

Empathy or Outrage? Framing and Tone in Abortion Discourse on X During the
2024 Election

Communication Science: Thesis

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01.07.2025

Word Count: 11976

Abstract

Social media has transformed how political messages are crafted, facilitated, and disseminated to the public. Recent research has shifted focus to how new media can influence public opinion, specifically in environments of high polarisation such as the United States. Following the ‘Dobbs v. Jackson’ ruling, abortion policy on X (formerly Twitter) has shifted into an emotionally charged battleground, offering a unique opportunity to explore how political actors use rhetorical strategies. This thesis investigates how presidential candidates, affiliated organisations, and political influencers use frames and tones in their tweets regarding abortion during the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Using a qualitative content analysis of 999 tweets ($n = 333$ per actor type), and a codebook across nine frames and eight tones developed through deductive and inductive methods. The findings reveal that frame and tone choices systematically align with actor identity and their communicative goals. Moreover, sentiment analysis and chi-square testing validate that these rhetorical strategies are not randomly applied but systematically applied. The findings reveal that frame and tone choices systematically align with actor identity and communicative goals. Additional sentiment analysis and chi-square testing confirmed that these rhetorical strategies are not randomly applied but strategically constructed. Ultimately, this thesis contributes to the growing framework of framing (Entman, 1993), tone (Pipal et al., 2024) and affective political communication (Papacharissi, 2024) by highlighting the emotional dimension of framing and tone within political digital discourse.

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1 Introduction

Digital media, specifically social media, has significantly revolutionised political communication in the 21st century. Platforms such as X (formerly known as Twitter), TikTok, and Reddit have taken precedence over traditional media as a means for politicians to engage directly with the audience and shape public opinion (Sugihartono, 2024). Driven by several factors, including the weakening of traditional news gatekeepers, democratisation of information, and the disruption of conventional media business models (Lata, 2024), researchers have been left to reconsider how new media can begin to influence public opinion, specifically in environments of high polarisation such as the United States. In particular, affective polarisation in the United States has intensified in recent years, as their political two-party system (democratic and republican) increasingly reflects deep cultural divisions (Nelson, 2022). As a result, political identities are often categorised into ‘culturally conservative’ majorities and ‘culturally liberal’ minorities (Young et al., 2024), a divide further emphasised by shifting party compositions, racial divides, and socio-political contexts (Boxell et al., 2020).

However, this shift is not only unique to the U.S.; social media has transformed campaign strategies, political discourse, and public engagement worldwide, with varying effects across different political systems (Reisach, 2021). Within countries such as Germany, digital media has taken a prominent role in political engagement, beyond election periods, as a tool for activism and as a mechanism for state control (Graham, 2020). Whilst these global developments exemplify the broad influence of digital media, the United States presents a distinctive landscape, where issues such as abortion have become focal points of political conflict and public discourse.

Abortion as a social issue has become a long-standing, contentious, and intensely polarising topic within U.S. politics, divided by moral, legal, and ideological beliefs across the political spectrum. In the past two years, it has increasingly dominated the political agenda in response to the Supreme Court’s decision on ‘Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization’ in 2022, which overturned the original legislation of ‘Roe v. Wade’ (U.S. Supreme Court, 2022), making it a central point of legal and political conflict across the U.S. As a result of this reversal, abortion policy is evoking strong visceral emotional reactions from the public (Rao et al., 2023), becoming a key issue in candidate messaging, voter engagement, and public discourse.

Alongside its growing traction in political discourse, the abortion debate has increasingly shifted into social media, where candidates, advocacy organisations, influencers, and the public engage in digital activism, narrative framing, and voter persuasion. Whilst various actors appeal to legal rights, healthcare access, or personal autonomy, the opposition relies on moral, religious, or ideological arguments to shape public sentiment, contributing to online diversity and polarisation (Daly, 2022). This evolving digital discourse directly fuels the broader political climate: in the context of the U.S. landscape, the 2024 presidential elections present a significant shift compared to the previous political environment. Historically, abortion discourse was shaped by institutional actors and traditional media, typically framed around precedent and partisan stances (Felix, 2017). However, the reinvigoration of abortion as a mobilising issue was prompted by the ‘2022 Dobbs’ decision, leading to an escalation in political engagement across Democratic and Republican parties (Palacio, 2022). Surveys conducted after the shift suggest that abortion access has become a top priority for a significant part of the electorate, especially in swing states (Pew Research Center, 2022). Demonstrating abortion policy as no longer an outlier, but central to the identity of political parties, and a decisive factor in voter behaviour, candidate viability, and policy outcomes.

Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of ‘Dobbs’, abortion shifted from a Constitutional legal right to a review-based state-level issue, resurging a renewed sense of activism and urgency. This shift has made the tone of public discourse more polarised and emotionally charged, especially on platforms such as X, where political actors increasingly rely on personal testimonies, moral appeals, and identity-driven rhetoric to influence public opinion (Palacio, 2022; Center for Reproductive Rights, 2024). Thus, the 2024 election, the first presidential election since the ‘Dobbs’ decision, provides a unique opportunity to examine how political actors strategically frame abortion at a time when the legal landscape, public sentiment, and political status are dynamically evolving.

Despite the growing significance of abortion in online political discourse, limited research has explored how political actors frame the topic within the context of the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Although prior literature has examined abortion framing in institutional and media contexts, limited research has explored how framing differs between individuals or how digital platforms shape political communication. This thesis aims to bridge this gap by analysing

how presidential candidates, organisations, and political influencers use framing and tone as strategic tools to shape public discourse and mobilise voters on social media. Accordingly, this study's central research question is: ‘How do political actors on X use frames and tone about the abortion discourse during the 2024 U.S. presidential election?’.

To answer the research question, the following sections build a conceptual foundation by reviewing key literature on social media, framing theory, and tone within political discourse. This is followed by explaining the methodological approach used to analyse the selected tweets. The results are subsequently presented and discussed in context with the broader political and communicative landscape, concluding with reflections on the study’s implications for understanding digital political engagement in highly polarised societies.

2 Theoretical Framework

The following section aims to introduce the theories and concepts utilised within this paper, specifically (2.1) Social Media, (2.2) Framing Theory and Types, (2.3) Tones, and (2.4) Political Actors regarding the abortion discourse within the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election.

2.1 Social Media

Driven by advancements in digital technology, media has continuously evolved; specifically, social media has surpassed its initial target, transforming political communication in how political messages are crafted, disseminated, and received. Divided into three phases as Tasente (2021) outlines: (1) “The Age of The Newspapers”; (2) “The Age of Television”; and (3) “The Postmodern Period”. These phases meaningfully reflect the gradual shift of communication strategies, particularly the relationship between politicians and the public. In the age of newspapers, communication was slow, text-heavy, and unidirectional, offering in-depth reporting but limited immediacy and emotional appeal (Tasente, 2021). Whilst the age of the television introduced visual storytelling and broadcasting immediately, allowing for political figures to develop a personal image and appeal directly to broader audiences, it still typically flowed one way (Tasente, 2021). The postmodern phase marked a radical change, as social media enabled real-time engagement, interactivity, and responsiveness (Tasente, 2021).

Building on Tasente’s (2021) evolutionary model, social media dramatically reshaped political messaging concerning emotionality and accessibility. Where newspapers and television typically filtered political narratives through network control (Cusion et al., 2018), digital platforms remove this barrier, allowing political figures to speak directly to their audiences. For example, known politicians, ‘Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez’ and ‘Ilhan Omar’, hosted a unique voter outreach event, streaming a popular game, ‘Among Us’, on the platform ‘Twitch’. Allowing users to live-stream video games, the event accumulated up to 439,000 viewers in real-time and a total of 5.2 million views, amassing engagement typically considered a rarity for politicians, specifically for reaching non-traditional audiences (Nolau, 2020).

Consequently, in the context of abortion discourse, social media has become a significant environment where pro-choice and pro-life actors actively compete to shape public perception.

Unlike slower, one-way communication styles of newspaper and TV, X offers short, emotionally charged, and visually driven messages to circulate rapidly among users (Jackson et al., 2020). Hashtags like #RoeVWade or @AbortionIsHealthcare act as digital framing tools, clustering discourse around specific narratives (Gligoric et al., 2018). Moreover, with character limits on social media platforms such as X, political actors are expected to compress arguments into highly salient and polarising frames, commonly called ‘microframes’ (Kwak, 2021). These microframes highlight how digital media has reshaped communication by prioritising emotional impact, ideological clarity, and rapid dissemination.

Thereby, social media, specifically X, has evolved into a highly polarised and performative environment for abortion discourse, where messages are not only circulated rapidly but also escalate emotionally, typically designed to mobilise support or discredit opposition. As such, this thesis positions X as a central foreground through which abortion framing during the 2024 U.S. presidential election is examined, focusing on how political actors construct meaning through both framing and tone in a rapidly shifting digital landscape.

2.2 Framing Theory and Types

Framing theory provides a foundational perspective for analysing how political messages are constructed to shape and influence interpretation. First introduced in psychology by Kahneman and Tversky (1981), framing highlights how different presentations of the same information can lead to different audience interpretations. Entman (1993) and Snow and Benford (2000) later adapted this concept to media and political contexts. According to Entman (1993), to frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text” (p. 52). Emphasising the role of salience in shaping perception by defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgements and suggesting solutions (Entman, 1993). Building on this, Snow and Benford (2000) categorised framing into three core functions: diagnostic (defining problems), prognostic (diagnosing causes), and motivational (suggesting solutions).

In political communication, framing allows political actors to develop narratives that align with their ideological positions and emotionally resonate with the audience. For example, Copenhaver et al. (2023) found that Democratic congress members would frame the issue of gun

violence as a question of outrage or empathy, in an attempt to appeal to different sets of values and emotions. This study utilised framing theory to push the boundaries of viewing messages at surface levels and instead, understand the underlying meaning of how messages are constructed, repeated, and circulated within digital political communication.

Drawing from existing literature on abortion discourse, as seen in Larsson et al. (2015), Stambolis-Ruhstofer et al. (2024), Thomson (2024), and inductive analysis of digital messaging, this thesis identifies nine dominant frame types. These frames were selected based on recurring patterns, thematic focus, and frequency of use among political actors. Building on Entman's (1993) emphasis on salience and Snow and Benford's (2000) diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing tasks, the identified frames reflect how political actors define problems, assign responsibility, and call for action in abortion discourse. Moreover, to support analytical clarity, the frames have been grouped into three overarching categories: ideological/ethical frames, institutional/political frames, and narrative/emotional frames. These categories aim to reflect the messages' content and the strategic aims behind them. As such, the following sections outline each frame category in detail, supported by examples drawn from the dataset.

2.2.1 Ideological and Ethical Frames

2.2.1.1 *Bodily Autonomy and Reproductive Freedom*

Aligned with the pro-choice movement, this frame portrays abortion as a fundamental human right, centring on an individual's autonomy to make decisions about their own body without political interference (Letzing, 2025). As outlined in the theoretical framework, this frame serves as a diagnostic function, identifying the problem as state or political control over reproductive health, and as a prognostic function, proposing that the solution lies in reaffirming bodily autonomy and legal protections (Snow & Benford, 2000). Rooted in a feminist perspective, prioritising women's human rights, particularly sexual and reproductive health (UNHR, 2025). The implementation of this frame aims to redirect focus to the agency of the individual seeking an abortion (Nyinawagaba, 2024).

