822	441	273	413	2.758
Sports and Athletes	Sport	162	117	94	122	74	46	599
Sports and Athletes	Football	210	184	78	187	177	75	1.092
Sports and Athletes	Athlete	58	42	23	37	27	18	174
Sports and Athletes	Premier League	24	31	7	26	30	9	187
Sports and Athletes	Champions League	10	25	5	20	30	3	128
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Conspiracy	119	78	29	163	43	50	492
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Plandemic	7	4	4	16	2	0	40
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Globalists	36	21	12	72	37	8	142
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	World Order	10	5	3	26	7	5	55
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	NWO (New World Order)	28	7	7	52	17	13	104
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	WEF (World Economic Forum)	17	7	7	37	11	3	73
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Global Reset	1	3	2	6	1	0	11
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Great Reset	28	11	7	52	14	5	114
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Davos	7	3	2	14	3	1	32
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Un	39	12	20	42	13	9	133
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Elite	135	97	78	183	79	34	443
Housing and Property Issues	Housing	148	76	66	82	35	26	369
Housing and Property Issues	Property	165	120	45	145	57	27	593
Others	Freedom	448	166	208	488	171	83	1.044
Others	Dictatorship	41	13	26	121	17	10	137
Others	Big Tech	17	11	10	33	17	7	65
Others	Manipulation	28	17	9	33	11	7	87
Total		**15842**	**8243**	**4396**	**13948**	**6604**	**3893**	**52.717**

Figure 24 – Moral Foundations across Keywords – absolute numbers (2021, N = 52,717 comments).

Key Topic	Keywords	Care	roportionalit	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Comments
Royal Family and Monarchy	Harry	29,8%	14,6%	5,7%	21,9%	27,6%	9,3%	100,0%
Royal Family and Monarchy	Meghan	28,3%	15,1%	8,1%	21,3%	23,4%	11,6%	100,0%
Royal Family and Monarchy	Royals	17,6%	16,8%	6,2%	31,4%	25,9%	6,5%	100,0%
Royal Family and Monarchy	Queen	25,7%	14,0%	4,0%	35,4%	31,0%	7,9%	100,0%
Royal Family and Monarchy	Charles	24,6%	13,3%	3,5%	29,0%	25,7%	7,4%	100,0%
Royal Family and Monarchy	Camilla	31,7%	10,6%	2,4%	21,1%	27,6%	8,9%	100,0%
Royal Family and Monarchy	Catherine	23,4%	14,3%	1,9%	26,0%	22,7%	5,8%	100,0%
Royal Family and Monarchy	William	23,9%	13,0%	3,4%	28,6%	30,8%	6,1%	100,0%
Royal Family and Monarchy	Windsor	15,3%	9,4%	3,5%	30,6%	20,0%	8,2%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Covid	38,3%	13,6%	4,8%	23,4%	7,0%	7,1%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Vaccine	35,6%	13,6%	4,8%	24,3%	7,3%	6,9%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Antivaxx	41,6%	20,2%	5,6%	32,2%	9,7%	12,4%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Pandemic	41,5%	15,5%	7,7%	30,0%	9,5%	7,7%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Pfizer	25,6%	9,7%	3,1%	21,3%	6,0%	4,8%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Astrazeneca	26,8%	8,7%	2,7%	17,4%	7,4%	2,7%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Lockdown	37,0%	13,5%	3,4%	30,1%	8,5%	5,9%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Masks	34,5%	14,2%	4,1%	29,1%	7,1%	9,2%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	WHO	20,7%	10,9%	5,5%	30,5%	6,5%	5,1%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	NHS	46,7%	20,7%	8,2%	24,7%	8,8%	5,2%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Fauci	20,5%	9,5%	4,0%	34,3%	10,1%	7,8%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Health	54,6%	16,0%	8,1%	26,1%	6,7%	9,4%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	PCR	23,8%	13,3%	0,0%	23,3%	8,1%	4,3%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Spike Protein	37,5%	4,2%	4,2%	8,3%	0,0%	8,3%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Gene Therapy	43,2%	8,1%	2,7%	18,9%	9,5%	6,8%	100,0%
Vaccination and COVID-19	Big Pharma	34,5%	14,7%	6,2%	34,5%	7,9%	11,3%	100,0%
Brexit and UK-EU Relations	Brexit	19,1%	13,4%	5,3%	24,1%	19,5%	4,1%	100,0%
Brexit and UK-EU Relations	EU	19,6%	13,4%	4,9%	25,3%	18,7%	4,1%	100,0%
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Trump	20,3%	13,9%	6,9%	35,3%	19,3%	7,2%	100,0%
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Biden	19,9%	11,5%	5,9%	38,2%	14,7%	5,5%	100,0%
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Democrats	22,1%	16,5%	12,3%	40,1%	17,7%	6,3%	100,0%
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Republicans	22,5%	16,3%	11,1%	36,4%	21,6%	7,2%	100,0%
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Kamala	21,0%	11,2%	9,5%	35,1%	13,7%	6,6%	100,0%
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Obama	15,9%	12,9%	6,1%	35,8%	17,7%	5,7%	100,0%
US Politics and the Biden Administration	Clinton	13,7%	14,2%	7,7%	29,5%	12,0%	9,8%	100,0%
Immigration and Refugee Crisis	Border	27,1%	11,7%	6,6%	37,2%	15,1%	4,5%	100,0%
Immigration and Refugee Crisis	Immigration	22,1%	18,0%	10,7%	39,9%	19,9%	4,6%	100,0%
Immigration and Refugee Crisis	Immigrant	33,3%	15,4%	16,7%	30,1%	16,2%	5,5%	100,0%
Immigration and Refugee Crisis	Refugees	44,1%	16,4%	22,6%	25,4%	16,9%	4,5%	100,0%
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Wokeness	22,4%	18,8%	17,5%	25,7%	15,0%	8,7%	100,0%
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Cancel Culture	38,0%	20,7%	22,3%	35,5%	20,7%	11,6%	100,0%
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Snowflakes	25,8%	16,3%	13,1%	15,5%	14,8%	9,2%	100,0%
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Free Speech	33,8%	25,4%	31,3%	44,8%	15,9%	8,5%	100,0%
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Left Wing	18,4%	26,5%	11,8%	29,9%	19,0%	6,2%	100,0%
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Right Wing	21,5%	23,1%	15,3%	26,0%	18,2%	8,3%	100,0%
Cancel Culture and Free Speech	Censorship	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Climate Change and Environmentalism	Climate Change	37,7%	23,9%	9,9%	16,0%	7,9%	13,5%	100,0%
Climate Change and Environmentalism	Global Warming	27,0%	18,3%	5,6%	9,5%	5,6%	12,7%	100,0%
Climate Change and Environmentalism	Carbon	34,7%	24,3%	8,9%	15,1%	8,9%	14,7%	100,0%
Economic Policies and Inflation	Trade	18,8%	15,4%	10,1%	26,5%	15,5%	4,4%	100,0%
Economic Policies and Inflation	Inflation	21,9%	21,9%	7,0%	20,8%	7,3%	3,8%	100,0%
Economic Policies and Inflation	Economy	33,6%	18,6%	6,4%	31,9%	13,4%	4,6%	100,0%
Economic Policies and Inflation	Prices	24,7%	19,7%	6,9%	15,7%	8,4%	5,9%	100,0%
Economic Policies and Inflation	Taxes	27,0%	27,1%	12,0%	27,5%	12,2%	5,2%	100,0%
Media Bias and Journalism	Fake News	15,1%	10,6%	5,0%	26,8%	9,5%	9,5%	100,0%
Media Bias and Journalism	MSM (Mainstream Media)	22,0%	11,3%	5,7%	33,0%	15,3%	5,0%	100,0%
Crime and Law Enforcement	Crime	40,5%	21,9%	10,4%	42,8%	8,9%	10,0%	100,0%
Crime and Law Enforcement	Justice	40,8%	28,9%	20,6%	46,9%	10,9%	9,7%	100,0%
Crime and Law Enforcement	Police	32,6%	16,5%	10,0%	45,9%	9,9%	7,0%	100,0%
Crime and Law Enforcement	Prison	44,2%	16,5%	9,5%	37,6%	9,2%	9,8%	100,0%
Crime and Law Enforcement	Terrorism	53,5%	25,6%	14,0%	46,5%	16,3%	11,6%	100,0%
Gender Issues and Feminism	Gender	30,0%	20,0%	46,9%	13,1%	5,4%	12,3%	100,0%
Gender Issues and Feminism	Feminism	18,2%	13,6%	59,1%	22,7%	9,1%	13,6%	100,0%
Gender Issues and Feminism	Female	32,5%	17,5%	32,5%	14,3%	8,9%	13,5%	100,0%
Gender Issues and Feminism	Women	41,6%	17,2%	29,8%	16,0%	9,9%	15,0%	100,0%
Sports and Athletes	Sport	27,0%	19,5%	15,7%	20,4%	12,4%	7,7%	100,0%
Sports and Athletes	Football	19,2%	16,8%	7,1%	17,1%	16,2%	6,9%	100,0%
Sports and Athletes	Athlete	33,3%	24,1%	13,2%	21,3%	15,5%	10,3%	100,0%
Sports and Athletes	Premier League	12,8%	16,6%	3,7%	13,9%	16,0%	4,8%	100,0%
Sports and Athletes	Champions League	7,8%	19,5%	3,9%	15,6%	23,4%	2,3%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Conspiracy	24,2%	15,9%	5,9%	33,1%	8,7%	10,2%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Plandemic	17,5%	10,0%	10,0%	40,0%	5,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Globalists	25,4%	14,8%	8,5%	50,7%	26,1%	5,6%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	World Order	18,2%	9,1%	5,5%	47,3%	12,7%	9,1%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	NWO (New World Order)	26,9%	6,7%	6,7%	50,0%	16,3%	12,5%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	WEF (World Economic Forum)	23,3%	9,6%	9,6%	50,7%	15,1%	4,1%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Global Reset	9,1%	27,3%	18,2%	54,5%	9,1%	0,0%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Great Reset	24,6%	9,6%	6,1%	45,6%	12,3%	4,4%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Davos	21,9%	9,4%	6,3%	43,8%	9,4%	3,1%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Un	29,3%	9,0%	15,0%	31,6%	9,8%	6,8%	100,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	Elite	30,5%	21,9%	17,6%	41,3%	17,8%	7,7%	100,0%
Housing and Property Issues	Housing	40,1%	20,6%	17,9%	22,2%	9,5%	7,0%	100,0%
Housing and Property Issues	Property	27,8%	20,2%	7,6%	24,5%	9,6%	4,6%	100,0%
Others	Freedom	42,9%	15,9%	19,9%	46,7%	16,4%	8,0%	100,0%
Others	Dictatorship	29,9%	9,5%	19,0%	88,3%	12,4%	7,3%	100,0%
Others	Big Tech	26,2%	16,9%	15,4%	50,8%	26,2%	10,8%	100,0%
Others	Manipulation	32,2%	19,5%	10,3%	37,9%	12,6%	8,0%	100,0%
Total		**30,1%**	**15,6%**	**8,3%**	**26,5%**	**12,5%**	**7,4%**	**100,0%**

