



AARON BUSHNELL'S SUICIDE MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

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Abstract: The conflict in Israel and Palestine has led to many demonstrations and protests from all circles around the world. The demonstrations and protests at a later stage developed into quite extreme actions, such as the suicide video by burning the body by Aaron Bushnell which had shocked the world of social media. This research uses a message content analysis method with a conventional approach. Taking data sources from the Twitter/X social media of one of the journalists in America, the researcher's focus is to present the world's reaction data based on the theory of mass communication effects caused by the content of Aaron Bushnell's message who committed the extreme protest action by suicide. The result of this research is that Aaron Bushnell's suicide succeeded in giving affective and conative effects on the world, so that the core content of the message conveyed by Aaron Bushnell in the form of Palestinian liberation can have an impact on the world.

Keywords: *Message Content Analysis, Aaron Bushnell, Mass Communication Effects.*

INTRODUCTION

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the Middle East conflicts that until now has become an endless conflict and has not found a meeting point. Zionism campaigned by Theodore Herzl became an embryo that gave birth to the state of Israel. The declaration of the state of Israel in 1948 was a sign of a rolling hot ball that made the Arabs realize.¹ Some people around the world think that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is a religious conflict. However, this conflict is actually caused by the struggle for land in the Palestinian territories. This conflict was caused by the Jewish people who wanted to establish their National Home in Palestine. It was proven by the Balfour Declaration in England which was officially declared on November 2, 1917. The Balfour Declaration was a promise given to the Jews in order to establish a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. From this description, it can be seen that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is not a religious conflict, but a conflict over territory between the two countries.²

Advances in technology, especially the internet, make it easier for people to find

¹Mudore, SB (2019). Peran Diplomasi Indonesia Dalam Konflik Israel-Palestina. *Center of Middle Eastern Studies (CMES)*, jurnal.uns.ac.id, <https://jurnal.uns.ac.id/cmest/article/view/37891>

²Nurjannah, EP, & Fakhrudin, M (2019). Deklarasi Balfour: Awal Mula Konflik Israel Palestina. *PERIODE: Jurnal Sejarah dan ...*, journal.unj.ac.id, <http://journal.unj.ac.id/unj/index.php/periode/article/view/10479>



everything they want, thus making people active users of the internet. The internet itself is a global system of interconnected computer networks that use the Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP) standard to serve billions of users around the world.³ In its development, YouTube became one of the most popular video sharing websites where users can load, watch and share video clips for free. It was founded in February 2005 by three former PayPal employees, Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim. Most of the videos on YouTube are movie clips, TV videos, and videos made by the users themselves.⁴ Continuing to innovate, the website allows users to upload, watch, and share long and short videos. They finally added a Youtube Shorts feature with a scroll concept.⁵

This research will discuss the message Aaron Bushnell wanted to convey by recording himself committing suicide on camera. Bushnell was a 25-year-old member of the US Air Force stationed at Lackland Air Force base in San Antonio and originally from Whitman, Massachusetts. He joined the Air Force as an active member in May 2020 and had since worked in information technology and development operations. In its statement on Monday, the Air Force said he was a cyber defense operations specialist with the 531st Intelligence Support Squadron.⁶

Deaths caused by suicide are increasing worldwide. Data found in Indonesia alone states that suicide is the second leading cause of death in the productive age of 15-29 years, and the average death by suicide in Indonesia is one person every hour. However, suicidal behavior is not only present in adolescents and young people, but can occur in all age groups.⁷

The research that uncovered the content of the message and the intent of the suicide in Aaron Bushnell's case has differences. The Pentagon spokesperson said the self-immolation incident committed by Aaron Bushnell on February 25, which occurred at 13:00 local time (18:00 GMT)⁸ has a purpose of its own. The act has a clear purpose: to use gruesome displays of self-sacrifice to draw public attention to an issue, to compel them to become moral witnesses.⁹

³Triyono, A, & Marhuda, NK (2020). Studi Analisis Isi Pesan Dakwah Dalam Media Sosial Instagram@dakwah_tauhid. Jurnal Interaksi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, jurnal.umsu.ac.id, <https://jurnal.umsu.ac.id/index.php/interaksi/article/view/3944>

⁴Faiqah, F, & Nadjib, M Amir, andi subhan.(2016). Youtube sebagai sarana komunikasi bagi komunitas makassarvidgram 123. *Jurnal Komunikasi Kareba*