Typically used in response to restrictive abortion legislation, it aims to counter narratives grounded in opposing frames, such as fetal personhood or religious morality (Banu, 2025).

Emphasising control over bodily autonomy, it performs a motivational framing function by resonating with values of personal liberty and gender equality. As such, it functions strategically to counter opposing ideological narratives and mobilise voter support.

2.2.1.2 Fetal Personhood and Rights to Life

As previously mentioned, this frame directly opposes narratives of bodily autonomy by asserting that life begins at conception; thus, the fetus holds inherent rights, specifically, the right to be born (Pregnancy Justice, 2025; Banu, 2025). Drawing on legal, constitutional, and emotional appeals, it frames abortion as a violation of fetal rights and reframes public discourse around the unborn rather than the pregnant individual (Maguire & Murphy, 2023).

This frame applies diagnostic framing by defining abortion as the unjust ending of a life, and motivational framing by appealing to empathy, moral outrage, and protective instincts. Typically invoked in support of restrictive abortion policies, this frame has proven effective in shaping public and legal discourse around rulings such as ‘Dobbs v. Jackson’ (Daly, 2022).

2.2.1.3 Religious and Moral Frame

Religion and morality frames are prominent in U.S. abortion discourse, shaping perception through moral and spiritual perspectives (Hill, 2023). Founded in religious doctrine and ethical worldview, this frame interprets life as sacred from conception, presenting abortion as neither a legal nor a political matter, but as a moral wrong (Combellick, 2021).

Predominantly employed by pro-life organisations and conservative political actors, this frame leverages on religious language, such as references to God, divine judgement, and the sanctity of life, as a means to invoke higher moral authority (Frohworth et al., 2018). It also promotes traditional gender roles and family values, portraying motherhood as a spiritual duty and abortion as a violation of natural order or moral law (Shever, 2003). Through diagnostic framing, it identifies abortion as a moral failure, whilst motivational framing calls to religious responsibility and cultural values, encouraging opposition to abortion on spiritual grounds.

2.2.2 Institutional and Political Frames

2.2.2.1 *State vs. Federal Control*

This frame debates jurisdiction over abortion policy, highlighting the growing tension between individual states' rights and the overarching federal authority in the wake of 'Dobbs v. Jackson'. This frame positions abortion access as neither a moral nor a health issue, but rather a question of governance and legal jurisdiction (Mayer et al., 2023).

Following the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, the geopolitical disparities of abortion laws have amplified, with several states sanctioning total bans, whilst others are reinforcing the protection of abortion procedures (KFF, 2025). This divide is framed on social media as either a victory for democratic self-governance or a failure of national consistency in protecting constitutional rights (Daly, 2022; Kimport & Kreitzer, 2023).

Supporters of state-level control frequently reference the Tenth Amendment and the Supreme Court's phrasing that power should be returned "to the people and their elected representatives" (SCOTUS, 2021). Alternatively, critics argue that reproductive rights should not be contingent on where you live, and that abortion access is a civil and human right (Daly, 2022). As such, this frame combines both diagnostic and prognostic framing to debate authority over abortion legislation and advocate for either decentralisation or federal protection.

2.2.2.2 *Healthcare and Medical Framing*

Healthcare and medical framing positions abortion as a vital component of reproductive healthcare. It emphasises the role of medical professionals as essential intermediaries for abortion access, positioning the importance of clinical standards, patient safety, and evidence-based care (Lindgren, 2021; Fay et al., 2022). From this perspective, abortion is framed not as a moral or political issue, but as a matter of public health and bodily well-being.

Historically, this frame played a central role in 'Roe v. Wade', advocating for the medical gatekeeper model and positioning physicians as judges of access (Lindgren, 2021). Presently, it remains salient in discussions around clinic closures, rural healthcare deserts, and delays in treatment caused by restrictive legislation. As a diagnostic frame, it identifies restricted access as

a threat to health outcomes; as a prognostic frame, it promotes safeguarding clinical protocols and reproductive health infrastructure.

2.2.2.3 Election Framing

Election framing positions abortion as a decisive electoral issue, used to mobilise voters, define party identities, and influence campaign strategies. Rather than addressing abortion through moral, legal, or health dimensions, this frame exemplifies abortion in the context of democratic participation and electoral stakes, specifically, regarding the outcome of presidential and congressional elections (Liebertz & Bunch, 2007).

This frame is prevalent in campaign messaging and political endorsements to link abortion policy directly to voting behaviours. It draws on motivational framing by invoking urgency, fear, and collective responsibility to encourage voter turnout. It also functions diagnostically by identifying specific political actors or parties as threats to or protectors of abortion access.

Additionally, election framing intertwines with polarisation, comparing party positions and referencing the consequences of certain electoral outcomes (Kass et al. 2025). The frame positions voting as a primary mechanism by which the public can influence abortion rights, reinforcing the notion that political engagement can directly shape reproductive policy.

2.2.3 Narrative and Emotional Frames

2.2.3.1 Victim Testimonies and Storytelling

The victim testimonies and storytelling frame play a crucial role in shaping abortion discourse by centring on personal narratives and lived experiences to humanise abortion and highlight its real-world consequences (Sherman, 2021). Moreover, in the reversal of the ‘Dobbs’ decision, this frame has been utilised as a form of resistance, sharing emotionally charged accounts to evoke empathy, assert reproductive justice, and reframe abortion as a deeply personal and situational matter.

Typically employed by advocacy groups and grassroots campaigns, this frame draws attention to how abortion access or its restriction impacts individuals’ health, autonomy, and

prospects (Ludlow, 2008). These narratives often highlight experiences involving trauma, poverty, or medical complications, to oppose dehumanising portrayals and oversimplified political abstractions. However, this frame differs across ideological movements: pro-choice storytelling narratives highlight empowerment, whilst pro-life narratives may express regret or moral conflict.

By centring on emotion, vulnerability, and specificity, this frame challenges dominant political or moral frames by foregrounding women's lives' complexity and diverse realities. Through diagnostic framing, it identifies stigma and legal barriers as sources of harm, whilst motivationally it seeks to build solidarity, reduce silence, and inspire advocacy.

2.2.3.2 Extremism and Moderation

Extremism and moderation framing positions abortion discourse along a scale of political intensity, portraying opposing views as radical, dangerous, or out-of-touch with mainstream values (Hänggli, 2010). It is strategically used to invalidate competing positions, whether pro-choice or pro-life, by portraying them as unreasonable, whilst presenting their stance as balanced.

Predominantly used in political debates, this frame relies on rhetorical contrasts such as 'radical left', 'extreme bans' or 'reasonable compromise', to influence public opinion. It emphasises moderation as a political virtue and seeks to position the individual as morally centred and ideologically flexible.

As a diagnostic frame, it identifies extremism as a societal threat or source of conflict. As a motivational frame, it is attracted to centrism and the belief in bipartisan cooperation, often calling for 'middle ground' solutions. This frame attracts undecided or moderate voters and discredits the opposition by stating it is ideologically rigid.

2.2.3.3 Economic and Societal Costs

The economic and societal costs frame links abortion access to broader structural issues such as poverty, systemic inequality, healthcare burden, and economic justice. Rather than framing abortion as an individual choice or morality, it highlights the tangible, material

consequences of unwanted pregnancies for individuals, families, and society (Harned & Fuentes, 2023).

This frame is particularly salient in discussions of how forced births impact low-income individuals, people of colour, and individuals without adequate access to healthcare or childcare (Cruz, 2025). It draws attention to the financial burden of pregnancy, long-term effects on education and employment, and the systemic barriers that make parenthood economically unfeasible for many.

Through diagnostic framing, it identifies socioeconomic inequity as the root cause of restricted reproductive freedom. As a motivational frame, it emphasises the need for policies that ensure equitable access to abortion as a matter of survival, opportunity, and social justice. This frame also intertwines public health discourse by highlighting the long-term costs to welfare systems, housing, and healthcare when reproductive autonomy is limited.

2.3 Tone

In addition to framing, which structures the content and meaning of political messaging, tone captures the emotional attitude embedded in political messaging. As Calonia (2024, para.1) outlines, tone is “the author’s attitude toward a subject or topic to their reader”, shaped through word choice, punctuation, and sentence structure. Tone is critical in political communication by influencing how audiences interpret, respond to, and emotionally engage with messages (Pipal et al. 2024; Papacharissi, 2015). Whilst framing tells ‘what’ is said and ‘why’, tone signals towards ‘how’ it is said, aimed at amplifying the intended meaning or polarisation.

In the context of abortion discourse, tone is significantly salient due to the topic’s emotional, moral and legal complexity. Political actors use tone to persuade, mobilise, and polarise audiences, with emotionally charged tones reflecting broader ideological positions and strategic intent (Jackson et al., 2020; Ott, 2017). Platforms like X heighten this effect due to their character limits and algorithmic incentives for emotionally engaging content. Therefore, tone develops into a strategic device to enhance message visibility, provoke reactions, and establish in-group identifications (Syndor, 2019).

To complement the structural analysis of framing, this thesis incorporates tone as an analytical category to capture emotional sentiment set within abortion-related discourse. The typology of tone categories used in this research is informed by previous literature on affective communication in digital media (Papacharissi, 2015; Ott, 2017; Jackson et al., 2020) and supported by inductive observations from the dataset. The selected tone types aim to reflect the recurring emotional range commonly used by political actors within abortion discourse.

Tones such as ‘urgent and mobilising’ reflect time sensitivity and direct calls to action, often using rushed language to encourage voting. ‘Outrage and condemning’ tones are marked by indignation and emotionally charged language, including capitalisation or exclamation marks, to signal moral disapproval. These tones are frequently associated with mobilisation and polarisation strategies (Ott, 2017). This contrasts heavily with ‘empathetic and supportive’ tones, which communicate compassion, solidarity, and understanding, typically found in testimonial narratives or expressions of reproductive justice (Jackson et al., 2020).

Additional tone types include ‘sarcastic and mocking’, which rely on irony, exaggeration, and aim to delegitimise and undermine opposing viewpoints; ‘inspirational and hopeful’, evoking optimism and collective strength; and ‘authoritative and confident’, described through assertive and declarative statements that suggest certainty. Lastly, ‘alarmist and fear-inducing’ tones imply radical outcomes or existential risks. Meanwhile, ‘neutral and informative’ tones maintain a factual and emotionally detached delivery, often associated with updates or statistical reporting (Papacharissi, 2015; Pipal et al., 2024).

2.4 Political Actors

Political actors play a leading role in shaping the framing and tone of abortion discourse, specifically on social media platforms such as X. In contrast to reacting solely to public sentiment, actors construct narratives through rhetorical language strategies: frame selection and emotional tone. As Van Aelst and Walgrave (2016) outline, political actors respond to public discourse and actively shape and influence public perception, specifically within mediatised and agenda-driven environments.

This thesis distinguishes three primary actor types: (1) Presidential Candidates; (2) Affiliated Organisations; and (3) Political Influencers. These groups were selected based on their high engagement on X, their strategic visibility in abortion discourse, and their relevance within the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Furthermore, their messages were often crafted to inform, persuade, mobilise, and polarise, closely aligning with the motivational and diagnostic framing tasks highlighted by Snow and Benford (2000).