Figure 25 - Moral Foundations across Keywords – row percentages (2021, N = 52,717 comments).

Keywords	Key Topic	Care	roportionalit	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Comments
Harry	Royal Family and Monarchy	0,3%	1,0%	2,6%	4,6%	15,1%	1,9%	0,0%
Meghan	Royal Family and Monarchy	1,7%	0,5%	0,3%	5,1%	10,9%	4,2%	0,0%
Royals	Royal Family and Monarchy	-12,5%	1,1%	2,1%	4,9%	13,4%	0,9%	0,0%
Queen	Royal Family and Monarchy	4,3%	1,6%	4,4%	8,9%	18,4%	0,5%	0,0%
Charles	Royal Family and Monarchy	5,5%	2,3%	4,8%	2,6%	13,2%	0,0%	0,0%
Camilla	Royal Family and Monarchy	1,7%	5,1%	5,9%	5,3%	15,1%	1,6%	0,0%
Catherine	Royal Family and Monarchy	6,7%	1,4%	6,4%	0,5%	10,2%	1,5%	0,0%
William	Royal Family and Monarchy	6,2%	2,6%	5,0%	2,1%	18,3%	1,3%	0,0%
Windsor	Royal Family and Monarchy	-14,8%	6,2%	4,8%	4,1%	7,5%	0,9%	0,0%
Covid	Vaccination and COVID-19	8,3%	2,1%	3,5%	3,0%	5,5%	0,3%	0,0%
Vaccine	Vaccination and COVID-19	5,5%	2,1%	3,6%	2,2%	5,2%	0,5%	0,0%
Antivaxx	Vaccination and COVID-19	11,5%	4,6%	2,7%	5,8%	2,8%	5,0%	0,0%
Pandemic	Vaccination and COVID-19	11,4%	0,1%	0,7%	3,6%	3,1%	0,3%	0,0%
Pfizer	Vaccination and COVID-19	4,4%	6,0%	5,2%	5,2%	6,5%	2,6%	0,0%
Astrazeneca	Vaccination and COVID-19	3,2%	6,9%	5,7%	9,0%	5,1%	4,7%	0,0%
Lockdown	Vaccination and COVID-19	7,0%	2,1%	4,9%	3,6%	4,0%	1,5%	0,0%
Masks	Vaccination and COVID-19	4,5%	1,5%	4,3%	2,6%	5,4%	1,8%	0,0%
WHO	Vaccination and COVID-19	9,3%	4,7%	2,9%	4,1%	6,0%	2,3%	0,0%
NHS	Vaccination and COVID-19	16,6%	5,0%	0,1%	1,8%	3,7%	2,1%	0,0%
Fauci	Vaccination and COVID-19	9,6%	6,1%	4,3%	7,8%	2,4%	0,4%	0,0%
Health	Vaccination and COVID-19	24,5%	0,4%	0,2%	0,4%	5,8%	2,0%	0,0%
PCR	Vaccination and COVID-19	6,2%	2,3%	8,3%	3,1%	4,4%	3,1%	0,0%
Spike Protein	Vaccination and COVID-19	7,4%	-11,5%	4,2%	-18,1%	-12,5%	0,9%	0,0%
Gene Therapy	Vaccination and COVID-19	13,2%	7,5%	5,6%	7,5%	3,1%	0,6%	0,0%
Big Pharma	Vaccination and COVID-19	4,4%	0,9%	2,1%	8,0%	4,6%	8,9%	0,0%
Brexit	Brexit and UK-EU Relations	-10,9%	2,3%	3,1%	2,3%	7,0%	3,3%	0,0%
EU	Brexit and UK-EU Relations	-10,5%	2,2%	3,4%	1,1%	6,2%	3,3%	0,0%
Trump	US Politics and the Biden Administration	9,7%	1,7%	1,4%	8,8%	6,8%	0,2%	0,0%
Biden	US Politics and the Biden Administration	-10,1%	4,1%	2,4%	11,7%	2,2%	1,9%	0,0%
Democrats	US Politics and the Biden Administration	8,0%	0,9%	3,9%	13,7%	5,2%	1,1%	0,0%
Republicans	US Politics and the Biden Administration	7,6%	0,7%	2,8%	10,0%	9,0%	0,2%	0,0%
Kamala	US Politics and the Biden Administration	9,1%	4,4%	1,2%	8,7%	1,1%	0,8%	0,0%
Obama	US Politics and the Biden Administration	-14,1%	2,8%	2,2%	9,3%	5,2%	1,7%	0,0%
Clinton	US Politics and the Biden Administration	-16,4%	1,4%	0,7%	3,0%	0,5%	2,5%	0,0%
Border	Immigration and Refugee Crisis	2,9%	3,9%	1,8%	10,8%	2,6%	2,9%	0,0%
Immigration	Immigration and Refugee Crisis	7,9%	2,4%	2,3%	13,4%	7,4%	2,7%	0,0%
Immigrant	Immigration and Refugee Crisis	3,2%	0,3%	8,4%	3,6%	3,6%	1,9%	0,0%
Refugees	Immigration and Refugee Crisis	14,0%	0,7%	14,3%	1,0%	4,4%	2,9%	0,0%
Wokeness	Cancel Culture and Free Speech	7,6%	3,2%	9,1%	0,7%	2,5%	1,4%	0,0%
Cancel Culture	Cancel Culture and Free Speech	8,0%	5,0%	14,0%	9,1%	8,1%	4,2%	0,0%
Snowflakes	Cancel Culture and Free Speech	4,3%	0,6%	4,7%	-10,9%	2,3%	1,8%	0,0%
Free Speech	Cancel Culture and Free Speech	3,8%	9,7%	23,0%	18,3%	3,4%	1,1%	0,0%
Left Wing	Cancel Culture and Free Speech	-11,7%	10,8%	3,5%	3,4%	6,5%	1,2%	0,0%
Right Wing	Cancel Culture and Free Speech	8,6%	7,5%	7,0%	0,4%	5,7%	0,9%	0,0%
Censorship	Cancel Culture and Free Speech	-30,1%	-15,6%	8,3%	-26,5%	-12,5%	7,4%	0,0%
Climate Change	Climate Change and Environmentalism	7,6%	8,3%	1,5%	-10,4%	4,6%	6,2%	0,0%
Global Warming	Climate Change and Environmentalism	3,1%	2,6%	2,8%	-16,9%	7,0%	5,3%	0,0%
Carbon	Climate Change and Environmentalism	4,7%	8,7%	0,5%	-11,4%	3,6%	7,3%	0,0%
Trade	Economic Policies and Inflation	-11,2%	0,3%	1,8%	0,1%	3,0%	3,0%	0,0%
Inflation	Economic Policies and Inflation	8,1%	6,3%	1,3%	5,7%	5,2%	3,6%	0,0%
Economy	Economic Policies and Inflation	3,5%	3,0%	1,9%	5,4%	0,8%	2,8%	0,0%
Prices	Economic Policies and Inflation	5,3%	4,0%	1,5%	-10,8%	4,1%	1,5%	0,0%
Taxes	Economic Policies and Inflation	3,0%	11,5%	3,7%	1,1%	0,4%	2,1%	0,0%
Fake News	Media Bias and Journalism	-15,0%	5,0%	3,3%	0,4%	3,0%	2,1%	0,0%
MSM (Mainstream Media)	Media Bias and Journalism	8,1%	4,3%	2,7%	6,5%	2,8%	2,4%	0,0%
Crime	Crime and Law Enforcement	10,5%	6,3%	2,1%	16,4%	3,7%	2,6%	0,0%
Justice	Crime and Law Enforcement	10,7%	13,3%	12,3%	20,5%	1,6%	2,3%	0,0%
Police	Crime and Law Enforcement	2,6%	0,8%	1,6%	19,4%	2,7%	0,4%	0,0%
Prison	Crime and Law Enforcement	4,2%	0,8%	1,2%	11,1%	3,3%	2,4%	0,0%
Terrorism	Crime and Law Enforcement	23,4%	9,9%	5,6%	20,1%	3,8%	4,2%	0,0%
Gender	Gender Issues and Feminism	0,1%	4,4%	38,6%	-13,4%	7,1%	4,9%	0,0%
Feminism	Gender Issues and Feminism	-11,9%	2,0%	50,8%	3,7%	3,4%	6,3%	0,0%
Female	Gender Issues and Feminism	2,4%	1,9%	24,2%	-12,1%	3,6%	6,1%	0,0%
Women	Gender Issues and Feminism	1,5%	1,5%	21,5%	-10,5%	2,6%	7,6%	0,0%
Sport	Sports and Athletes	3,0%	3,9%	7,4%	6,1%	0,2%	0,3%	0,0%
Football	Sports and Athletes	-10,8%	1,2%	1,2%	9,3%	3,7%	0,5%	0,0%
Athlete	Sports and Athletes	3,3%	8,5%	4,9%	5,2%	3,0%	3,0%	0,0%
Premier League	Sports and Athletes	-17,2%	0,9%	4,6%	-12,6%	3,5%	2,6%	0,0%
Champions League	Sports and Athletes	-22,2%	3,9%	4,4%	-10,8%	10,9%	5,0%	0,0%
Conspiracy	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	5,9%	0,2%	2,4%	6,7%	3,8%	2,8%	0,0%
Plandemic	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	-12,6%	5,6%	1,7%	13,5%	7,5%	7,4%	0,0%
Globalists	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	4,7%	0,8%	0,1%	24,2%	13,5%	1,8%	0,0%
World Order	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	-11,9%	6,5%	1,6%	20,8%	0,2%	1,7%	0,0%
NWO (New World Order)	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	3,1%	8,9%	1,6%	23,5%	3,8%	5,1%	0,0%
WEF (World Economic Forum)	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	6,8%	6,0%	1,3%	24,2%	2,5%	3,3%	0,0%
Global Reset	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	-21,0%	11,6%	9,8%	28,1%	3,4%	7,4%	0,0%
Great Reset	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	5,5%	6,0%	2,2%	19,2%	0,2%	3,0%	0,0%
Davos	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	8,2%	6,3%	2,1%	17,3%	3,2%	4,3%	0,0%
Un	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	0,7%	6,6%	6,7%	5,1%	2,8%	0,6%	0,0%
Elite	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	0,4%	6,3%	9,3%	14,9%	5,3%	0,3%	0,0%
Housing	Housing and Property Issues	10,1%	5,0%	9,5%	4,2%	3,0%	0,3%	0,0%
Property	Housing and Property Issues	2,2%	4,6%	0,8%	2,0%	2,9%	2,8%	0,0%
Freedom	Others	12,9%	0,3%	11,6%	20,3%	3,9%	0,6%	0,0%
Dictatorship	Others	0,1%	6,1%	10,6%	61,9%	0,1%	0,1%	0,0%
Big Tech	Others	3,9%	1,3%	7,0%	24,3%	13,6%	3,4%	0,0%
Manipulation	Others	2,1%	3,9%	2,0%	11,5%	0,1%	0,7%	0,0%
Total		**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**	**0,0%**