⁵Malik, R, & Nurhadi, J (2023). Strategi Pembelajaran Keterampilan Berbahasa Anak Menggunakan Algoritma Aplikasi Tiktok, Instagram Reels, dan Youtube Shorts. *Disastra: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra*

⁶<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/aaron-bushnell-self-immolation-what-we-know.html>

⁷Valentina, TD, & Helmi, AF (2016). Ketidakberdayaan dan perilaku bunuh diri: Meta-analisis. *Buletin Psikologi*, journal.ugm.ac.id, <<https://journal.ugm.ac.id/buletinpsikologi/article/view/18175/0>>

⁸<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-68405119>

⁹<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/feb/28/aaron-bushnell-self-immolation-gaza-israel>

Related research that discusses suicide messages as previous literature, one of which was written by Wahyu Budi Nugroho entitled "Youth, Suicide and Resilience: Strengthening Resilience as a Reduction of Suicide Rates among Indonesian Youth" in 2012.¹⁰ The difference from the research is in the perspective of the scientific discipline. Wahyu departed from the perspective of sociology, while the researcher departed from the perspective of communication. The next previous literature is in the paper by Arthur D. B. Mantiri, etc, in 2016 Arthur's research is entitled "Profile of suicides in Manado City for the period January - November 2015" which has differences in research objects. If Arthur discusses people in Manado with various backgrounds, the researcher discusses Aaron Bushnell who has citizenship and profession as an American soldier. More fresh from previous research, the researcher's previous literature still related to this research was written by Yosua Rononuwu, etc., in 2020 entitled "Content Analysis of Bullying Messages in Films: Shazam". The source of data for the research conducted by Yosua used film media, while the researcher used social media, which in this case was through Twitter/X. Research that is almost the same in terms of disciplines and data sources with this research is research written by Uswatun Hasanah.¹¹, etc., entitled "*Content Analysis of One Percent Youtube Channel Videos (Case Study of Social Media Impact on Mental Health)*" in 2023. The difference in research written by Uswatun is the object of her research which discusses the content analysis of messages from Youtube channels, not from individuals.

METHOD

This research method uses a content analysis approach. This method is widely used in the field of communication science. In fact, content analysis is one of the main methods in the discipline of communication.¹² The content analysis method focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of data through a process of systematic classification coding and identification of themes or patterns. There are 3 approaches in qualitative content analysis method: conventional, directed and combined. Key Coding Differences among the 3 Approaches in

¹⁰Nugroho, WB (2012). Pemuda, bunuh diri dan resiliensi: Penguatan resiliensi sebagai pereduksi angka bunuh diri di kalangan pemuda Indonesia. Jurnal Studi Pemuda, [journal.ugm.ac.id, <https://journal.ugm.ac.id/jurnalpemuda/article/view/32074>](http://journal.ugm.ac.id/jurnalpemuda/article/view/32074)

¹¹Hasanah, U, & Abidin, AAAS (2023). ANALISIS ISI VIDEO CHANNEL YOUTUBE SATU PERSEN (Studi Kasus Sosial Media Berdampak Pada Kesehatan Mental). At-Tazakki: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu ..., [jurnal.uinsu.ac.id, <http://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/attazakki/article/view/15323>](http://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/attazakki/article/view/15323)

¹²Eriyanto, Analisis Isi: Pengantar Metodologi untuk Penelitian Ilmu Komunikasi dan Ilmu-ilmu Sosial Lainnya, (Jakarta: Prenada Media 2017)



Qualitative Content Analysis.¹³

Type Of Content Analysis	Study Start With	Timing of Defining Codes or Keyword	Sources of Codes & Keywords
Conventional Content Analysis	Observation	Code are defined during data analysis	Codes are derived from data
Directed content Analysis	Theory	Codes are defined before and during data analysis	Codes are derived from theory/relevant research findings
Summative content Analysis	Keywords	Keywords are identified before and during data analysis	Keywords are derived from interest of researcher/review of literature

For this research, the author will use a conventional approach that starts from observation.

The research data uses observation and documentation data collection techniques. As an observation step, the researcher looked for the most relevant and accurate video sources on social media Twitter/X. At the end of the observation, the researcher took the primary data source of Aaron Bushnell's amateur video recording his own suicide which had been uploaded by Talia Jane's Twitter/X account @taliaotg with the username @taliaotg on February 26, 2024 which became the beginning of a lot of news and crowd circulation on social media. This video has been viewed 8.5 million times as of April 22, 2024.¹⁴ Then the secondary data that the author took were several uploads provided by the Talia Jane account on the Twitter/X account and several websites on the internet as supporting data for this research.