Presidential candidates represent the formal political leadership, directly responsible for shaping party positions on contentious policy issues such as abortion (American Bar Association, 2025). On X, their tweets serve to define policy agenda, respond to legal developments, and appeal to voters by framing abortion as a decisive electoral issue. Candidates such as Kamala Harris, Donald Trump and their respective vice-presidential candidates actively craft messages using strategic tones and framing to mobilise support and outline party boundaries.

Affiliated organisations refer to formal advocacy groups and communities concerning reproductive health or pro-life associations within the U.S. (Northwestern, 2022). This actor type includes groups such as Planned Parenthood, Students for Life, and Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, all of which have a distinct digital presence. This stakeholder group plays a central role in agenda-setting, moderation setting, and policy mobilisations, maintaining a consistent online presence, employing various frames and tones to strategically influence the public's opinion, and policy discussions.

Political influencers, whilst not always affiliated with formal institutions, hold significant reach and discursive power on X through a high follower base and public credibility. This group includes individuals from differing backgrounds, such as journalists, activists, and prominent political figures directly involved in the policy debate. Their tweets often reflect or challenge dominant narratives, introducing varied emotional tones and alternative framing that can shape public sentiment and shift debate.

Ultimately, the selection of these actor groups differs in institutional status; they operate in relation to one another. Influencers amplify or oppose messages from candidates or organisations, whilst advocacy groups provide sustained framing that presidential figures either align with or dissociate themselves from. Across all three actor types, tone and framing serve as

rhetorical strategies, as a means to provoke mobilisation, deepen polarisation, or delegitimise opposers, as such highlighting their central role in abortion-related discourse on X.

3 Methodology

This thesis explores how political actors use rhetorical strategies, specifically framing and tone, to shape abortion discourse on X during the 2024 U.S. presidential election. As established in the theoretical framework, this includes examining how messages are constructed (framing theory; Entman, 1993) and how emotional sentiment is embedded (Papacharissi, 2015; Pipal et al., 2024). This study employs a qualitative content analysis in conjunction with an interpretive perspective to explore these dynamics, allowing for an in-depth analysis of meaning beyond surface-level discourse.

3.1 Research Design and Instrument

The thesis employs a comparative content analysis design, focusing on three political actor types: presidential candidates (including vice-presidential candidates), affiliated organisations (advocacy groups), and political influencers. These categories were derived from their prominence and rhetorical influence during the presidential election. A complete list of selected actors is provided in Appendix A.

As such, this design choice allows for a structured comparison between these actor types, focusing on how messages are constructed (framing) and how emotional attitudes are conveyed (tone). Moreover, whilst quantitative elements such as the frequency of frames and tones per actor types are taken into account, the primary emphasis remains on qualitative interpretation, related to the meanings and the strategic intention behind message construction (Saifuddin et al., 2024).

Prior media and political communication studies inform the choice to apply content analysis, highlighting how social media platforms act as a polarising environment (Jackson et al., 2020; Papacharissi, 2015). More specifically, X was chosen due to its unique role in communication, where political actors frequently use the platform to disseminate short, emotionally charged messages that align with the study's focus on framing and tone. Whilst also providing a basis for exploring how platform-specific constraints influence the way messages are delivered.

The analytical process was guided by a structured codebook (Appendix B), with codes derived from a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning. Deductively, categories such as diagnostic and motivation framing (Snow & Benford, 1988) and key tone types (Papacharissi, 2015; Ott, 2017) were drawn from the literature. Whilst inductively, codes were developed from a preliminary view of abortion-related tweets, capturing tones of sarcasm, alarmist, or authoritative variants that were prominent in the dataset. As such, utilising such a structured codebook (Appendix B) allows the content of the tweets to be analysed in a comprehensible, representative, and easily replicated manner.

Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge that the researcher acts as a research instrument within the content analysis, manually coding all the tweets. However, intercoder reliability is established through a prior pre-test, where a third party codes 10% of the sample. The reliability of the codebook is then evaluated using Cohen's Kappa (DATAtab Team, 2025).

3.2 Corpus

This thesis employs a purposive sampling strategy to select thematically relevant tweets that are diverse in framing and tone and represent the different types of political actors within abortion discourse during the 2024 U.S. election (Nikolopoulou, 2023). The final sample consists of 999 tweets, with 333 collected from each actor category (presidential candidates, affiliated organisations, and political influencers). This number was selected to balance depth and spread, providing sufficient variation for comparison, whilst remaining manageable for detailed, manual qualitative coding. Additionally, actor selection within each group aimed to reflect an extensive range of political alignments, level of public engagement, and relevance to the abortion debate, as a means to ensure diversity and representativeness across the corpus.

The data for this study were collected from X, a social media platform primarily used by political actors to engage with the public and shape political discourse in real-time. Due to X's character limits, interactivity, and algorithmic visibility (Bossetta, 2018) provides a space for political strategies to be employed, making it suitable for analysing framing and tone within the context of abortion discourse.

Tweets were collected, covering posts dated June 24, 2023 (the first anniversary of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organisation*) and November 5, 2024 (the date of the U.S. presidential election). This time frame intends to capture abortion-related messaging when electoral dynamics and significant events were heightened.

Tweets were collected using X's advanced search function, filtered by relevant keywords and hashtags such as 'abortion', "*Roe v. Wade*", #ProChoice, #ProLife, reproductive rights, and 'Dobbs'. The search was further refined using the following inclusion criteria: (1) original tweets only (excluding retweets, replies, and quote tweets); (2) written in English; (3) published within the defined time frame; and (4) posted by verified or publicly recognised political actors (as defined in Section 2.4). Furthermore, to ensure that the analysis process does not code anything but the phrases and statements of the political actor, any visual images, videos or displays of other material (external links) are removed.

Lastly, tweets were collected manually rather than automated scraping tools to allow consistent, context-aware judgment when assessing tweet relevance, especially for distinguishing rhetorical tone, sarcasm, or ambiguity. This approach helped ensure the inclusion of only thematically relevant and textually analysable content. Moreover, manual collection reduced noise in the dataset, specifically duplicate tweets and automated bot content were screened manually based on identical phrasing, irregular posting patterns, and non-human-like engagement metrics (See Sample Table of Corpus in Appendix C).

3.3 Analysis

As previously mentioned, a combination of both inductive and deductive approaches was taken into account to conduct the content analysis, as such they were systematically organised into a thematic codebook, this includes: frame type, definition, inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, and example tweet, found below are a sample of the codebook used for frames and tones (See Full Table in Appendix B). Additionally, it is significant to note that each tweet equates to one frame and one tone, the most dominant and most salient frame and tone.

Table I*Thematic Codebook for Frame Types (Sample)*

Frame Type	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Tweet
Bodily Autonomy & Reproductive Freedom	Emphasis on abortion as a fundamental human right, typically considered a “feminist” approach (Nyinawagaba, 2024).	Mentions of personal choice, bodily autonomy, reproductive rights, government control over bodies, or slogans such as “My body, my choice”.	Mentions of choice that are unrelated to the body (e.g. educational choices) or when “freedom” is used in a general context with no abortion tie.	“Every woman deserves the right to make decisions about her own body - not politicians” - @KamalaHarris
Fetal Personhood & Rights to Life	Emphasis on moral status and rights of the fetus, often using emotive language such as “baby” or “murder” (Larsson et al., 2015).	Mentions of “unborn child”, “life begins at conception”, “abortion is murder”	Religious or moral tweets that do not explicitly mention the fetus or life framing.	“Abortion ends an innocent human life. Every baby deserves a chance” - @SenMikeLee
State vs. Federal Control	Frames abortion as a matter of administration, through either state versus federal rights (Palacio, 2022).	Arguments for and against state-level abortion bans or federal protections typically reference the	Legal opinions without a jurisdictional stance.	“The Constitution doesn’t give the federal government the power to dictate abortion laws to the states” - @VivekGRamaswamy

Table I shows that the thematic codebook for frames was constructed using inductive and deductive strategies. Deductively, the six core frame types, ‘Bodily Autonomy & Reproductive Freedom’, ‘Fetal Personhood & Right to Life’, ‘State vs. Federal Control’, ‘Religion & Morality’, ‘Election Framing’ and ‘Healthcare & Medical Framing’, were derived from existing academic literature on abortion rhetoric and political communication (e.g., Nyinawagaba, 2024; Larsson et al., 2015; Palacio, 2022; Ott, 2017). More specifically, these frames were selected for their frequent appearance in U.S. political discourse and their distinct rhetorical functions in shaping public perceptions. Moreover, each frame had explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure consistency.

Furthermore, inductive insights derived during a preliminary overview of the dataset, in which common rhetorical patterns, such as strategic language use for election, or frequent references to moral authority, informed refinements to the code definitions and criteria. Additionally, inductive observations helped refine the boundaries between overlapping categories, such as using gendered appeals or references to constitutional authority. This mixed-method approach ensures that the codebook remains theoretically and empirically grounded in the evolving discourse on X.

Table II
Thematic Codebook for Tone Types

Tone Type	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Tweet
Urgent / Mobilising	Language that conveys time sensitivity or calls for immediate action, often to vote, protest, or donate.	Use of “now”, “urgent”, “act”, “vote”, “don’t wait”	Any call to action not related to abortion	“Abortion rights are under attack - we must act NOW. Vote like your life depends on it” - @JoeBiden
Outraged / Condemning	Expresses moral outrage, indignation, or intense disapproval of a policy, person, or group.	Use of all caps, exclamation marks, or language like “disgusting”, “horrific”, “outrageous”.	Anger is not tied to abortion discourse.	“It’s outrageous that politicians think they can control women’s bodies in 2024” - @SenWarren
Empathetic / Supportive	Tone of compassion, understanding, or solidarity with people affected by abortion policies.	Use of words like “I understand”, “we stand with”, “no one should suffer”, and personal testimonies.	Neutral reporting or detached statements	“No one should be forced to carry a pregnancy after rape. We see you. We hear you.” - @AOC

Table II was similarly developed using a combination of deductive and inductive methods. Deductively, core tone types such as ‘Outraged’, ‘Empathetic’, and ‘Mobilising’ were constructed from existing literature on digital political communication and affect (Papacharissi, 2015; Ott, 2017), where tone is framed as a strategic element in emotional engagement and message virality. As such, these foundational tones were selected on their notability in previous studies of polarised online discourse and their ability to reflect distinct affective strategies taken by political actors. Inductively, additional tones such as ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Alarmist’, and

‘Authoritative’ were identified during a preliminary analysis of the abortion-related tweets. These emerged frequently across the actor types and were added to capture tonal nuances not sufficiently represented in existing literature. More specifically, ‘Sarcastic’ and ‘Alarmist’ tones often co-occur with emotionally charged content aimed at mobilisation or polarisation. Meanwhile, ‘Neutral’ and ‘Authoritative’ tones were most commonly found in informational and institutional messaging. This mixed-method approach ensures that the codebook remained theoretically informed whilst also referring to the landscape of the 2024 abortion debate on X.