Figure 26 - Moral Foundations across Keywords – difference to average, green = above average (2021, N = 52,717 comments).

To interpret the relationship between keywords and Moral Foundations, we focus on Figure 26, which highlights the over- and underrepresentation of specific Moral Foundations across different topics. A key premise of this analysis is that one motivation for writing a user comment in response to an article is to express a particular emotion. User comments, among other functions, serve as an outlet for readers' emotional reactions. In many cases, this emotional response is triggered by a perception that the events described in an article violate certain moral values held by the reader. Thus, the motivation to comment often stems from an emotional reaction to (perceived) violations of moral values, which can be understood through the lens of Jonathan Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory with its set of universal moral values framed through different cultural and individual lenses.

Examining Figure 26, particularly the green bars that indicate overrepresentation, reveals clear connections between keywords and the moral values addressed. For instance, the keywords at the beginning of the table, such as "Harry," "Meghan," "Queen," "Charles," and "Camilla," all pertain to the Royal Family and the British Monarchy. Comments on articles containing these keywords frequently emphasize the Loyalty Foundation. This could be interpreted as reflecting loyalty to the United Kingdom and the monarchy, as well as a sense that the events reported in these articles violate the moral value of loyalty. For example, some members of the Royal Family may be accused of betraying loyalty, which elicits strong emotional responses from readers. When we turn to keywords related to the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination, comments are often associated with the Care Foundation. These comments reflect fears about the harm caused by the pandemic, both to individuals and to their loved ones, and concerns about inadequate protection from this harm. Such concerns often lead to criticism of public authorities, health agencies, and experts, which is why the Authority Foundation is also frequently invoked in this context. Keywords like "Antivax," "Pandemic," and "WHO" exemplify this, as comments often express distrust or disapproval of perceived failures by authorities to act appropriately. Keywords tied to U.S. politics, such as "Trump," "Biden," "Democrats," and "Republicans," predominantly evoke the Authority Foundation. This suggests that these comments reflect emotions of mistrust towards political institutions, parties, and their representatives. The frequent invocation of authority in these contexts highlights the role of emotions in expressing discontent with perceived failures or abuses of power by political actors. Similarly, topics like "Cancel Culture" and "Free Speech" are strongly linked to the Equality Foundation, though often framed from a conservative perspective. These comments reflect concerns about fairness and perceived inequities in the treatment of individuals or ideas. On the other hand, keywords related to "Crime" and "Law Enforcement" reflect multiple Moral Foundations, with a particular focus on the Care Foundation, emphasizing fears of harm and the need for protection from authorities. For topics related to "Gender Issues" and "Feminism," comments overwhelmingly invoke the Equality Foundation, highlighting concerns about fairness and equal treatment, from both conservative and progressive perspectives. In contrast, comments tied to sports-related keywords show less engagement with moral violations. Meanwhile, keywords connected to conspiracy theories and skepticism towards decision-makers, experts, and the media often emphasize the Authority Foundation. These comments reflect distrust towards authorities and accusations of inadequate or unethical behavior. Overall, each thematic area has at least one dominant Moral Frame.

7.3.4.4. The Moral Foundations across Key Topics

We now want to take a closer look at the relationship between topics and Moral Foundations by grouping the keywords into key topics (according to Figure 24) and examining which Moral Foundations are particularly addressed within each key topic.

id	Keyword	Care	Proportionality	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Comments
14	Vaccination and COVID-19	7.579	2.875	1.043	4.916	1.509	1.434	20.235
13	US Politics and the Biden Administration	1.856	1.229	705	3.178	1.553	584	8.894
11	Royal Family and Monarchy	1.312	738	275	1.176	1.234	422	4.923
5	Crime and Law Enforcement	1.559	803	465	1.865	419	352	4.276
6	Economic Policies and Inflation	1.020	795	318	904	431	206	3.878
1	Brexit and UK-EU Relations	715	488	181	888	682	155	3.628
7	Gender Issues and Feminism	1.357	599	1.054	538	328	501	3.469
2	"Cancel Culture" and Free Speech	667	556	476	760	445	244	2.810
9	Immigration and Refugee Crisis	730	342	268	838	402	118	2.489
12	Sports and Athletes	434	377	186	365	310	139	2.033
4	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	377	231	149	553	207	116	1.448
8	Housing and Property Issues	307	194	108	224	91	53	948
3	Climate Change and Environmentalism	260	169	64	115	60	101	750
10	Media Bias and Journalism	93	53	26	146	63	32	477
15	**Total**	15580	8136	4283	13643	6513	3847	**52.057**