MASS COMMUNICATION EFFECTS

The role of mass media in creating culture in society is now inevitable. The advancement of communication media today greatly influences society both on thinking and lifestyle. This is what happens in mass communication activities and develops the mass media effect. There are three dimensions of mass communication effects, namely: cognitive, affective, and conative. Cognitive effects include increased awareness, learning, and additional knowledge. Affective effects relate to emotions, feelings, and attitudes. Meanwhile, conative effects relate to behavior and intentions to do something in a certain way.

This research opens data that causes conative effects, namely the effects that arise in the audience in the form of behavior, actions or activities. But before the conative effect occurs, there will be an affective effect, which is an effect that has a higher level than the Cognitive

¹³Asri, R (2020). Membaca film sebagai sebuah teks: analisis isi film "nanti kita cerita tentang hari ini (nkcthi)". Jurnal Al Azhar Indonesia Seri Ilmu Sosial, jurnal.uai.ac.id, <<https://jurnal.uai.ac.id/index.php/JAISS/article/view/462>>

¹⁴<https://twitter.com/taliaotg/status/1761944158636331247/video/1>

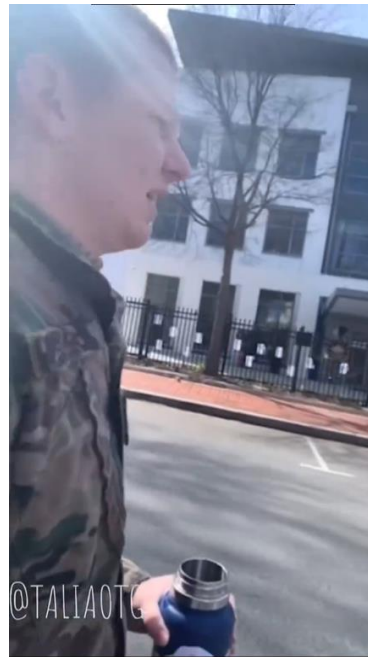


Effect. The goal is not just to tell the audience to know about something, but more than that, after knowing the information they receive, the audience is expected to feel it.¹⁵The following are the factors that influence the affective effects of mass communication.

1. Emotional mood: our response to a movie, advertisement, or piece of information, will be influenced by one's emotional mood;
2. Cognitive schema: this is the script in our mind that explains the flow of events;
3. Setting of exposure: a person will be very frightened watching a horror movie, for example, if they watch it alone in an old house, when it is raining heavily, and the pillars of the house are creaking;
4. Individual predisposition factors: This factor indicates the extent to which people feel involved with the characters featured in the mass media.

¹⁵F Fitriansyah, "Efek komunikasi massa pada khalayak (studi deskriptif pengguna media sosial dalam membentuk perilaku remaja", *Cakrawala-Jurnal Humaniora* (ejournal.bsi.ac.id, 2018), <<https://ejournal.bsi.ac.id/ejurnal/index.php/cakrawala/article/view/4228>>

AARON BUSHNELL'S PALESTINE LIBERATION MESSAGE



Picture 1

Screenshot of Aaron Bushnell's self-immolation video on Twitter account/X Talia Jane

This research uses a content analysis method with a conventional approach, the author observes the video and obtains data results that become the content of Aaron Bushnell's message. The video begins with Aaron Bushnell introducing himself as an active member of the United States Air Force who has been involved in the Palestinian genocide but does not want to do it again. Aaron Bushnell's explanation then tells the audience that he will commit a suicide that is quite extreme, but he then explains that his action cannot be compared to the genocide experienced by the Palestinians, and according to Aaron Bushnell his death is a normal thing for the rulers against all the deaths of people who defend Palestine and the Palestinians themselves. The last sentence mentioned by Aaron Bushnell before setting himself on fire was a message of Palestinian liberation, namely "Free Palestine!" 7 times. The video closes with several officers trying to extinguish Aaron Bushnell's body that has been burned by the fire.