Additionally, before being able to code the entire sample, the reliability of the codebook has to be ensured, as previously mentioned. Therefore, a pre-test assessing intercoder reliability is conducted. This entails a third-party coding 10% of the sample independently, alongside the researcher using the existing codebook. From this, two Cohen’s Kappas will be calculated: one for the frame types and one for the tones. Cohen’s Kappa is a frequently used tool widely recognised to measure the codebooks' explanatory power, reliability and accuracy (Datatab, 2025), measuring the degree to which both coders agree with their choice of codes. Moreover, to ensure the reliability of the codebook, Cohen’s Kappa has to be above the score of 0.6, which is the degree that measures sufficiency within the codebook. As exemplified in Table III, there was substantial to near-perfect agreement for both coding categories ($\kappa = 0.865$). Since a sufficient level of agreement was reached, no changes to the codebook were required, and the entire corpus of tweets was subsequently coded based on the codebook.

Table III

Intercoder Reliability

Category	Cohen’s Kappa
Frame Types	0.88
Tone Types	0.85

3.3.1 Sentiment Analysis

In addition to the qualitative content analysis, this study employs a lexicon-based sentiment analysis to qualitatively assess the emotional polarity of tweets, based on actor type. Whilst manual tone coding captures the rhetorical nuances and the emotional intent, sentiment analysis will serve as a complementary method to identify general affective trends, specifically positivity, negativity, or neutrality, that may be less immediately visible through interpretive coding by itself. This computational layer enables a cross-comparison between manual and automated analysis, assessing the alignment or divergence between human-coded tones and machine-identified sentiment scores.

The analysis uses the ‘syuzhet’ package in R (Kim, 2022), which assigns sentiment scores to text based on a predefined lexicon. A lexicon-based approach was selected due to its transparency, ease of interpretation, and suitability for studies focused on textual data without an extensive computational training set. The sentiment analysis process in this study follows a clear structure, through which each tweet will be processed to generate a numeric sentiment score indicating its overall emotional tone, which ranges from highly negative to highly positive. These scores are used to identify the broader affective trends across the different actor types; as such, the sentiment analysis functions as an additional tool to support and enrich the qualitative interpretation of tone and framing found within.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

To ensure compliance with ethical standards, this study was reviewed and approved by the University of Twente Ethics Committee (Ethics Committee BMS, 2025). The submitted ethics application detailed the types of data collected, the procedures used for analysis, and potential ethical issues related to the use of social media content. Key considerations included the public versus private nature of online data and the sensitive nature of abortion discourse. Although all data was retrieved from publicly accessible posts on X, the study took care to anonymise non-public figures and avoid including personally identifiable information where unnecessary.

4 Results

This chapter depicts the findings of the qualitative content analysis conducted on 999 tweets posted by various political actors in the context of the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Tweets were manually collected and coded using a thematic codebook based on Entman's (1993) framing theory and Piapal's (2024) tone categories. The results are organised into five sub-sections covering a descriptive overview, frame and tone analysis, frame-and-tone combinations, chi-square testing and sentiment analysis.

4.1 Descriptive Overview

The following section provides an initial dataset overview to contextualise the qualitative analysis. Nine hundred-ninety tweets were analysed and evenly distributed ($n = 333$) across three actor categories. Although the primary focus of this thesis is qualitative, preliminary counts were conducted to support a thematic comparison. Across the full corpus, nine distinct frame types and eight tone types were coded. These distributions are visualised in Appendix D, with only sample views presented in Table III to provide context.

Table III

Sample View of Overall Frequency of Frames and Tones

Frame Type	Tweet Count (n)
Election Framing	224
Bodily Autonomy & Reproductive Freedom	154
Fetal Personhood & Rights to Life	147
Extremism & Moderation	108
Tone Type	Tweet Count (n)
Outraged / Condemning	196
Alarmist / Fear-inducing	186
Inspirational / Hopeful	150

Table III presents a sample view of tweets frequency distribution between frames and tones, providing insight into their prominence across the dataset. The full distribution table is included in Appendix D.

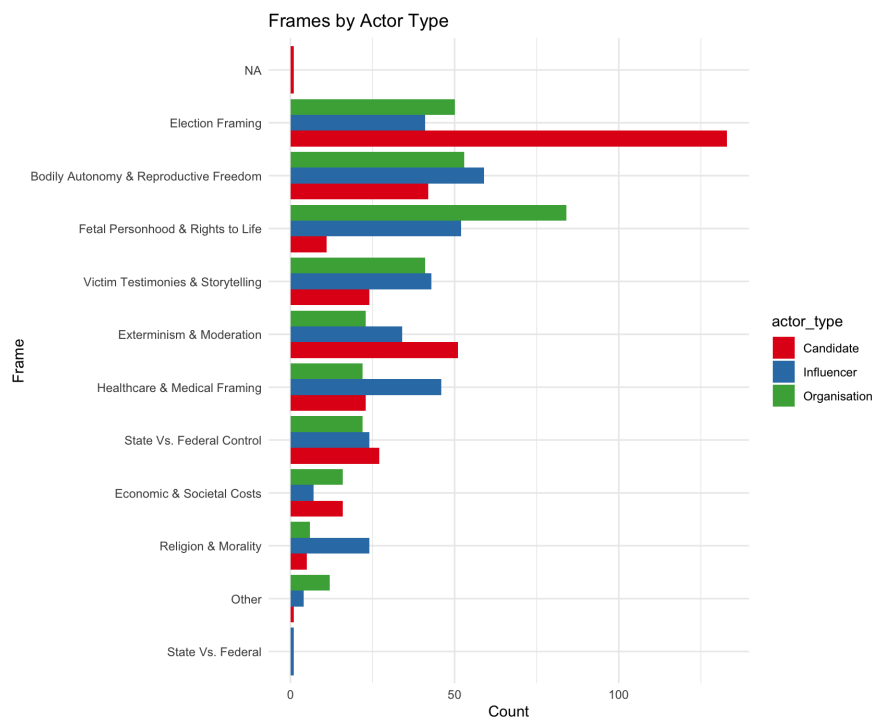
As previously mentioned, a lexicon-based sentiment analysis was conducted to computationally calculate emotional polarity across actor types. Whilst not a central analytical tool, its inclusion is utilised as a comparative perspective on affective tendencies that complements the manually coded tone categories. The findings from this sentiment analysis are selectively integrated throughout this section to contextualise certain actor-specific discourse patterns.

4.2 Frame Analysis

To qualitatively analyse how political actors construct meaning around abortion, this section explores the dominant frames employed by each actor type.

Figure I

Bar Graph of Frames by Actor Type



As displayed in Figure I, which provides a general outline of frame categories across presidential candidates, political influencers, and affiliated organisations, significant patterns emerged in how rhetorical strategies were applied. Additionally, Figure I provides a quantitative overview, specifically showcasing the frame type versus their tweet count. The following subsections outline these frames with X, highlighting language, tone, and intent through selected tweet examples.

4.2.1 Presidential Candidates

Presidential candidates frequently utilised abortion discourse to position themselves within the broader political landscape of the 2024 U.S. presidential election. A dominant frame observed in this category was ‘Election Framing’, shifting abortion into campaign promises, voter mobilisations, and often critiques of political oppositions. One candidate tweeted:

“Not every generation has to fight for their rights, but this one does. There are people who want to turn back the clock on women's rights. They want more control over women. Any woman who values freedom needs to understand there's one choice in this election and that's Joe Biden.” - @KamalaHarris

This tweet reflects ‘Election Framing’, where reproductive rights are framed as central to the stakes of electoral participation. Harris (2024) frames abortion in this tweet as a matter of electoral action, pushing abortion as a matter of personal reproductive freedom and gender equality. The mobilising tone encourages voter action through an urgent, emotionally resonant appeal.

Comparatively, other candidates utilise ‘Election Framing’ to delegitimise their opponents and showcase their ideological beliefs. For example:

“Kamala Harris says that she does not believe in religious exemptions when it comes to abortion. Christians, remember this when you go to vote.” - @TrumpWarRoom

This tweet combines abortion access with religious liberty, framing abortion through a value-based conflict, and using election participation as the solution (motivational framing). The

tone here applies a similar urgent and mobilising manner, appealing to Christian voters through a moral lens.

In addition to using election frames, few presidential candidates employed a frame that emphasised ‘Exterminism & Moderation’. This frame presents the abortion issue as neither a black-and-white issue nor one requiring compromise, balancing personal beliefs, political feasibility, and societal consensus.

“Abortion has been a notoriously divisive issue in America, but actually I see an emerging consensus: that abortion should be legal up until a certain number of weeks, and restricted thereafter... Every abortion is a tragedy, and by better supporting mothers, parents, and families, we can dramatically reduce abortions across the board.” - @RobertFKennedyJr

This tweet reflects this moderation strategy, where the candidate aspires to distance themselves from radical points of view, whilst still presenting a clear stance. Rather than mobilising voters through outrage or fear, this tone is inspirational and hopeful.

Overall, presidential candidates engage in abortion discourse to amplify their ideological stances and mobilise voter support, characterising the election as a critical moment for abortion. As such, framing patterns reflect the polarisation, with election framing utilised differently between candidates. Particularly, liberal candidates centred on bodily autonomy, whilst conservative candidates focused on religious appeal, with tones ranging from mobilising and urgent to authoritative and confident, depending on political alignment and platform positioning.

4.2.2 Affiliated Organisations

Affiliated organisations, such as advocacy groups, frequently employed ‘Fetal Personhood’ and ‘Bodily Autonomy’ frames to position themselves to an ideological stance, whilst mobilising their audiences towards political or civic action. Unlike presidential candidates, these organisations often framed abortion as an ongoing struggle, as a result of social injustices.

Prominent examples of ‘Fetal Personhood & Right to Life’ frames are found in tweets by Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America:

“At 34 weeks, a baby in the womb can learn flavors, nursery rhymes, songs, and even words that she will recognize after birth! Florida's Amendment 4 would make it legal to kill that baby in an abortion — for any reason.” - @SBAProLifeAmerica

“Wait, there’s a heartbeat?” Andrea was scheduled to have an abortion, but after she heard her daughter Olivia's heartbeat, she knew there was no way she could go through with it. "I hope this encourages just one woman." - @SBAProLifeAmerica

These tweets view the fetus as a fully realised, feeling individual, capable of learning, recognising, and even influencing decisions. This rhetorical approach strengthens the moral argument against abortion by correlating it with the intentional harm of a human being, thereby heightening the emotional weight of the anti-abortion stance.

In contrast, liberal organisations leaned into ‘Bodily Autonomy’ and ‘Economic & Societal Costs’ frames, emphasising systemic barriers, such as racial, economic, and geographic inequalities, that affect access to reproductive healthcare. For example:

“Last year, when the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, access to care grew further out of reach for millions of Americans. Everyone deserves the freedom to control their body and life, regardless of age, race, income, or zip code.” - @PPFA

This tweet, posted by Planned Parenthood, emphasises equality and inclusion, constructing abortion access as a matter of fundamental freedom and bodily agency, rather than a healthcare policy issue. This positions abortion rights as a part of a larger human rights issue, where access to healthcare is a matter of privilege rather than a universal right.

4.2.3 Political Influencers

Political influencers included various individuals involved in the abortion debate online, thus demonstrating a broader distribution of framing types. Their tweets often combined ideology with performative phrasings, amplifying the existing debate or polarising perspective.