id	Keyword	Care	Proportionality	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Average
14	Vaccination and COVID-19	37,5%	14,2%	5,2%	24,3%	7,5%	7,1%	15,9%
13	US Politics and the Biden Administration	20,9%	13,8%	7,9%	35,7%	17,5%	6,6%	17,1%
11	Royal Family and Monarchy	26,7%	15,0%	5,6%	23,9%	25,1%	8,6%	17,5%
5	Crime and Law Enforcement	36,5%	18,8%	10,9%	43,6%	9,8%	8,2%	21,3%
6	Economic Policies and Inflation	26,3%	20,5%	8,2%	23,3%	11,1%	5,3%	15,8%
1	Brexit and UK-EU Relations	19,7%	13,5%	5,0%	24,5%	18,8%	4,3%	14,3%
7	Gender Issues and Feminism	39,1%	17,3%	30,4%	15,5%	9,5%	14,4%	21,0%
2	"Cancel Culture" and Free Speech	23,7%	19,8%	16,9%	27,0%	15,8%	8,7%	18,7%
9	Immigration and Refugee Crisis	29,3%	13,7%	10,8%	33,7%	16,2%	4,7%	18,1%
12	Sports and Athletes	21,3%	18,5%	9,1%	18,0%	15,2%	6,8%	14,8%
4	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	26,0%	16,0%	10,3%	38,2%	14,3%	8,0%	18,8%
8	Housing and Property Issues	32,4%	20,5%	11,4%	23,6%	9,6%	5,6%	17,2%
3	Climate Change and Environmentalism	34,7%	22,5%	8,5%	15,3%	8,0%	13,5%	17,1%
10	Media Bias and Journalism	19,5%	11,1%	5,5%	30,6%	13,2%	6,7%	14,4%
15	Total	29,9%	15,6%	8,2%	26,2%	12,5%	7,4%	16,6%

id	Keyword	Care	Proportionality	Equality	Authority	Loyalty	Purity	Average
14	Vaccination and COVID-19	7,5%	-1,4%	-3,1%	-1,9%	-5,1%	-0,3%	-0,7%
13	US Politics and the Biden Administration	-9,1%	-1,8%	-0,3%	9,5%	4,9%	-0,8%	0,4%
11	Royal Family and Monarchy	-3,3%	-0,6%	-2,6%	-2,3%	12,6%	1,2%	0,8%
5	Crime and Law Enforcement	6,5%	3,2%	2,6%	17,4%	-2,7%	0,8%	4,6%
6	Economic Policies and Inflation	-3,6%	4,9%	0,0%	-2,9%	-1,4%	-2,1%	-0,9%
1	Brexit and UK-EU Relations	-10,2%	-2,2%	-3,2%	-1,7%	6,3%	-3,1%	-2,4%
7	Gender Issues and Feminism	9,2%	1,6%	22,2%	-10,7%	-3,1%	7,1%	4,4%
2	"Cancel Culture" and Free Speech	-6,2%	4,2%	8,7%	0,8%	3,3%	1,3%	2,0%
9	Immigration and Refugee Crisis	-0,6%	-1,9%	2,5%	7,5%	3,6%	-2,6%	1,4%
12	Sports and Athletes	-8,6%	2,9%	0,9%	-8,3%	2,7%	-0,6%	-1,8%
4	Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	-3,9%	0,3%	2,1%	12,0%	1,8%	0,6%	2,1%
8	Housing and Property Issues	2,5%	4,8%	3,2%	-2,6%	-2,9%	-1,8%	0,5%
3	Climate Change and Environmentalism	4,7%	6,9%	0,3%	-10,9%	-4,5%	6,1%	0,4%
10	Media Bias and Journalism	-10,4%	-4,5%	-2,8%	4,4%	0,7%	-0,7%	-2,2%
15	Total	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%

Figure 27 - Moral Foundations across Key Topics (2021, without "Others", N = 52,057 comments).

Before discussing the individual moral foundations, we begin by examining the average "morality" of various key topics, as depicted in Figure 28. This average morality is derived from the data in the second table of Figure 27, specifically the column on the far right. The average value represents the extent to which each topic engages with multiple moral foundations rather than focusing on just one. It serves as an indicator of how broadly moral discourse is distributed across the different foundations for each topic.

Upon closer inspection of Figure 28, it becomes evident that the topic of Crime and Law Enforcement is the most morally charged on average. This means it engages with multiple moral foundations to a significant degree. For instance, Crime and Law Enforcement elicits responses related to the Care foundation, Authority, Equality, and Proportionality, making it a topic with

a wide-ranging moral resonance. In contrast, COVID-19 and Vaccination is primarily associated with the Care foundation, engaging less with other moral domains. Similarly, the topic of Gender Issues and Feminism strongly invokes Equality, while other moral foundations are less involved. This pattern indicates that the topics ranked higher – such as Crime and Law Enforcement, Gender Issues and Feminism, and Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism – are those that engage multiple moral foundations more evenly, creating a broader moral spectrum. At the lower end of the spectrum, topics such as Brexit and UK-EU Relations, Media Bias and Journalism, and Sports and Athletes, while still morally significant, tend to focus on one or two specific moral foundations rather than engaging a broader range. This distinction illustrates the varying degrees to which different key topics resonate with diverse moral concerns.

Topic	%
Crime and Law Enforcement	21,3%
Gender Issues and Feminism	21,0%
Conspiracy Theories and Skepticism	18,8%
"Cancel Culture" and Free Speech	18,7%
Immigration and Refugee Crisis	18,1%
Royal Family and Monarchy	17,5%
Housing and Property Issues	17,2%
Climate Change and Environmentalism	17,1%
US Politics and the Biden Administration	17,1%
Vaccination and COVID-19	15,9%
Economic Policies and Inflation	15,8%
Sports and Athletes	14,8%
Media Bias and Journalism	14,4%
Brexit and UK-EU Relations	14,3%

Figure 28 – Average "morality" of Daily Mail user comment topics (2021, N = 52,057 comments).

The analysis of key topics and their associated moral foundations reveals distinct patterns in how Daily Mail user comments reflect moral framing. Each topic engages specific moral concerns, which are often emotionally charged and politically significant.

The topic of **COVID-19 and vaccination** is predominantly framed through the **Care foundation**, as it centers on individuals expressing concern for their own health as well as the well-being of their family, friends, and broader social networks. This moral framing reflects a strong anxiety and the collective responsibility to protect others from harm. Many comments highlight fears that health authorities or political decision-makers are failing to take sufficient measures to mitigate harm and safeguard the population. Conversely, some commentators argue that political authorities are exaggerating the severity of the pandemic or using it as an opportunity to consolidate or expand their power. The following two examples are intended to illustrate this:

- *This is so sad. I am sorry for your loss. You look a lovely family. As you, we too only are going to the shops and work from home. It's very concerning. I do wish people would listen and stay home. I know lockdown is hard but at least it's temporary. Death isn't. You are in my thoughts and prayers.*
- *He is absolutely right it is about time the people stood up to this government. They are just moving the goalposts all the time just so they can have control. Burn your masks*

on 21 June and open everything up. Do what you want to do. Make sure your MP knows he won't be voted in again if he doesn't back the people who have put them in power.

The topic of **US Politics and the Biden Administration** is primarily framed through the moral foundation of **Authority**, focusing on the role of political leaders and representatives in exercising their authority responsibly and making sound decisions. Discussions often center on whether these figures are fulfilling their responsibilities as legitimate authority figures, with critiques of perceived failures or misuses of power. This topic is characterized by a predominance of conservative perspectives, where skepticism toward political leaders is common, including accusations of incompetence or divisive leadership. However, progressive viewpoints also appear, defending the legitimacy and actions of the Biden administration against what are seen as unfounded criticisms.

- *Get used to lies from the right about Biden more like. He is delivering what he promised as the article stated. Presumably you also believe the lies that the election was stolen and Obama wasn't born in the US.*
- *Looks like Biden is continuing Obama legacy as the great divider ready to tear this country apart. Have you heard a word from him in the last two days? Is he conscious? Is he a leader? Four more years of terrible democrat presidency which 80 million Americans oppose!*

The user comments addressing articles about the **Royal Family and the British monarchy** are primarily framed through the moral foundation of **Loyalty**. This provides a compelling example of why the Moral Foundations framework is so valuable, even for those who may not personally consider the Royal Family or monarchy to be significant topics. Understanding that these discussions revolve around loyalty—a fundamental moral value—helps to explain why they are so fervently debated. When people perceive certain members of the Royal Family as being disloyal to Britain or the monarchy, or alternatively view others as exemplary in their loyalty, it evokes strong emotional and moral reactions. This highlights the centrality of loyalty as a moral concern and explains why these discussions are so passionate. Loyalty, as a moral value, resonates deeply with people, making the Royal Family a particularly sensitive and significant topic of public discourse. Here are two examples addressing loyalty in context of the Royal Family:

- *A credit to the royals. She has dignity, integrity and above all is loyal. The future is bright for the royals, because of Kate and William.*
- *I will not donate to any charity associated with Meghan after the Oprah interview. It was disrespectful to this country and the Royal Family.*

The user comments in the context of articles addressing **Crime and Law Enforcement** frequently engage with the moral foundation of **Authority**. These discussions focus on the extent to which political authorities and decision-makers are perceived to effectively address real or perceived crime. This is a topic that often intersects with other issues, such as immigration, with crime being frequently associated with migrants in public discourse. As a result, the conversation around crime and law enforcement is intertwined with broader societal and political debates. At its core, however, this topic reflects a concern with whether political authorities are fulfilling their responsibilities to combat crime and maintain order. The comments reveal a

range of perspectives, from strong critiques of systemic failures to more nuanced evaluations of the effectiveness of specific policies or actions. This moral framing underscores the public's expectation that authority figures take decisive and effective action to address crime, while also revealing the complexities of public sentiment on the issue, as our examples show:

- *We have a major problem with the sexual and physical abuse of young girls in many towns across the country. The politician's, police and local authorities continue to deny the scale of it, even going so far as to cover it up.*
- *Although I believe this kid should get the death penalty I'm confused why they would charge him as an adult. Yes he did an adult crime but he is only 14. What's the point of having an adult system and a juvenile system? His crime is heinous but he is still a kid. Again I'm not against him being charged as an adult I've just always wondered where they set the line.*

The moral foundation most prominent in discussions about **Economic Policies and Inflation** is **Proportionality**, which represents one of the key dimensions of fairness. As already mentioned above, the original concept of the Fairness foundation by Jonathan Haidt encompassed the moral value of justice—a principle central to many societal and political debates. Over time, however, the concept of fairness was refined, recognizing that people have different understandings of what constitutes justice and fairness (Atari et al., 2023). This divergence is particularly apparent in ideological differences: individuals with rather left-leaning or liberal perspectives often equate fairness with Equality, advocating for the equal distribution of resources. In contrast, those with more conservative viewpoints interpret fairness through the lens of Proportionality, arguing that fairness and justice are achieved when rewards are distributed in proportion to effort or contribution. In the Daily Mail user comments, the principle of Proportionality is clearly dominant. Many commenters emphasize the importance of rewarding effort and contribution, often expressing frustration with policies or systems that are perceived to distribute resources equally without considering individual input or achievement. This contrasts with the less prevalent notion of equality, which is more focused on redistributive fairness and ensuring everyone receives the same resources, regardless of their effort or output. The contrasting notions of fairness shape the debates in the user comments on economic conditions and policies. Discussions often hinge on differing understandings of justice, with proportionality being the moral framing that underpins the majority of these conversations:

- *First of all, you can't "pull people out of poverty" they have to do it themselves. Secondly, raising the minimum wage by that much at once will cause mass inflation and the cost of basic things will go up. So the cost of living will go up and $15/hr isn't going to get you as far as it did before. It's basically a wash. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Basic law of nature. This ideology to just give people stuff is so ill advised. I remember when I was young making $7.25 and hour as a hostess while in college. That was 2006 and 2007. I had only enough money for the bare essentials. Struggling teaches you to manage money and builds character.*
- *Its impossible for them to sort it out, as we are a caring Country. We look after every one else in the World, except peaple who were born here and paid all there Taxes.*

Discussions surrounding **Brexit and UK-EU relations** engage multiple moral foundations, but the dominant framing is **Loyalty**, specifically loyalty to the United Kingdom in the broadest sense. This moral foundation underscores much of the discourse, reflecting a strong emphasis on national allegiance and the importance of prioritizing Britain's interests. In the context of user comments, loyalty is frequently intertwined with other moral frames, particularly Care and Harm, as many arguments center on the idea of protecting the UK from harm either caused or avoided by Brexit. Some commenters argue that Brexit was necessary to shield the nation from perceived negative impacts of EU membership, while others emphasize the harm Brexit has caused to the country. Similarly, notions of fairness also appear in the discussion, with differing perspectives on what is just or equitable in the context of the UK's departure from the EU. Another significant aspect of these discussions is the emphasis on sovereignty, which many commenters view as a key component of loyalty to Britain. Sovereignty, in this context, is framed as the ability for the UK to make its own decisions independently of the European Union. This view is closely tied to the perception that loyalty to the nation requires prioritizing domestic governance and resisting external influence from EU institutions.

- *Our economy will get stronger earlier than EU. Good job we voted brexit otherwise we would have been dragged down by the EU and their handling of Covid. He who laughs first laughs last as the saying goes.*
- *She doesn't know the meaning of the words true and fair. True and fair means that the majority of the British public voted for Brexit whether she and the other remoaners like it or not. That is what is true and faie is democracy but something the left don't like. If you don't agree with them you're in the wrong side.*

The topic of **Gender Issues and Feminism** is primarily framed through the moral foundation of **Fairness**, with a particular emphasis on **Equality,** in many cases from a conservative perspective. Discussions in this area focus on the deeply rooted societal questions of what is fair and just in the context of gender relations. The framing revolves around the concept of equality and its interpretation, as well as the practical and moral implications of striving for gender justice. This includes debates over what fairness means in specific contexts, such as representation in the workplace, the allocation of resources, or the recognition of historical injustices. Many comments reflect differing perspectives on how equality should be achieved and what it truly entails. For some, equality is about ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of gender, so that everyone has the same chance to succeed based on their abilities and merits. For others, it involves addressing systemic inequalities through measures that actively promote gender equity, such as policies aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership roles. Of course, the comments reveal tensions between progressive and conservative viewpoints on the topic. While progressive voices often advocate for structural changes to rectify historical imbalances, more conservative perspectives may question whether such efforts are fair or if they risk prioritizing identity over merit. This tension highlights the complexity of the fairness concept, as it intersects with deeply held beliefs about justice, meritocracy, and societal roles.

- *One would hope that these women are being promoted on the basis of their capabilities and experience rather than their gender or race.*

- *Gender issues have been with us for ever, it's just that many people of your age were (are) possibly too narrow minded and judgemental to accept it.*

The topic of **"Cancel Culture" and "Free Speech"** is a prominent and contentious area within the Daily Mail user comments, characterized by a strong sense of grievance about the perceived suppression of conservative or right-leaning views. Many commenters express the belief that there is a growing "cancel culture" targeting conservative perspectives, effectively silencing these viewpoints in public discourse. This narrative frequently frames the political and media mainstream as dominated by left-leaning, liberal, or even "woke" ideologies, often described in derogatory terms. The sentiment is that conservative voices are not afforded the same platform or respect as progressive ones, leading to what commenters perceive as a form of ideological censorship. The moral foundation that emerges most strongly in this discourse is **Equality**. Commenters argue that the principle of fairness and equal treatment is being violated because, in their view, conservative opinions are not given the same legitimacy or freedom of expression as progressive ideas. This perceived inequality is framed as a moral injustice, with commenters suggesting that public and institutional spaces are biased against them. Through the lens of equality, these discussions highlight the frustration and alienation felt by individuals who perceive themselves as excluded from the cultural and political mainstream. The moral argument centers on the demand for fairness in the treatment of differing viewpoints and the protection of free speech:

- *The WOKE media network (Which incidentally shouldn't be funded any longer) leapfrogs over facts, truths and evidence regularly; preferring to gamble with what their 'smart', woke advisors tell them. Common sense is a rare commodity among this lot.*
- *Conservative values have been under attack for a long time, and they are being cancelled. Marriage... man+woman, 1 each. Gone Gender... male or female, going fast. What is a man or woman... going fast. Responsibility equal with rights... just rights are left. Free speech... going real fast. Tolerance... gone.*

The topic of **Immigration and the Refugee Crisis** is another highly significant area of discussion within Daily Mail user comments, with the dominant moral foundation being **Authority**. While this discourse often includes a substantial number of racist and anti-immigration comments, the overarching theme is a profound distrust of political authorities and decision-makers in their handling of immigration. This distrust manifests in critiques of authorities either for failing to recognize, addressing, or effectively managing the perceived problems associated with immigration and the refugee crisis. Commenters frequently accuse political leaders and institutions of downplaying or minimizing the scale of immigration issues, while others criticize them for not taking sufficient action to address the situation. This moral framing highlights the tension between the public's expectations of authority figures to act decisively and the widespread perception that they are either incapable of or unwilling to do so. In addition to these critiques, some comments reflect more conspiratorial views, suggesting that immigration is part of a deliberate plan by political elites to harm the country or to consolidate their own

power. These conspiracy theories intertwine with broader concerns about authority, further eroding trust in political institutions. At its core, the discussion centers on the question of whether political authorities can be trusted to make the right decisions and to act in the best interests of the British people. This framing of authority underscores the expectation that leaders should prioritize the well-being and security of the nation, and the frustration when they are perceived to fail in this regard.

- *The Government have had plenty of time to make law allowing ALL illegals to be returned to France or point of origin. Put them all in prison.*
- *All of these migrants coming into America illegally will immediately be forced to become future democrats! It's all a ploy to destroy our beloved country. WE give them everything and we get back "nada." It's just the simple truth. Biden doesn't care about these immigrants one bit. He is just doing what he's been TOLD TO DO !!*

The moral foundation that emerges most prominently in comments addressing articles about **Sports and Athletes**, such as football, is **Loyalty**. These discussions often center on allegiance to a specific athlete, team, or club, with loyalty being the primary moral value that shapes the discourse. Commenters frequently express pride and commitment to their chosen teams or players, emphasizing the importance of dedication and respect within the sporting community. At the same time, perceived disloyalty—whether from athletes, managers, or fans—is a common source of frustration and criticism.