The transcript of Aaron Bushnell's message from the video uploaded by Twitter account/X Talia Jane and translated into Indonesian:



Bahasa Inggris	Bahasa Indonesia
<i>"Hi my name is Aaron Bushnell, I am an active duty member of the United States Air Force and I will no longer be complicit in genocide.</i> <i>I am about to engage in an extreme act of protest, but compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonizers it's not extreme at all.</i> <i>This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal".</i> <i>"Free Palestine!", "Free Palestine! FREE PALESTINE! FREE PALESTINE! FREE PALESTINE! FREE PALESTINE!", "Free Palestine".</i>	<i>"Hai, nama saya Aaron Bushnell, saya adalah seorang anggota Angkatan Udara Amerika Serikat yang masih aktif dan saya tidak akan terlibat dalam genosida.</i> <i>Saya akan terlibat dalam sebuah aksi protes yang ekstrem, namun dibandingkan dengan apa yang telah dialami oleh orang-orang di Palestina di tangan penjajah, hal ini tidak ekstrem sama sekali.</i> <i>Ini adalah apa yang diputuskan oleh kelas penguasa kita sebagai sesuatu yang normal".</i> <i>"Bebaskan Palestina!", "Bebaskan Palestina! MERDEKA PALESTINA! MERDEKA PALESTINA! MERDEKA PALESTINA! MERDEKA!", "Bebaskan Palestina".</i>

Table 1

English Video Transcript and Indonesian Translation

As the results of the data presented above, Aaron Bushnell's main message, which he repeated up to 7 times, was "Free Palestine" or in Indonesian translated into "Free Palestine". This was the last sentence before Aaron Bushnell set himself on fire.

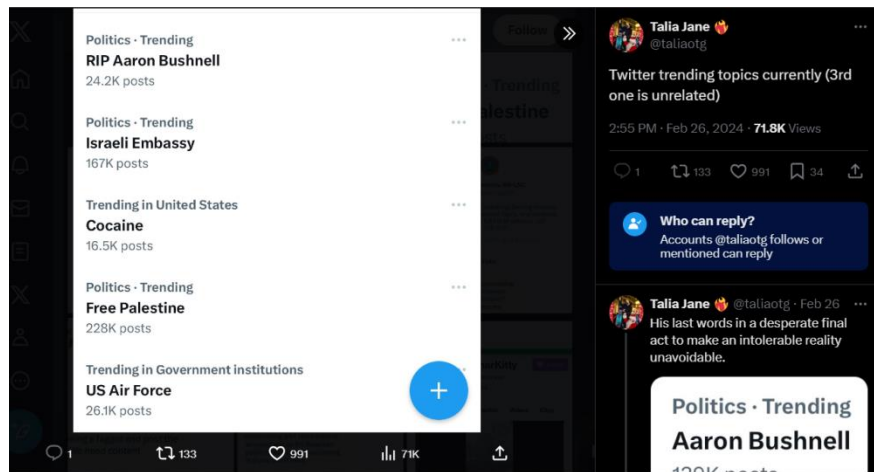


Picture 2

**Tangkapan Layar Video Aaron Bushnell Meneriakkan Kalimat “*Free Palestine*”
Sebelum Melakukan Aksi Bakar Diri pada Menit 1.30**

EFFECT ON THE WORLD

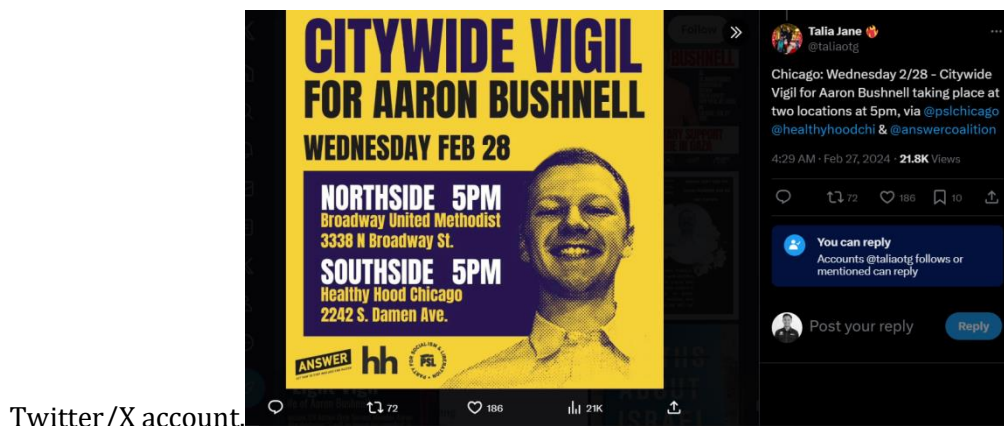
Since the incident of Aaron Bushnell who delivered the message of Palestinian liberation with his extreme suicide protest, the world has been hit by a mental and emotional 'attack'. Various acts of solidarity and defense for Aaron Bushnell began to emerge from various parties. Starting from the topic that is currently being discussed by Twitter/X users



Picture 3

Trending Topics on February 26, 2024 after Aaron Bushnell's self-immolation on Social Media Twitter/X by Talia Jane¹⁶

Then from ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism) America, an anti-war and social justice coalition with organizing centers across the country¹⁷ who organized a solidarity action for Aaron Bushnell. This announcement was shared and posted by Talia Jane on her



Twitter/X account.