Frames commonly employed for this group were ‘Healthcare & Medical Framing’ and ‘Victim Testimonies & Storytelling’, alongside frames correlated with their ideological belief.

An example of ‘Healthcare & Medical Framing’ is seen from Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez:

“No one can tell me that Donald Trump is somehow the same as the Democratic ticket in any way, shape, or form. Tell that to a woman who is bleeding out in an ER in a state that doesn't guarantee abortion rights. This isn't a game.” - @AOC

Ocasio-Cortez (2024) frames abortion access not as a policy issue but as a medical emergency, presenting the real-life consequences of restrictive abortion laws. The urgency of the language “bleeding out in an ER” portrays the life-or-death scenario, framing abortion as essential health care rather than political ideology.

Additionally, many liberal influencers employed ‘Victim Testimonies & Storytelling’ frames to provide lived experiences of those affected by abortion.

*“A 16-year-old in Florida was denied an abortion and forced to have a child. A woman in Virginia was denied medication to treat lupus because it can *sometimes* be used to end early pregnancies. This is the post-Roe chaos Republicans and their Supreme Court created.” - @SenTinaSmith*

This tweet aimed to construct a broader narrative of the systemic failures following the overturn of ‘Roe v. Wade’. By naming a specific emotionally resonant incident, where a teenager was being forced to give birth or a woman denied essential medication, it exemplifies the life-threatening consequences of restrictive abortion policies. The use of the term “chaos” intensifies this frame, positioning current policies as not only harmful but also unjust.

In contrast, conservative influencers similarly employed ‘Victim Testimonies & Storytelling’ frames to outline perceived harms caused by abortion procedures themselves, often appealing to moral and emotional reflection. An example tweet is:

“JD Vance grew up in poverty with an abusive, drug addicted single mother. His life encompasses many of the reasons people push for abortion. He is now running for Vice

President of the United States despite hardship, but his life was inherently valuable all along.” - @christineyeargs

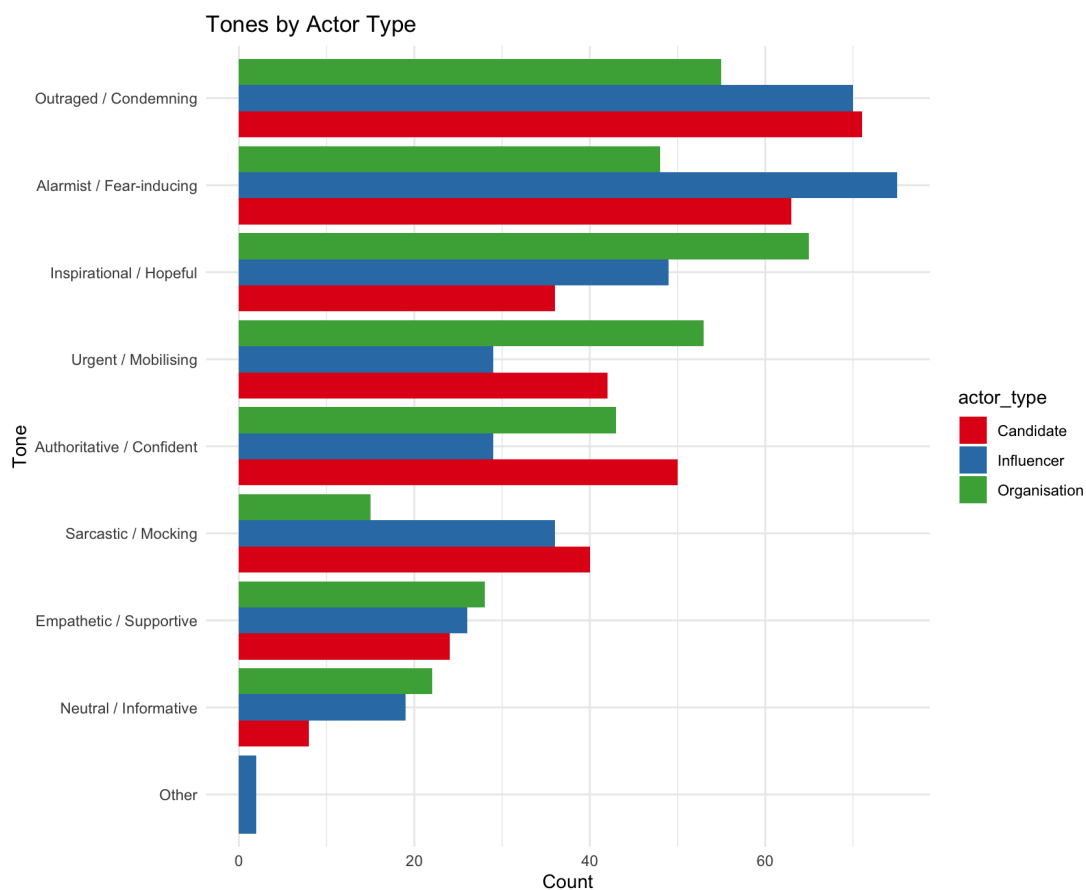
This tweet frames abortion not through its denial but through hypothetical loss, that social justifications for abortion, for example, poverty, trauma, or instability, cannot outweigh the inherent worth of life.

4.3 Tone Analysis

Tone in abortion discourse functions as a powerful rhetorical tool, shaping the emotional environment of political communication. Across all actor types, tone was employed to align ideological positions and provoke, mobilise, or humanise. This section examines how presidential candidates, affiliated organisations, and political influences used tone to reinforce their framing strategies and shape public sentiment.

Figure II

Bar Graph of Tones by Actor Type



As Figure II shows, ‘Outraged / Condemning’ and ‘Alarmist / Fear-Inducing’ were the most frequently used tones across all actor groups, with notable variations. Presidential candidates leaned on ‘Urgent / Mobilising’ tones, whilst influencers displayed higher rates of ‘Sarcastic / Mocking’ and organisations using ‘Inspirational / Hopeful’ tones. The following subsections outline the qualitative analysis of these tone patterns across actor types, supported by selected tweet examples.

4.3.1 Presidential Candidates

Presidential candidates employed tone as a strategic tool to shape the emotional impact of their tweets across abortion discourse, often aligning with the urgency and polarisation of the 2024 U.S. election cycle. For liberal candidates, tone was frequently used to evoke urgency and a sense of collective action. In the following tweet, Kamala Harris appeals to women’s autonomy through a mobilising tone:

“Know this: Donald Trump would sign a national abortion ban and restrict access to contraception. We believe politicians should not come between a woman and her doctor. The contrast is clear.” - @KamalaHarris

This tweet uses distinct language, “would sign a national abortion ban”, to amplify emotional stakes and repel the opposition. This tone is both confrontational and directive, aimed at reinforcing urgency in the lead-up to the election.

Whilst Harris (2024) uses urgency as a prominent rhetorical device, alternative candidates use tone to invoke fear, moral outrage, or condemn candidates. The following tweet reflects a fear-inducing and condemning tone aimed at voters:

“Kamala, you have been part of the problem, and administrations that didn’t care to codify abortion rights even when they had the House and the Senate. Obama-Biden admin had 8 years, and the Biden-Harris admin had 4 years to protect abortion rights; they failed. Your promises don’t guarantee anything! #Debate2024” - @Claud9_

This tweet critiques the perceived inaction of the Democratic Party, showcasing frustration and annoyance to challenge campaign rhetoric. De La Cruz’s (2024) tone captures a

broad voter sentiment, expressing distrust and moral outrage at their opponents. Unlike the mobilising tone viewed in Harris' message, De La Cruz expresses ideological distance, using tone to appeal to a different set of voters, and position herself as a better alternative.

4.3.2 Affiliated Organisations

Affiliated organisations employed tone to strategically mobilise their stance, educate the public, and frame abortion as a human rights or moral emergency. The tone used by these accounts was often direct, reflecting their activist orientation. Conservative advocacy groups frequently adopted a fear-inducing tone to emphasise fetal rights, for example:

"The closest thing to real haunted houses are abortion facilities." - @StudentsforLife

This tweet uses metaphor and horror imagery to provoke fear and moral disgust. The tone is condemning, aimed at shocking the audience into pro-life ideology.

In contrast, liberal organisations adopted more hopeful and inspirational tones. Their communication often emphasises systemic inequalities, reproductive freedom, and political urgency:

"Last year, when the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, access to care grew further out of reach for millions of Americans. Everyone deserves the freedom to control their body and life, regardless of age, race, income, or zip code." - @PPFA

"Underestimate the salience of abortion at your peril. When we run on abortion, we win!" - @VoteChoice

Whilst Planned Parenthood (2024) frames abortion access as a universal right grounded in equality, VoteProChoice (2024) adopts a strategic, campaign-focused tone. The assertive phrasing emphasises confidence and urgency, positioning abortion not just as a moral issue.

4.3.3 Political Influencers

Political influencers displayed the most expressive and rhetorically diverse use of tones across the dataset. Their construction of messages frequently blended ideological conviction, personal opinion, and performative language, contributing to an emotionally intensified abortion discourse. The tones commonly identified included ‘Mocking / Sarcasm’ and ‘Empathic / Supportive’, used to provoke, humanise, or polarise.

Liberal influencers often adopted mocking or empathetic tones to challenge conservative positions and highlight gender-based injustices, for example, Ocasio-Cortez (2024) and Clinton's (2024) tweets:

“Why should I ever listen to a man that thinks he should have more say over my body than I do? NEXT.” — @AOC

*“What a normal, relatable guy who certainly doesn't hate women having freedoms.”
— @HillaryClinton*

This tweet captures a mocking and assertive tone, targeted at the interpreted male-heavy influence in reproductive policies. Intentionally dismissive and conversational, it has been designed to affirm solidarity within female followers and provoke the opposition through rhetorical defiance.

In contrast, republican influencers frequently employed alarmist or outraged tones, often framed in fetal personhood frames:

“What it's like being brainwashed in Houston tonight while Kamala Harris holds a free Beyoncé concert as they call killing babies ‘reproductive freedom.’” — @RepMTG

“Imagine dressing up as the drugs that starve babies in the womb because you love abortion so much. Depraved.” — @christineyeargs

Here, Greene's (2024) and Yeargin's (2024) tweets are openly condemning, aiming to discredit both the language of reproductive rights and the political campaigns used to promote them. By using phrases such as “brainwashed” and “starve babies” and associating abortion with

celebrity culture, the tone is both alarmist and accusatory. Positing abortion advocacy as inherently ‘deviant’.

4.4 Frame-Tone Combinations

The following section explores how frame and tone combinations coordinate to construct emotionally charged narratives in abortion discourse. Rather than viewing these tools independently, tones function as amplifiers of a specific frame, shaping not only what is said but also how the audience feels about it. Across the dataset, certain frame-tone pairings appeared with key frequency and rhetorical intent.