- *I've no problem with players and managers moving, to better themselves but I am disappointed that he didnt, at least, finish his contract. I know loyalty should be a two way street but the timing of this move is disrespectful, to Rangers. There will be plenty of other chances for him in the future, given the regularity of manager sackings in the premier league, which when you think about it, should worry him!*
- *I am a proud Chelsea fan watching academy prospects becoming integral part of a Chelsea champions league winning team. Just don't get Mbappe'd in your head, stay grounded and hungry so you can have 10+ years of trophy winning seasons with Chelsea. I believe in you Mason!*

A significant number of Daily Mail user comments expresses **conspiracy theories**, and the predominant moral foundation in these discussions is **Authority**. At the heart of conspiracy narratives lies the belief that a group of individuals, organizations, or social actors in positions of power are responsible for perceived harm or societal misfortune. This framing inherently revolves around distrust in authority, reflecting the conviction that those in positions of influence are not only failing to act in the public's best interest but are actively conspiring against it. The moral foundation of authority is central to these narratives, as they often posit that the very institutions or leaders meant to provide stability and protection are instead the source of harm. This distrust manifests in claims that societal challenges—ranging from economic hardships to political instability—are the result of deliberate actions by elites, governments, or other powerful actors. In addition to these more traditional conspiracy theories, some

comments (as our second example shows) also reflect broader anxieties about social and economic developments, such as deindustrialization, the decline of the middle class, or the erosion of social status and stability. These fears lead individuals to seek explanations for these unsettling changes, with conspiratorial thinking providing a framework for attributing blame to perceived authorities or elites.

- *THE GREAT RESET!!! Meanwhile Boris and the cabal launch the Gov.uk Pandemic Preparedness Partnership (PPP) with the Gates Foundation!! I've been saying all along it's the great reset under the guise of public health and climate change! See the government website and WEF for evidence!*
- *Pretty much ever since the mines close it destroyed our communities based all around them since the 80's we are still recovering from it. I live in Bradford once the world's textiles capital now there is no mills. Well they is a few still, but nothing in comparison. This is what happens when you get rid of all industry increase in hopeless and drug addiction look at detroit? Once also a working class great thriving city the sell out politicians In they suits didn't care less about they own American people they only care about they own money and gave they industries to China making they own people and country poorer for it exactly same as England selling out and giving all our industry to China making our own people poorer destroying communities. Its no wonder though the China modal is the modal of tyranny they want to spread all over the world so they want to make China rich because that's where the satanist system is gonna come from. Its all part of the NWO agenda. To destroy the west.*

When examining user comments on the topic of Housing and Property Issues, the predominant moral foundation is Proportionality. Discussions often center on the perceived fairness of housing policies and systems, with a particular focus on whether outcomes align with individual effort and contribution. Commenters express frustration about the lack of proportionality in access to housing, highlighting disparities between what people invest—financially and personally—and the opportunities available to them, such as the ability to purchase a home. This framing underscores a sense of injustice, where individuals feel that their hard work is not adequately rewarded within the current housing market. Moreover, debates about property taxes and housing development frequently invoke concerns about whether these systems are designed equitably, reflecting a broader moral demand for fairness that rewards effort while addressing systemic inefficiencies.

- *Yep, it's not proportional to the services provided/used just based as a % of the property value. Typical nonsense Labour thinking.*
- *We should be building on countryside. We should be building on brownfield. There needs to be a major debate about the affordably of homes in the UK. To finally get onto the housing ladder next year, would be the best Christmas present for me. Being 45 and still living at home with parents, makes me feel like a failure, despite the fact I have worked my backside off for 25 years. Financially I just cannot do it.*

When analyzing user comments on the topic of Climate Change, the predominant moral foundation is Purity. Discussions often revolve around the preservation or degradation of the natural environment, with strong opinions about whether climate change is human-made and

how environmental measures impact the world. This framing reflects a concern with maintaining the purity of nature, whether in criticizing human actions believed to harm the planet, such as meat consumption, or in questioning the effectiveness and environmental impact of renewable energy solutions like solar panels and wind power. Some commenters reject the scientific consensus on climate change, framing it as a form of ideological imposition, while others emphasize the moral obligation to protect the environment from human exploitation and cruelty.

- *Reopen the coal power stations. There is nothing 'green' about building these virtually useless solar panels (and windmills). Climate change is a religion based on pseudoscience. What is real though is that the lights will go out if we are reliant on unreliable energy sources.*
- *It doesn't matter where it comes from. If you eat meat and dairy, you are the problem, no matter how much you protest that you're not. In 20 years time we will look back at what we used to do to animals and amaze ourselves. In the meantime, selfish people continue to cause climate change and animal cruelty.*

The final topic that attracts significant attention in Daily Mail user comments is the perceived issue of **Media Bias in Journalism**, where the predominant moral foundation is **Authority**. Discussions center on a deep mistrust of mainstream, official, or editorial media, as well as public broadcasters, with many commenters expressing skepticism toward their credibility and intentions. This moral framing highlights the belief that the media, as an authoritative institution, fails in its responsibility to provide unbiased and truthful information. Instead, commenters often argue that the media selectively reports on issues, concealing or omitting important problems while promoting specific narratives, thereby manipulating public perception. The core concern is that the authority of the media is being misused, leading to a pervasive distrust in its role as an impartial and reliable source of information:

- *The MSM are just an extension of the government now. They committed to 320m to them already. It's their propaganda machine.*
- *You are wondering just what the heck is going on? Well it's all part of a manufactured crisis using a "plandemic". Western Govts and MSM have been infiltrated by placemen installed by the Elite. They are using COVID-19 as an old socialist style tactic for demoralisation. The goal is digitisation of everyone on the planet by using mandatory vaccines with certification (COVI-PASS and ID2020) as the vehicle. The agenda is totalitarianism to achieve UN AGENDA21 for redistribution of wealth, land use restrictions and forced reduction of ppulation).They intend to collapse world economies to impose UBI and their new digital crypto currency on the world, you and your money all being controlled by them (GLOBAL RESET). The normalisation stage will include monitoring of all usingChinese style 5G / AI social credit monitoring. Lockdowns continue until 2021 coordinated cyber attacks/blackouts will take place. Food shortages expected. Schwab, WEF and others who shall not be named are behind it.*

8. Conclusion

With our analysis, we have sought to demonstrate that one of the reasons why discussions around polarizing topics such as disinformation and conspiracy theories are so emotionally charged is that they often involve the negotiation of moral values. These values are understood to be universal – meaning that moral considerations are important to nearly everyone. However, people differ significantly in what they perceive as morally valuable, what they consider fair, loyal, or just, what they regard as harmful, and what they recognize as significant events. In this sense, while moral values are universal, individuals vary in how they interpret and prioritize them. Our findings show that the topics at hand are deeply infused with moral significance and identify the specific moral values that shape these debates. This helps explain why these discussions are so emotionally intense and why they are frequently associated with exaggeration, disinformation, or conspiracy theories. These topics resonate deeply with people's core moral beliefs, which amplifies the emotional investment in these issues. We believe that understanding the moral underpinnings of these discussions provides an important advantage. When addressing the emotions, disinformation, or conspiracy theories linked to these topics, it is crucial to recognize the moral frames through which they are shaped. This knowledge can serve as a foundation for developing countermeasures that engage with and address the same moral frames.

9. References

Abalakina-Paap, M. *et al.* (no date) 'Beliefs in Conspiracies', *Political Psychology Vol. 20, No. 3 (Sep., 1999), pp. 637-647* [Preprint]. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3792165.

Almodt, R. (2024) 'From criticism to conspiracies: The populist discourse of COVID-19 sceptics in Germany's Querdenken community on Telegram', *Discourse & Society*, 35(1), pp. 3–26. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265231191971.

Alonso, M.A. *et al.* (2021) 'Sentiment Analysis for Fake News Detection', *Electronics*, 10(11), p. 1348. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/electronics10111348.

Amlinger, C. (2022) *Gekränkte Freiheit: Aspekte des libertären Autoritarismus*. Erste Auflage, Originalausgabe. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Atari, M. *et al.* (2023) 'Morality beyond the WEIRD: How the nomological network of morality varies across cultures.', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 125(5), pp. 1157–1188. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000470.

Bagić Babac, M. (2023) 'Emotion analysis of user reactions to online news', *Information Discovery and Delivery*, 51(2), pp. 179–193. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/IDD-04-2022-0027.

Balzer, W. (2020) *Das Sensorische und die Gewalt: zum Seelenleben im digitalen Zeitalter*. Originalausgabe. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag (Imago).

Banko, M., MacKeen, B. and Ray, L. (2020) 'A Unified Taxonomy of Harmful Content', in *Proceedings of the Fourth Workshop on Online Abuse and Harms*. *Proceedings of the Fourth Workshop on Online Abuse and Harms*, Online: Association for Computational Linguistics, pp. 125–137. Available at: https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2020.alw-1.16.

Barker, E.D. and Riley, H. (2022) 'The role of trauma and mental health in violent extremism'.

Beiró, M.G. *et al.* (2023) 'Moral Narratives Around the Vaccination Debate on Facebook', in *Proceedings of the ACM Web Conference 2023*. *WWW '23: The ACM Web Conference 2023*, Austin TX USA: ACM, pp. 4134–4141. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1145/3543507.3583865.

Berg, W. (2024) 'Origins of the "Deep State" Trope', *Critical Review*, pp. 1–38. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/08913811.2023.2305537.

Blondel, V.D. *et al.* (2008) 'Fast unfolding of communities in large networks', *Journal of Statistical Mechanics: Theory and Experiment*, 2008(10), p. P10008. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-5468/2008/10/P10008.