Picture 4

Infographic in Solidarity with Aaron Bushnell on Social Media Twitter/X by Talia Jane¹⁸

On the other hand, Palestine as the main content of Aaron Bushnell's message also commemorated this event by making one of the streets in Jericho, Palestine with his name. The Mayor of Jericho, Abdul Karim Sidr, said the authority's decision to use Bushnell's name as the

¹⁶<https://twitter.com/taliaoatg/status/1762023679930589590/photo/1>

¹⁷<https://twitter.com/answercoalition>

¹⁸<https://twitter.com/taliaoatg/status/1762228330466546131/photo/1>

name of the new street was due to the soldier's sacrifice for Palestine.¹⁹

● This article is more than 1 month old

Palestinian town of Jericho names street after US soldier who set himself on fire

Aaron Bushnell, who died last month, 'sacrificed everything' for Palestinians, says mayor of Jericho



Picture 5

One of the Streets in Jericho City, Palestine Named Aaron Bushnell as a Form of Respect Reported by The Guardian.com

Seeing the self-immolation of Aaron Bushnell, the reaction of the Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine, HAMAS, also expressed condolences for the death of Aaron Bushnell. in a statement reported by Gutzy.asia.com:

"We in the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) express our deepest condolences and our full solidarity with the family and friends of the American pilot Aaron Bushnell, whose name has been immortalized as a defender of human values and the oppression of the Palestinian people who are suffering because of the American administration and its unjust policies," Hamas stated.

¹⁹<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/10/palestinian-town-of-jericho-names-street-after-us-airman-who-set-himself-on-fire>

INTERNATIONAL

Hamas extends condolences for tragic self-immolation of US Airman Aaron Bushnell

Hamas extends condolences for the tragic self-immolation of US airman Aaron Bushnell, condemning the US administration's support for Zionist actions. Vigils outside the Israeli Embassy underscore the emotional impact of Bushnell's protest.



Published 2 months ago on 28 February 2024
By Yustika



(Photo: X/Sulaiman Ahmed)

Picture 6

Official Statement by HAMAS on the Death of Aaron Bushnell Reported by Gutzy.asia.com

CONCLUSION

Based on the data and the researcher's findings, the conclusion of this research is that the content of Aaron Bushnell's message has a considerable affective and conative effect on the world. The data proves that there is an affective effect which then develops into a conative effect. First, affective effects occurred on Twitter/X social media users, giving rise to three hashtags related to the content of the message and the death of Aaron Bushnell, namely: #RIP Aaron Bushnell, #Free Palestine, and #US Air Force which shows this is the conative effect of the message content and the death of Aaron Bushnell. Secondly, the affective effects felt by American citizens that led to the conative effects led to the invitation and announcement of solidarity actions for Aaron Bushnell in two places at once, namely Northside Broadway United Methodist, 3338 N Broadway St., and Southside Healthy Hood Chicago, 2242 S. Damen Ave., United States. Third, the affective effect felt by Palestinians, especially in Jericho City, is that they pay tribute to Aaron Bushnell's sacrifice. The conative effect that occurred was the Mayor of Jericho, Abdul Karim Sidr, then made Aaron Bushnell's name as one of the streets in the city. Fourth, the affective effect felt by the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) who condoled the self-immolation and death of Aaron Bushnell in conveying the content of the Palestinian liberation message to the world.

This research has many shortcomings. Such as the lack of discussion of the theory

underlying the cause or motive of Aaron Bushnell committing suicide in depth which requires an approach and exposure from the discipline of psychology. Furthermore, this research also requires further development related to how the content of Aaron Bushnell's message finally has an effect specifically on the conflict between Palestine and Israel. It is hoped that this research can provide a start and refreshment in the discussion of mass communication effects that occur due to various things, especially in this research which discusses suicide as a communication message.

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