Table IV

Common Frame-Tone Pairings Across Actor Types

Frame Type	Tone Types	Actor Type(s)	Effect
Election Framing	Urgent / Alarmist	Presidential Candidates	Amplifies stakes; mobilises voters
Fetal Personhood & Right to Life	Outraged / Condemning	Affiliated Organisation, Influencers	Evokes moral panic; frames abortion as injustice
Victim Testimonies & Storytelling	Empathetic / Supportive	Political Influencers, Organisations	Builds emotional connection; humanises impact
Moderation & Exterminism	Inspirational / Hopeful	Presidential Candidates	Frames abortion as solvable issue; encourages unity
Medical & Healthcare Framing	Alarmist / Fear-inducing	Political Influencers	Frames abortion as a necessary procedure; real-life consequences
Bodily Autonomy & Reproductive Freedom	Urgent / Mobilising	Presidential Candidates, Affiliated Organisation	Emphasises resistance; promotes collective empowerment

Table IV outlines a comparative summary of dominant frame-tone pairings used by each political actor type. The table highlights the most frequently observed frame-tone combinations based on qualitative coding across the full corpus of tweets. This overview illustrates key trends in how political actors strategically align emotional tone with thematic framing to strengthen their messages, underscoring how emotional tone operates as an amplifier within framing strategies across actor types.

4.5 Chi-Square Test Results

As a means to assess whether the use of both frames and tones is systematically associated with the actor type, specifically whether the rhetorical strategies are paired meaningfully, multiple Pearson's Chi-square tests of independence were conducted (Biswal, 2025). However, based on the low expected cell frequencies, a typical circumstance for high-dimensional contingency tables, all Chi-square tests were conducted using the Monte Carlo simulation (where $B = 10,000$), which provides a rich estimation for the p-values under the conditions (Hope, 1968; Agrest, 2002).

Firstly, a test examining the association between actor type and frame usage displayed a statistically significant result $\chi^2 = 204.44$, $p < 0.001$. These findings confirm that frame selection is not independent of the actor's identity. As presented in Section 4.3, candidates emphasised 'Election Framing', whilst organisations and influencers present greater variation, frequently employing 'Victim Testimonies', 'Bodily Autonomy', and 'Healthcare Framing'. The full frequency distribution for this test is available in Appendix D.

The next Chi-square test assessed the relationship between actor type and emotional tone, which yielded another significant result $\chi^2 = 51.80$, $p < 0.001$. This supports the conclusion that tone use varies systematically between political actors. For which, candidates were more likely to employ an 'Alarmist' and 'Urgent' tones, whilst influencers tended to lean towards more 'Mocking' and 'Empathetic' expressions, subsequently, as displayed by organisations often assumed a 'Confident' or 'Informative' narratives, emphasising tone as a core feature of political identity within digital media spaces.

Lastly, a third test was deployed to test whether frames and tones were paired in a statistically dependent way, regardless of actor type. This test additionally revealed a significant association $\chi^2 = 374.01$ $p < 0.001$. This result suggests that frame-tone combinations are not used at random, but are carefully selected to amplify rhetorical goals. An example of this is ‘Fetal Personhood’ frames were frequently paired with ‘Outraged’ or ‘Alarmist’ tones, whilst ‘Victim Testimonies’ were accompanied by ‘Empathetic’ or ‘Supportive’ tones.

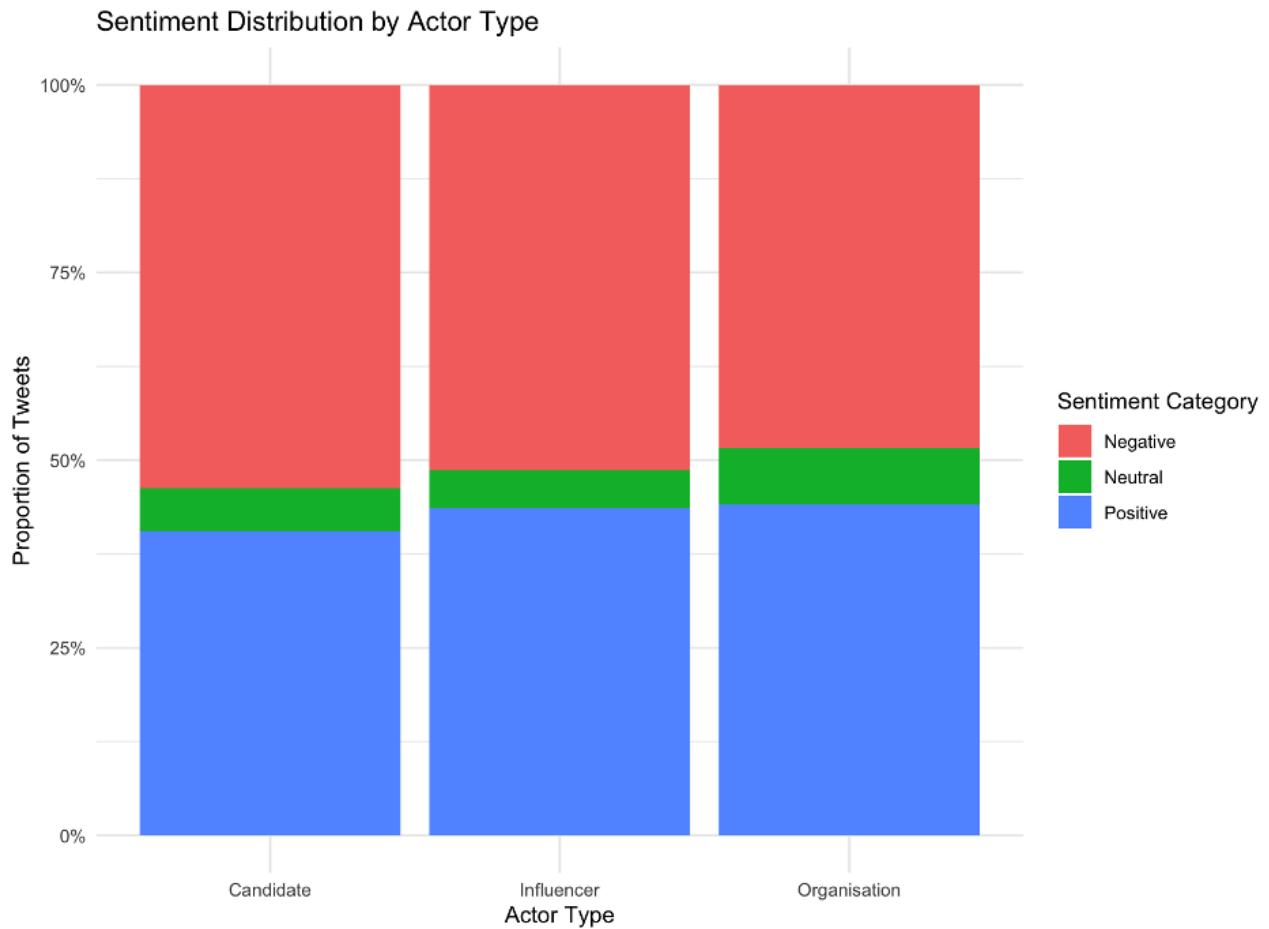
The results of the three Chi-square tests provide significant supporting evidence that the actor's identity shapes rhetorical strategies (frames and tones) in abortion discourse and is systematically constructed rather than randomly applied. The statistically significant associations between actor type, frame, and tone reinforce the previous findings (descriptive and visual) presented previously and validate the underlying assumptions of framing theory and affective political communication. These findings underline the communicative intention behind how different political actors engage with abortion on X, revealing patterns of meaning-making that are both ideologically and emotionally strategic. Section 4.6 will further investigate this rhetorical layering through examining the sentiment polarity of abortion discourse, offering a wider perspective.

4.6 Sentiment Polarity

In addition to manual coding, a lexicon-based sentiment analysis was conducted to complement manually coded tone categories. Results are interpreted regarding tone usage and actor strategies. This method allows for an additional numerical layer of interpretation that complements the qualitative analysis of tone, offering validation and insight into affective trends across actor types. Each tweet was assigned a numeric sentiment score based on its polarity, where values greater than 0.1 were labelled as positive, values less than -0.1 as negative, and values in between were identified as neutral. This allows for computational emotional valence evaluation, independent of manually coded tone categories.

Figure X

Bar graph of Sentiment Distribution by Actor Type



As shown in Figure X, all actor types expressed a similar balance of sentiment categories. Candidates demonstrated a slightly higher share of negative valence than influencers and organisations, whilst organisations featured a marginally larger percentage of neutral tweets. Positive sentiment was evenly distributed, though more pronounced in organisations and influencers.

5 Discussion

This thesis explored the research question: ‘How do political actors in X (formerly Twitter) use frames and tone in abortion discourse during the 2024 U.S. presidential election?’ Through a qualitative content analysis of 999 tweets, supported by computational sentiment analysis and chi-square testing, the findings demonstrate how political actors strategically deploy rhetorical language to shape audience perception, reinforce ideological positions, and mobilise support.

This section outlines the key findings, in conjunction with theoretical implications, displaying the importance of this thesis and what this means for political communication. Moreover, this section describes and outlines this thesis's methodological reflection, limitations, and possible future directions.

5.1 Interpretation of Key Findings

The results identified distinct, actor-specific patterns in rhetorical strategies applied within abortion discourse during the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Rather than arbitrarily using frames and tone, each actor group consistently selects frame-and-tone combinations that reinforce their identity, communicative intent, and ideological position. These patterns reflect the broader framing theory (Entman, 1993), specifically the concept that framing is deliberately used for meaning-making to shape audience perceptions and define political problems.

Presidential candidates most frequently employed ‘Election Framing’, often paired in conjunction with urgent or alarmist tones, to emphasise the electoral stakes of abortion and mobilise voters. This reflects Gerstlé and Nai's (2019) conceptualisation that electoral rhetoric increasingly relies on emotional urgency to engage voters; however, this thesis develops upon these findings by displaying how urgency is present and strategically constructed through frame-and-tone combinations. In addition, the presence of alarmist tones suggests deliberate attempts to accentuate abortion as not only a policy matter, but as a central electoral issue, requiring immediate action (through voting).

Affiliated organisations relied heavily on ‘Fetal Personhood’ or ‘Bodily Autonomy’ frames, reinforcing previous literature by Rao et al. (2023) and Kim and Hemphill (2025), who

found that advocacy groups rely on moral appeals to strengthen their ideological stance. In tandem with these frames, persuasive tones, specifically outrage and empathy, were frequently paired, reinforcing Papacharissi's (2015) affective public, in that consistent combinations of specific frames to tones are key to the persuasive influence of digital discourse.

Comparatively, political influences displayed the widest variations, combining frames such as 'Victim Testimonies' and 'Healthcare Framing' with sarcastic or mocking tones. This aligns with Flamino et al. (2023), who established that influencers often engage in heightened emotionally performative communication styles through a blend of personal narrative and ideological beliefs. These findings refine this concept by conveying how the use of rhetorical strategies functions differently based on ideological stances, with more liberal influencers highlighting systemic injustice, and conservative influencers underlining fetal personhood or moral loss.

Moreover, this thesis favours recent conceptualisations of rhetoric combinations (Young, 2021; Pipal et al., 2024), versus earlier literature that views tones and frames as separate variables, such as Evers (2016), who views tone as a framing component. Furthermore, the statistically significant findings between frame, tone, and actor identity continuously support Papacharissi's (2015) study, that affective language is intertwined in constructing meaning. As such, this contribution reinforced the need to study emotional rhetoric language use in digital political communication, focused on what is said and how they say it is said, to generate emotional resonance, outrage, or mobilisation.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

Beyond reaffirming the strategic use of framing and tone in political messaging, this thesis contributes to existing theories by presenting how emotional tone operates as a core technique for meaning-making. Whilst Entman's (1993) framework conceptualises frames as tools for defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgements, and suggesting solutions, this study displays how framing is emphasised and intensified through tone.