Borgatti, S.P. and Grosser, T.J. (2015) 'Structural Equivalence: Meaning and Measures', in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Elsevier, pp. 621–625. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.43120-X.

Bourdieu, P. (1988) *Homo academicus*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2014) *On the state: lectures at the Collège de France, 1989 - 1992*. Edited by P. Champagne et al. Translated by D. Fernbach. Cambridge Malden, MA]: Polity.

Bourdieu, P. *et al.* (2021) *Forms of capital: lectures at the Collège de France (1983-1984)*. Translated by P. Collier. Cambridge, UK Medford, MA: Polity (General sociology, Volume 3).

Bovet, A. and Grindrod, P. (2022) 'Organization and evolution of the UK far-right network on Telegram', *Applied Network Science*, 7(1), p. 76. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s41109-022-00513-8.

Bowes, S.M., Costello, T.H. and Tasimi, A. (2023) 'The conspiratorial mind: A meta-analytic review of motivational and personological correlates.', *Psychological Bulletin*, 149(5–6), pp. 259–293. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000392.

Bude, H. (2018) *Society of fear*. 1. Auflage. Translated by J. Spengler. Cambridge Medford, MA: Polity.

Burt, R.S. (2007) *Brokerage and closure: an introduction to social capital*. 1. publ. in paperback. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Clifford, S. *et al.* (2015) 'Moral foundations vignettes: a standardized stimulus database of scenarios based on moral foundations theory', *Behavior Research Methods*, 47(4), pp. 1178–1198. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-014-0551-2.

Cowen, A.S. and Keltner, D. (2017) 'Self-report captures 27 distinct categories of emotion bridged by continuous gradients', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(38). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1702247114.

Cunningham, D. and Everton, S. (2022) 'A Network Analysis of Twitter's Crackdown on the QAnon Conversation', *Journal of Social Structure*, 23(1), pp. 4–27. Available at: https://doi.org/doi:10.21307/joss-2022-002.

Curry, O.S., Jones Chesters, M. and Van Lissa, C.J. (2019) 'Mapping morality with a compass: Testing the theory of "morality-as-cooperation" with a new questionnaire', *Journal of Research in Personality*, 78, pp. 106–124. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2018.10.008.

Czaika, M. and Reinprecht, C. (2022) 'Migration Drivers: Why Do People Migrate?', in P. Scholten (ed.) *Introduction to Migration Studies*. Cham: Springer International Publishing (IMISCOE Research Series), pp. 49–82. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92377-8_3.

Diaz Ruiz, C. (2023) 'Disinformation on digital media platforms: A market-shaping approach', *New Media & Society*, p. 14614448231207644. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231207644.

Doosje, B. *et al.* (2016) 'Terrorism, radicalization and de-radicalization', *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 11, pp. 79–84. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.06.008.

Douglas, K.M., Sutton, R.M. and Cichocka, A. (2017) 'The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 26(6), pp. 538–542. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721417718261.

van Eerten, J.-J. *et al.* (2017) 'Developing a social media response to radicalization'. Available at: https://repository.wodc.nl/handle/20.500.12832/2215.

Elias, N. *et al.* (2010) *The civilizing process: sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations*. Rev. ed. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Enders, A.M. *et al.* (2023) 'The Relationship Between Social Media Use and Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories and Misinformation', *Political Behavior*, 45(2), pp. 781–804. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09734-6.

Erisen, C. (2020) 'Anger in Political Decision Making', in Erisen, C., *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.997.

Farzindar, A. and Inkpen, D. (2015) *Natural Language Processing for Social Media*. Cham: Springer International Publishing (Synthesis Lectures on Human Language Technologies). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-02157-2.

FARZINDAR, A.A.I., DIANA (2020) *NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING FOR SOCIAL MEDIA, THIRD EDITION*. S.l.: SPRINGER INTERNATIONAL PU.

Geering, K. (1975) 'Lipase and unspecific esterase activity in the fat body of Aedes aegypti L', *Acta Tropica*, 32(3), pp. 273–276.

Gerts, D. *et al.* (2021) '"Thought I'd Share First" and Other Conspiracy Theory Tweets from the COVID-19 Infodemic: Exploratory Study', *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance*, 7(4), p. e26527. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2196/26527.

Girard, R. and Girard, R. (1984) *Deceit, desire, and the novel: self and other in literary structure*. 3th print. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.

Girard, R. and Girard, R. (2011) *I see Satan fall like lightning*. 10. printing. New York: Orbis Books [u.a.].

Girard, R., Oughourlian, J.-M. and Lefort, G. (2016) *Things hidden since the foundation of the world*. Revelations edition. Translated by S. Bann and M.L. Metteer. London Oxford New York New Delhi Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic (Bloomsbury revelations).

Gkinopoulos, T., Truelsen Elbæk, C. and Mitkidis, P. (2022) 'Morality in the echo chamber: The relationship between belief in COVID-19 conspiracy theories and public health support and the mediating role of moral identity and morality-as-cooperation across 67 countries', *PLOS ONE*. Edited by P.K. Jonason, 17(9), p. e0273172. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0273172.

Goertzel, T. (1994) 'Belief in Conspiracy Theories', *Political Psychology*, 15(4), p. 731. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/3791630.

Goldenberg, A. and Willer, R. (2023) 'Amplification of emotion on social media', *Nature Human Behaviour*, 7(6), pp. 845–846. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01604-x.

Goreis, A. and Voracek, M. (2019) 'A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Psychological Research on Conspiracy Beliefs: Field Characteristics, Measurement Instruments, and Associations With Personality Traits', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, p. 205. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00205.

Grootendorst, M. (2022) 'BERTopic: Neural topic modeling with a class-based TF-IDF procedure'. arXiv. Available at: https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2203.05794.

Gutiérrez, L. and Keith, B. (2019) 'A Systematic Literature Review on Word Embeddings', in J. Mejia et al. (eds) *Trends and Applications in Software Engineering*. Cham: Springer International Publishing (Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing), pp. 132–141. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01171-0_12.

Habermas, J. (2022) *Ein neuer Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit und die deliberative Politik*. Erste Auflage, Originalausgabe. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Haidt, J. (2003) 'The Moral Emotions', in *Handbook of affective sciences*.

Haidt, J. (2013) *The righteous mind: why good people are divided by politics and religion*. London: Penguin Books.

Han, E. *et al.* (2024) 'Association of personality traits and socio-environmental factors with COVID-19 pandemic-related conspiratorial thinking in the D-A-CH region', *SN Social Sciences*, 4(2), p. 41. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-023-00790-9.

Harrang, C. (2023) 'Truth and lies: psychoanalytic perspectives', *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83(4), pp. 443–464. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09431-9.

Harris, K., Gringart, E. and Drake, D. (2014) 'Understanding the role of social groups in radicalisation', *Australian Security and Intelligence Conference* [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4225/75/57A83235C833D.

Harsin, J. (2015) 'Regimes of Posttruth, Postpolitics, and Attention Economies', *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 8(2), pp. 327–333. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12097.

Hayes, C. (2012) *Twilight of the elites: America after meritocracy*. First Paperback Edition. New York: Broadway Paperbacks.

Hirschhäuser, V. and Winter, S. (2024) 'Moral Comments in Social Media: Analyzing the Role of Ideology-Matching Moral Framing and Impression Motivation in the Persuasive Effect of User Comments on YouTube', *Mass Communication and Society*, pp. 1–26. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2024.2415019.

Hopp, F.R. *et al.* (2020) *The Extended Moral Foundations Dictionary (eMFD): Development and Applications of a Crowd-Sourced Approach to Extracting Moral Intuitions from Text*. preprint. PsyArXiv. Available at: https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/924gq.

Horberg, E.J. *et al.* (2009) 'Disgust and the moralization of purity.', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(6), pp. 963–976. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017423.

Hutcherson, C.A. and Gross, J.J. (2011) 'The moral emotions: A social–functionalist account of anger, disgust, and contempt.', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(4), pp. 719–737. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022408.

Imhoff, R. *et al.* (2022) 'Conspiracy mentality and political orientation across 26 countries', *Nature Human Behaviour*, 6(3), pp. 392–403. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01258-7.

Imperati, V. *et al.* (2023) 'The Conspiracy Money Machine: Uncovering Telegram's Conspiracy Channels and their Profit Model'. arXiv. Available at: http://arxiv.org/abs/2310.15977 (Accessed: 16 April 2024).

Keuchenius, A., Törnberg, P. and Uitermark, J. (2021) 'Why it is important to consider negative ties when studying polarized debates: A signed network analysis of a Dutch cultural controversy on Twitter', *PloS One*, 16(8), p. e0256696. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256696.

Keyes, R. (2004) *The post-truth era: dishonesty and deception in contemporary life*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Koleva, S.P. *et al.* (2012) 'Tracing the threads: How five moral concerns (especially Purity) help explain culture war attitudes', *Journal of Research in Personality*, 46(2), pp. 184–194. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2012.01.006.

Kubin, E. *et al.* (2024) 'Understanding news-related user comments and their effects: a systematic review', *Frontiers in Communication*, 9, p. 1447457. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2024.1447457.