Aligning itself with Papacharissi's (2015) theory of affective publics, the findings demonstrate how tone functions as an affective underlying layer to framing, strategically aligned with ideological identities and actor types. Rather than randomly pairing tone with content,

political actors use emotional language to shape how frames are received, designing digital environments to generate outrage, solidarity, or mobilisation. This suggests the need to expand upon Entman's (1993) framework by incorporating affective layering in emotionally charged discourse.

Furthermore, these findings correspond with Goffman's (1974) theory that frames the structure of social reality but also suggest that emotional tone is equally structuring within the digital sphere. Specifically, influencers displayed this dynamic by associating themselves with an ideology in favour of highly effective content designed for virality or resonance within the sphere. This suggests that within affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015), emotion becomes a communicative resource that drives cognitive framing structure.

Another key implication is the relation to the role of actor identity. The significant variation in frame and tone usage across actor types suggests that institutional positions shape framing functions. Candidates act as representatives of political legitimacy, drawing on 'Election Frames' with mobilising tones, underscoring the agenda-setting function. Organisations, in comparison, lean more into the educational and ideological roles, deploying more 'Outrage' and 'Supportive' tones alongside moral frames. Influencers function as cultural intermediaries, not bound by institutional norms, expressing an increasing emotional range. These patterns align with Freelon and Wells' (2020) view that online discourse involves different layers of participation and influence, with actors playing distinct affective and strategic roles.

Furthermore, the sentiment analysis reinforces these theoretical implications by demonstrating how the emotional polarity of a tweet typically aligns with a rhetorical purpose. Sentiment in this thesis serves as an additional confirmation of tone categories and suggests that even with more neutral frames, they are often still embedded within an emotionally charged context. This supports the argument that in online abortion discourse, affect is central in shaping not only how the issue is perceived but also how it is felt and reacted to by the audience.

5.3 Practical and Political Relevance

The findings presented in this thesis present significant implications for political communicators, campaign strategies, and advocacy groups engaging in emotionally charged

discourse, such as abortion. As a result, understanding how frames and tones are strategically combined and how these combinations shift across actor types presents an opportunity to develop tailored rhetorical messaging strategies within emotionally-charged discourse. For example, political candidates may mobilise and rally voters more effectively through affective urgency in combination with electoral framing, whilst organisations can reinforce ideological stances and legitimacy through moral framing and supportive tones. Based on these insights, political communicators can tailor messaging by matching specific frames and tones to their communicative goals, optimising audience impact, and being consistent with agenda-setting theory (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

In addition, recognising the distinctive rhetorical patterns within abortion discourse highlights the importance of ongoing monitoring of framing practices during politically sensitive events. Emotional and strategic use of language, particularly when signalling towards urgency, threat, or moral conviction, can effectively raise awareness but also risks fostering polarisation or manipulative rhetoric. Thereby, policymakers and media literacy advocates should integrate these insights into public education strategies, helping individuals better understand by identifying and interpreting emotionally loaded messages. Rather than focusing solely on factual accuracy, media literacy should account for how affective framing shapes interpretation, intensifies engagement, and influences how political realities are constructed online (Vraga & Tully, 2021).

5.4 Methodological Reflection

This study employed a qualitative content and sentiment analysis to explore how political actors framed and emotionally charged abortion discourse during the 2024 U.S. election. Whilst this approach allowed for a wider and nuanced understanding of both rhetorical strategies and affective tone, it is essential to recognise and reflect critically on the methodological approach used in this study.

Firstly, a core strength of this study was the systematic coding approach, grounded in established theoretical frameworks. The thematic codebook (Appendix B), as previously mentioned, was developed based on Entman's (1993) framing theory and Piapal's (2024) tonal categories, ensuring theoretical relevance and validity. Furthermore, the addition of intercoder

reliability through Cohen's Kappa ($\kappa = 0.865$) reflects agreement and enhances the reliability of qualitative content analysis. Overall, this strength provides confidence in the consistency and reliability of the manual coding process.

Moreover, evenly distributing all the political actor types, presidential candidates, affiliated organisations, and influencers was a deliberate attempt to minimise bias and ensure representational equivalence across the corpus. In addition, this divide allows for more meaningful comparisons for both descriptive and inferential analysis, increasing the internal validity of the findings.

Nonetheless, the methodological approach is weakened by the choice of manual coding, whilst a reliable option, it is time-intensive and susceptible to researcher bias, the process by which personal beliefs and experience can influence how the data was interpreted and coded (Scribber, 2025). However, a sentiment analysis was added to strengthen and provide a cross-comparison between manual and computational coding. It helped confirm trends seen in the manual coding, for example, tweets manually coded as 'Alarmist' or 'Outraged' generally matched with a negative sentiment score, whilst 'Empathetic' or 'Hopeful' tones leaned positive. This provided more insight and weight to the concept that tone is not randomly assigned, but closely linked to the type of frame and actor using it.

Moreover, the tweet selection process relied on manual, purposive sampling, through which the tweets were individually chosen based on relevance, clarity, and representation of actor type. Although this does coincide with high-quality data and alignment, this type of manual selection can introduce researcher bias, potentially excluding less coherent, ambiguous, or nuanced tweets. This approach can limit the diversity and representation of the dataset, thus constraining the generalisability and external validity of the study's findings.

Future research can build upon this foundation by possibly integrating supervised machine learning classification to scale the coding process and test the codebook's replicability. In addition, a nuanced sentiment lexicon can better detect irony, sarcasm, and complex emotional combinations. Moreover, adding cross-platform data like Reddit, TikTok, or Social Space may provide a more holistic view of abortion discourse within digital spaces.

5.5 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Whilst this study provides invaluable insights into the framing and tone strategies used by political actors on X during the 2024 U.S. presidential election abortion debate, it also has several limitations that must be acknowledged.

Firstly, this thesis exclusively focused on and analysed abortion discourse on X, missing out on other influential digital platforms such as TikTok or Reddit. As each social media platform presents unique communication affordances, demographics, and engagement patterns, limiting the analysis to one platform restricts the generalisability of the findings and the size of the corpus. Thus, the results presented may not fully reflect how abortion discourse is disseminated across various media spaces and audiences.

Following this, this study examined only U.S.-based political discourse surrounding abortion in the immediate period following the ‘Dobbs’ decision through to the 2024 presidential election. As such, the generalisability of these findings can not be generalised beyond the U.S., as abortion framing strategies may differ globally. Moreover, the chosen time frame prevents an analysis of the long-term dynamics and evolution of abortion discourse in response to ongoing political or social developments. Focusing specifically on pre- and post- ‘Dobbs’ may infer different results.

Thirdly, by concentrating the analysis on only verified political actors, the study excludes many voices and perspectives of unverified users or grassroots movements. As such, the findings may overlook alternative narratives, framing practices, or any emerging rhetorical strategies actors use. Perspectives may offer important insights into how abortion discourse is shaped from the bottom up, as opposed to a more structured and institutionalised communication.

Lastly, this research predominantly focused on and analysed textual framing and tone without directly analysing audience reactions, engagement metrics, or behavioural patterns. As a result, this thesis is limited by how effectively these frames and tones resonate with audiences or influence public perceptions and behaviours towards abortion policy or partisan participation.

Given these limitations and the insights found within this study, several opportunities for future research emerge. Firstly, future research should conduct cross-platform comparative analysis, examining how frame and tone usage differ across social media platforms like Reddit or TikTok. This approach could reveal platform-specific strategies and enhance understanding of digital abortion framing strategies.

Secondly, incorporating audience-centred methodologies, such as surveys, interviews, or experimental studies, measuring audience perceptions and responses to different frames and tones. This could have the ability to evaluate the real-world efficacy of these rhetorical strategies in shaping attitudes, emotional responses, and political behaviours amongst the public, leading to insights about what the most effective frame and tone are per audience.

Last but not least, adopting a longitudinal research design would help capture evolving framing patterns across multiple electoral cycles, major policy changes, or significant cultural shifts, providing a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of social media, specifically in emotionally charged movements such as abortion or other related social issues.

These findings offer theoretical insight and practical direction for understanding emotionally charged discourse, setting the landscape for broader reflections in the concluding chapter.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis explored how political actors on X strategically use framing and tone to shape abortion discourse during the 2024 U.S. presidential election. A qualitative content analysis of 999 tweets demonstrated how frames and tones are not applied randomly but function as deliberate rhetorical tools tailored to actor identity and communicative goals. Presidential candidates frequently employed electoral framing with mobilising tones to rally voter support. Affiliated organisations utilised more ideologically based framing types with emotionally resonant tones to reinforce legitimacy and humanise the debate. Political influencers, in contrast, displayed the most variety using provocative tones and polarising frames, often disrupting institutional narratives, amplifying ideological beliefs, and delegitimising opposers.

This thesis exemplifies the exaggerated and performative nature of social media. Frame-and-tone combinations construct affective narratives that can shape public perception, mobilise action, and reinforce partisan divides. Political messages are actively contested, emotionalised, and redefined by employing such rhetoric in digital environments such as X.

Ultimately, by bridging framing theory, affective tone analysis, and actor-based comparison, this research provides a holistic understanding of how contentious issues such as abortion are communicated in digital public spheres. This thesis contributes to ongoing theoretical frameworks about the mediatisation of politics, affective polarisation, and the evolving role of emotion within political discourse. As social media, specifically X, continues to develop and be used for political messaging, understanding how rhetorical strategies are crucial, particularly within environments of high polarisation.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Table of All the Political Actors identified within the Corpus

The following tables represent all the political actors identified within the corpus, this includes the following groups: presidential candidates, affiliated organisations, and political influencers. A nuanced number of actors were chosen for each group, ranging from different political parties and ideological beliefs.

Actor Type	Name
Presidential Candidates	Kamala Harris
	Joe Biden
	Donald Trump
	Bernie Sanders
	Jill Stein
	JD Vance
	Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
	Nicole Shanaham
	Chase Oliver
	Mike ter Maat
	Claudia De la Cruz
	Cornel West
	Melina Abudulla
	Peter Sonski

Political Influencers

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Nikki Haley

Lindsey Graham

Ron DeSantis

Majorie Taylor Greene

Ingrid Skop

Randall Terry

Shiva Ayyaduari

Tim Walz

Mike Lee

Tina Smith

Barack Obama

Michelle Obama

Rosemary Westwood

Kristan Hawkins

Molly Jong-Fast

Megan Messerly

Kristen Holmes

Alice Miranda Ollstein

Oliva Juliana

Lila Rose

Abby Johnson

Christine Yeargin

Savannah Craven

Terrisa Bukovinac

Nancy Pelosi

Kristin Gillibrand

Lizz Winstead

Sunsara Taylor

Raquel Willis

Kat Abughazaleh

Amelia Bonow

Dan Sullivan

Thom Tillis

Bob Casey

Jocelyn Benson

Marjorie Dannenfelser

Ayanna Pressley

Ben Shapiro

Misty Phillip

Nancy Pearcey

Jack Graham

Allie Beth Stuckey

Jacqui Lewis

Affiliated Organisations

Reproductive Freedom for All

SBA Pro-Life America

American Life League

Students for Life of America

Ethics and Public Policy Center

Vote Pro-Choice

Americans United for Life
Thomas More Society
Public Religion Research Institute
American Civil Liberties Union
Alliance Defending Freedom
Center for Reproductive Rights
Abortion Funds
Stop Abortion Now
American Life League

Appendix B

Thematic Codebook of Frames and Tones

The following tables represent all the frame and tone categories used in the thematic analysis. This includes the formal category name, a definition/description of the category, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, alongside an example tweet.

Frame Type	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Tweet
Bodily Autonomy & Reproductive Freedom	Emphasis on abortion as a fundamental human right, typically considered a “feminist” approach (Nyinawagaba, 2024).	Mentions of personal choice, bodily autonomy, reproductive rights, government control over bodies, or slogans such as “My body, my choice”.	Mentions of choice that are unrelated to the body (e.g. educational choices) or when “freedom” is used in a general context with no abortion tie.	“Every woman deserves the right to make decisions about her own body - not politicians” - @KamalaHarris
Fetal Personhood & Rights to Life	Emphasis on moral status and rights of the fetus, often using emotive language such as “baby” or “murder” (Larsson et al., 2015).	Mentions of “unborn child”, “life begins at conception”, “abortion is murder”	Religious or moral tweets that do not explicitly mention the fetus or life framing.	“Abortion ends an innocent human life. Every baby deserves a chance” - @SenMikeLee
State vs. Federal Control	Frames abortion as a matter of administration, through either state versus	Arguments for and against state-level abortion bans or federal	Legal opinions without a jurisdictional stance.	“The Constitution doesn’t give the federal government the

	federal rights (Palacio, 2022).	protections typically reference the Constitution or SCOTUS.		power to dictate abortion laws to the states” - @VivekGRamaswamy
Healthcare & Medical Framing	Portrays abortion as an essential aspect of healthcare and a medical decision (Copenhaver et al., 2023).	References to doctors, hospitals, health risks, medical access, and procedures.	Medical metaphors unrelated to abortion.	“Abortion is healthcare. Full stop.” - @PPact
Religion & Morality	Uses religious beliefs, divine authority, or moral absolutism to justify abortion stances (Pew Research Center, 2022).	Mentions of God, sin, biblical references, and religious duties in the abortion context.	Vague morality language or secular ethics, not tied to religion.	“Abortion is sin. Life is a gift from God.” - @MattWalshBlog
Extremism & Moderation	Frames opposing abortion views as extreme or advocates for a middle-ground approach (Thomson, 2024).	Use of words like “radical”, “common sense”, “extreme”, and “bipartisan” regarding abortion.	Political extremism is not linked to abortion discourse.	“The Democrats want abortion up until birth. That’s extreme.” - @GOP
Economic & Societal Costs	Links abortion access (or lack thereof) to economic hardship, systemic inequality, or public health (Palacio, 2022).	Mentions of poverty, social care burden, employment impact, or economic injustice.	General economic concerns are not related to reproductive policy.	“Forcing someone to carry a pregnancy they can’t afford, deepens poverty” - @RepPressley
Victim Testimonies & Storytelling	Uses personal or shared abortion-related stories to elicit sympathy and empathy or	First-person narratives, emotional storytelling, and testimonials about abortion.	General emotional appeals with no narrative or personal angle.	“I was 19, scared, and alone. Abortion gave me a second chance” - @abortionfund

highlight
consequences
(Copenhaver et
al., 2023).

Election Framing	Uses abortion as a rallying point for voter turnout, party loyalty, or electoral stakes (Pew Research Centre, 2022).	“Abortion is on the ballot” Vote to protect rights, calls to action for elections.	Election talk is not tied to abortion.	“If you care about reproductive freedom, VOTE this November” - @JoeBiden
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Tone Type	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Example Tweet
Urgent / Mobilising	Language that conveys time sensitivity or calls for immediate action, often to vote, protest, or donate.	Use of “now”, “urgent”, “act”, “vote”, “don’t wait”	Any call to action not related to abortion	“Abortion rights are under attack - we must act NOW. Vote like your life depends on it” - @JoeBiden
Outraged / Condemning	Expresses moral outrage, indignation, or intense disapproval of a policy, person, or group.	Use of all caps, exclamation marks, or language like “disgusting”, “horrific”, “outrageous”.	Anger not tied to abortion discourse.	“It’s outrageous that politicians think they can control women’s bodies in 2024” - @SenWarren
Empathetic / Supportive	Tone of compassion, understanding, or solidarity with people affected by abortion policies.	Use of words like “I understand”, “we stand with”, “no one should suffer”, and personal testimonies.	Neutral reporting or detached statements	“No one should be forced to carry a pregnancy after rape. We see you. We hear you.” - @AOC
Sarcastic / Mocking	Uses irony or ridicule to undermine	Use of scare quotes, sarcasms, and	Honest criticism without humour or irony.	“So now the ‘small government’

	opposing abortion stances, often humorous or cynical.	exaggeration to belittle opponents or highlight hypocrisy.		folks want to track periods? Got it.” - @MollyJongFast
Inspirational / Hopeful	Evokes optimism, collective strength, and belief in progress or justice.	Use of phrases like “we can win”, “change is possible”, “future generations”	Neutral facts without emotional uplift.	“Together, we will protect reproductive freedom for generations to come.” - @GavinNewsom
Authoritative / Confident	A firm, resolute tone is used to assert a stance as truth or policy, which is often found in official statements.	Use of direct, assertive statements, lack of hedging, citations of laws or rights.	Uncertain or speculative posts.	“We will veto any national abortion ban. Period.” - @POTUS
Alarmist / Fear-inducing	Focuses on catastrophic consequences or worst-case scenarios to provoke fear.	“If we don’t act, people will die”, “America will collapse”, “women will suffer massively.”	Legitimate concerns without emotional escalation.	“If they can take away abortion rights, they can take away any right.” - @RobertGarcia
Neutral / Informative	Tone focused on providing facts, updates, or clarifications without emotional appeal.	Statistics, court decisions, and election information without ‘spin’.	Includes emotive or persuasive language.	“13 states have enacted near-total abortion bans since Dobbs.” - @Guttmacher

Appendix C

Full Tweets Codebook (Sample) and Sample of Sentiment-Scored Tweets

The following table depicts a sample of 10 rows of the full manual tweets code, including the tweet_id, actor, actor type, tweet_text, frame, tone, sentiment, sentiment-score, and sentiment-category, all presented in the results section.

tweet_id	actor	actor_type	tweet_text	frame	tone	sentiment	sentiment-score	sentiment-category
1	Kamala Harris	Candidate	"Because of Donald Trump, more than 1 in 3 women of reproductive age live in a state with a Trump Abortion Ban-many with no exceptions for rape or inc...	Extremism & Moderation	Alarmist / Fear-Inducing	-7	-2.3	Negative
2	Kamala Harris	Candidate	Across our nation, we witnessed a full-on assault on reproductive freedom, and we know who is to blame-Donald Trump. Because of him, more than 20 states...	Election Framing	Alarmist / Fear-inducing	-4	-1.4	Negative
3	Kamala Harris	Candidate	Here's what will happen if Donald Trump wins this year's election: -More abortion bans -More pain and suffering -Less freedom. We deserve	Election Framing	Alarmist / Fear-inducing	4	-0.35	Negative

4	Kamala Harris	Candidate	<p>better.</p> <p>Know this: Donald Trump would sign a national abortion ban and restrict access to contraception. We believe politicians should not come between a woman...</p>	Medical & Healthcare Framing	Urgent / Mobilising	-3	-1.65	Negative
5	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	Influencer	<p>Nevada, it's time to fight like hell for our reproductive freedom. Join me, @PPact, @reproforall, @nv Dems, labor leaders, and more to rally together a...</p>	State vs. Federal Control	Urgent / Mobilising	3	-1.110	Neutral
6	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	Influencer	<p>"Good, he's trying to take all their reproductive rights away."</p>	Bodily Autonomy & Reproductive Freedom	Sarcastic / Mocking	3	1.35	Positive
7	Joe Biden	Candidate	<p>"I had the chance to meet with Amanda, a woman who nearly lost her life due to Texas' abortion ban. What she went through was barbaric - and it's Dona...</p>	Victim Testimonies & Storytelling	Alarmist / Fear-inducing	-5	-2.8	Negative
8	Joe Biden	Candidate	<p>On the 51st anniversary of the Supreme</p>	Extremism & Moderation	Alarmist / Fear-inducing	2	8.32	Neutral

Court's decision
in Roe v. Wade,
Trump and
MAGA
Republicans
continue to push
for a national
abortion ban. It's

9	Joe Biden	Candidate	... Folks, Donald Trump brags about overturning Roe v. Wade. He's ready to ban abortion nationwide. And today, he said states should be able to punish wom...	Election Framing	Alarmist / Fear-induc ing	-6	-2.55	Negative
10	Joe Biden	Candidate	Republicans, led by Donald Trump, are threatening access to abortion, contraception, and IVF. It's at odds with the majority of Americans. @KamalaHarri.	Election Framing	Authoritati ve / Confident	0	1.0	Positive

Appendix D

Contingency Tables for Chi-Square Tests

The following tables exemplify and support Section 4.5 of statistical tests, which includes B1. Actor Type x Frame; B2. Actor Type x Tone; and B3: Frame x Tone. Each table displays a clear and clean matrix layout.

B1. Actor Type x Frame:

Actor Type	Bodily Autonomy	Economic Costs	Election Framing	Extremism	Fetal Rights	Medical Framing	Other	Story-telling	Federal Control	Religion
Candidate	39	16	133	51	11	23	1	24	27	5
Influencer	48	7	41	34	52	46	4	43	25	24
Organisation	53	16	50	23	84	22	12	41	22	6

B2. Actor Type x Tone

Actor Type	Alarmist	Authoritative	Empathetic	Hopeful	Neutral	Other	Condemning	Mocking	Urgent
Candidate	63	50	24	36	8	0	71	39	42
Influencer	75	29	26	49	19	2	70	36	29
Organisation	48	43	28	65	22	0	55	15	53

B3. Frame x Tone

Frame	Alarmist	Authoritative	Empathetic	Hopeful	Neutral	Other	Condemning	Mocking	Urgent
Bodily Autonomy	13	26	18	39	3	0	27	14	14
Economic Costs	5	7	1	5	2	0	7	4	8

Election Framing	45	29	3	22	12	0	36	27	52
Extremism	22	11	0	10	1	0	38	14	12
Fetal Rights	17	16	17	42	2	0	27	13	13
Medical Framing	39	6	10	3	8	0	14	4	7
Other	2	0	0	1	9	0	0	3	2
Religion	5	6	3	7	2	1	10	0	1
Federal Control	10	17	2	8	7	1	13	9	7
Storytelling	28	4	24	13	3	0	24	4	8

Appendix E - AI

While preparing this thesis, I used ChatGPT to provide structure within the sections and sub-sections. I thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as needed. Moreover, Grammarly was applied to this thesis to fix grammatical errors and possible sentence structure, taking full responsibility for the outcome.