Kurzwelly, J., Pérez, M. and Spiegel, A.D. (2023) 'Identity politics and social justice', *Dialectical Anthropology*, 47(1), pp. 5–18. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-023-09686-9.

La Morgia, M., Mei, A. and Mongardini, A.M. (2023) 'TGDataset: a Collection of Over One Hundred Thousand Telegram Channels'. arXiv. Available at: http://arxiv.org/abs/2303.05345 (Accessed: 22 September 2023).

Lakoff, G. (2009) *The political mind: a cognitive scientist's guide to your brain and its politics; [with a new preface]*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Lal, R. (2016) 'Beyond COP 21: Potential and challenges of the "4 per Thousand" initiative', *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, 71(1), pp. 20A-25A. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2489/jswc.71.1.20A.

Landmann, H. and Hess, U. (2018) 'Testing moral foundation theory: Are specific moral emotions elicited by specific moral transgressions?', *Journal of Moral Education*, 47(1), pp. 34–47. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2017.1350569.

Leman, P.J. and Cinnirella, M. (2013) 'Beliefs in conspiracy theories and the need for cognitive closure', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00378.

Leone, L., Giacomantonio, M. and Lauriola, M. (2019) 'Moral foundations, worldviews, moral absolutism and belief in conspiracy theories', *International Journal of Psychology*, 54(2), pp. 197–204. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12459.

Liu, B. (2015) *Sentiment Analysis: Mining Opinions, Sentiments, and Emotions*. 1st edn. Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139084789.

Malik, M., Youk, S. and Weber, R. (2024) 'Beyond the Screen: Exploring Moral Understanding via User Comments on YouTube Short Films', *Journal of Media Psychology*, 36(4), pp. 231–243. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000430.

Marx, K., Lobin, H. and Schmidt, A. (eds) (2020) 'Zwischen Deliberation und Emotionalisierung: Interaktionsstrukturen in Sozialen Medien', in *Deutsch in Sozialen Medien*. De Gruyter, pp. 123–146. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110679885-007.

Mertens, W. (2018) *Psychoanalytische Schulen im Gespräch über die Konzepte Wilfred R. Bions*. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag (Bibliothek der Psychoanalyse).

Miani, A., Hills, T. and Bangerter, A. (2022) 'Interconnectedness and (in)coherence as a signature of conspiracy worldviews', *Science Advances*, 8(43), p. eabq3668. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abq3668.

Miotto, N. and Droogan, J. (2024) '"Stand Against the Wiles of the Devil": Interpreting QAnon as a Pseudo-Christian Extremist Movement', *Critical Sociology*, p. 08969205241228744. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205241228744.

Mohammad, S.M. and Turney, P.D. (2013) 'Crowdsourcing a Word-Emotion Association Lexicon'. Available at: https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.1308.6297.

Nejat, P., Heirani-Tabas, A. and Nazarpour, M.M. (2023) 'Moral foundations are better predictors of belief in COVID-19 conspiracy theories than the Big Five personality traits', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, p. 1201695. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1201695.

Nielsen, F.Å. (2011) 'A new ANEW: Evaluation of a word list for sentiment analysis in microblogs'. Available at: https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.1103.2903.

Nooy, W. de, Mrvar, A. and Batagelj, V. (2011) *Exploratory social network analysis with Pajek*. Rev. and expanded 2. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Structural analysis in the social sciences, 34).

Nyhan, B. (2021) 'Why the backfire effect does not explain the durability of political misperceptions', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(15), p. e1912440117. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1912440117.

OpenAI *et al.* (2023) 'GPT-4 Technical Report'. arXiv. Available at: https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2303.08774.

Papaioannou, K., Pantazi, M. and Van Prooijen, J. (2023) 'Is democracy under threat? Why belief in conspiracy theories predicts autocratic attitudes', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 53(5), pp. 846–856. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2939.

Peeters, S. and Hagen, S. (2022) 'The 4CAT Capture and Analysis Toolkit: A Modular Tool for Transparent and Traceable Social Media Research', *Computational Communication Research*, 4(2), pp. 571–589. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5117/CCR2022.2.007.HAGE.

Peeters, S. and Willaert, T. (2022) 'Telegram and Digital Methods: Mapping Networked Conspiracy Theories through Platform Affordances', *M/C Journal*, 25(1). Available at: https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2878.

Pivetti, M. *et al.* (2021) 'Conspiracy beliefs and attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccinations: A conceptual replication study in Finland', *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*, 15, p. 183449092110398. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/18344909211039893.

Pomerantsev, P. (2020) *This is not propaganda: adventures in the war against reality*. Paperback edition. London: Faber.

RAPHAEL, L. (2023) *BEYOND COAL AND STEEL: a social history of western europe after the boom*. S.l.: POLITY PRESS.

Reddy, W.M. (2009) *The navigation of feeling: a framework for the history of emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511512001.

Rezapour, R., Dinh, L. and Diesner, J. (2021) 'Incorporating the Measurement of Moral Foundations Theory into Analyzing Stances on Controversial Topics', in *Proceedings of the 32st ACM Conference on Hypertext and Social Media*. *HT '21: 32nd ACM Conference on Hypertext and Social Media*, Virtual Event USA: ACM, pp. 177–188. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1145/3465336.3475112.

Schulze, H. *et al.* (2022) 'Far-right conspiracy groups on fringe platforms: a longitudinal analysis of radicalization dynamics on Telegram', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 28(4), pp. 1103–1126. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565221104977.

Simon, M. *et al.* (2022) 'Linked in the dark: A network approach to understanding information flows within the Dutch Telegramsphere', *Information, Communication & Society*, pp. 1–25. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2022.2133549.

Sloan, L. and Quan-Haase, A. (2016) *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications Ltd. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473983847.

Smith, D.S. (2019) 'Shaping the modern world with a stone-age brain: Brexit and the Moral Foundations Theory', *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 7(2), pp. 863–889. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v7i2.1032.

Social network analysis methods and applications (2012). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thiel, P. (2003) 'The Straussian Moment', *Policy Review, no. 117 (October 2003): 33–42.* [Preprint].

Thielmann, I. and Hilbig, B.E. (2023) 'Generalized Dispositional Distrust as the Common Core of Populism and Conspiracy Mentality', *Political Psychology*, 44(4), pp. 789–805. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12886.

Thompson, J.A. (2017) 'Framing and Moral Motives: The Interaction Between Moral Foundations and Political Identity in Predicting Motives'. Available at: https://doi.org/10.25710/1HPF-QB98.

Thurman, N. (2018) 'Newspaper Consumption in the Mobile Age: Re-assessing multi-platform performance and market share using "time-spent"', *Journalism Studies*, 19(10), pp. 1409–1429. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1279028.

Törnberg, P. (2018) 'Echo chambers and viral misinformation: Modeling fake news as complex contagion', *PLOS ONE*. Edited by C.T. Bauch, 13(9), p. e0203958. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0203958.

Törnberg, P. *et al.* (2021) 'Modeling the emergence of affective polarization in the social media society', *PLOS ONE*. Edited by A.B. Mahmoud, 16(10), p. e0258259. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0258259.

Trager, J. *et al.* (2022) 'The Moral Foundations Reddit Corpus'. Available at: https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2208.05545.

Urman, A. and Katz, S. (2022) 'What they do in the shadows: examining the far-right networks on Telegram', *Information, Communication & Society*, 25(7), pp. 904–923. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1803946.

Van Bavel, J.J. and Pereira, A. (2018) 'The Partisan Brain: An Identity-Based Model of Political Belief', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 22(3), pp. 213–224. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2018.01.004.

Van Prooijen, J. and Douglas, K.M. (2018) 'Belief in conspiracy theories: Basic principles of an emerging research domain', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 48(7), pp. 897–908. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2530.

Vogler, D., Rauchfleisch, A. and Schwaiger, L. (2024) 'The System Is Corrupted, and the Mainstream Media Is Lying to us! Exploring the Relation Between Affinity Toward Conspiracy Myths and Alternative News Media Usage', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 36(1), p. edad044. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edad044.

Walter, A.S. and Redlawsk, D.P. (2023) 'The Effects of Politician's Moral Violations on Voters' Moral Emotions', *Political Behavior*, 45(3), pp. 1191–1217. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09749-z.

Williamson, V. *et al.* (2022) 'The Relationship between of Moral Injury and Radicalisation: A Systematic Review', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 45(11), pp. 977–1003. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2021.1961706.

World Economic Forum (2023) 'The Global Risks Report 2023. 18th Edition'. Available at: https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2023.pdf.

Yaşar, M. and Akgün, S. (2023) 'Duyguların Ahlaki Temeller ile İlişkisi', *Psikoloji Çalışmaları / Studies in Psychology*, 0(0), pp. 0–0. Available at: https://doi.org/10.26650/SP2022-1110045.

Zick, A. and Küpper, B. (eds) (2021) *Die geforderte Mitte: rechtsextreme und demokratiegefährdende Einstellungen in Deutschland 2020/21*. Bonn: Dietz.

Zick, A. et al. (2023): *Die distanzierte Mitte Rechtsextreme und demokratiegefährdende Einstellungen in Deutschland 2022/23*. 1. Auflage (2023). Bonn: Dietz, J H.