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The Attitudes of Arab Youth towards the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis

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Abstract

The current study provides the first investigation on the attitudes of Middle Eastern individuals on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Most prior studies on individuals' attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict were conducted on social media data (mostly Twitter, Facebook now known as X). Importantly, most of these studies often using sentimental analyses. One limitation of the use of publicly available data is the lack of testing specific hypotheses. Accordingly, in the current study, a novel survey was developed and used to study which includes questions probed individuals' attitudes including cognitive (awareness and knowledge), emotional (feelings and empathy), and social-behavioural (behaviors and actions) aspects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Further, demographical data was also collected from all participants (n = 370) including age, gender, country of residence, country of citizenship, academic qualifications, academic specialization, job, and income. In the current study, an extensive number of statistical analyses was conducted, including group comparisons, correlational analyses, factor analyses, and regression analysis. Our results are as follows: factor analyses suggest that the survey includes two different constructs: questions about the war in general and questions supporting Russia. Further, results show that cognitive and socio-behavioural aspects of the scale (but not emotional aspects) are related to many demographical variables, suggesting that the impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on Arabic people is more cognitive than emotional, possibly due to geographical distance and cultural differences between the Middle East and Russia/Ukraine. Importantly, our factor analysis shows that there was stronger support for Ukraine than Russia among Arabic people. Our findings have implications for understanding the public opinions of individuals in the Middle East towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Keywords: *Middle East, public opinions, attitudes, Russia, Ukraine, Russia-Ukraine conflict.*

Introduction

Before delving into individuals' attitudes and public opinions regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, a quick historical perspective on the Russia and Ukraine interrelationships is provided. Ukraine has been a part of the Soviet Union. However, following the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Ukraine gained independence in 1991. However, throughout this time, Ukraine has always had (and still having) two camps of individuals: (a) individuals residing in the East of the country, who speaks Russian, and often supportive of Russian regimes and (b) individuals

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residing in the West of Ukraine, who tends to associate more with the European Union than Russia (Giuliano, 2018a; Samokhvalov, 2015; White et al., 2010). It is important to note this division has shaped the past and ongoing political changes in the region over the following decades. It is likely that this division will also shape the future of politics in this region. Further, both Russia and Ukraine share many cultural and social similarities including Christian orthodox religion and Slavic culture (Abo Hamza & Helal, 2015; Kappeler, 2014).

As discussed below, most studies conducted on the attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict was done with Russian or European individuals, and the majority of these studies use publicly available data that do not include sufficient data on the demographics of the participants. It is important to conduct a controlled study to investigate how individuals' demographics impact their attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The current problem in this study is (a) there is a lack of research studies on the attitudes of Middle Eastern individuals on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and (b) most prior studies have used publicly available data, such as Twitter data. Accordingly, in the current study, for the first time, the attitudes of Middle Eastern individuals towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict are investigated using a survey analysis.

Our study objectives and hypotheses are as follows:

Objective 1: Validate our newly developed scale on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Objective 2: Assess cognitive, emotional, and social-behavioural attitudes of Middle Eastern Individuals on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Objective 3: Investigate the impact of several demographical variables including age, gender, country of residence, country of citizenship, academic qualifications, academic specialization, job, and income on cognitive, emotional, and social-behavioural attitudes of Middle Eastern Individuals on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Our hypotheses are follows:

Hypothesis 1: Unlike European countries, it is predicted that Middle Eastern individuals may score low on emotional attitudes of the scales, but perhaps high on cognitive and socio-behavioural scale of the review. This is because the Middle East is geographically further away from Ukraine and Russia and thus not may be emotionally invested in Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Hypothesis 2: It is also predicted that Middle Eastern individuals may show more support for Ukraine than Russia during the conflict.

Literature Review

Based on exiting literature on this topic, this section is divided into three subsections. In the first subsection, general studies on individuals' attitudes towards the Russian and Ukraine conflict are discussed. In the second subsection, existing studies on individuals' attitudes towards the Russia and Ukraine conflict following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 are discussed in detail. In the third subsection, individuals' attitudes towards the conflict following the recent Russian attacks on Ukraine in 2022 are discussed.

Individuals' attitudes towards Russia-Ukraine conflict in general

In this section, studies related to individuals' attitudes toward the Russia-Ukraine conflict are discussed. Several studies reported that individuals attitudes towards this conflict are diverse and complex, reflecting a range of psychological, social cultural factors (Arel, 2018). Individuals' views and attitudes on the Russia-Ukraine conflict depend on many factors, which are discussed below.

Public attitudes in Ukraine itself are also multifaceted. While there is a strong sense of national unity and resistance against Russian invasion and aggression towards a sovereign state, there are regional variations in attitudes toward the conflict, particularly in areas directly affected by the conflict, including Crimea and East Ukraine. Some individuals tend to sympathise with Ukraine's struggle for independence and self-determination (Papastephanou, 2023). However, other Ukrainian individuals hold a more sympathetic or ambivalent view of Russia's actions. Some Russian individuals from neighbouring countries may perceive Ukraine's move towards closer ties with Western institutions such as the European Union and NATO as a threat to Russia's security interests (Götz & Staun, 2022).

Additionally, there are individuals who emphasize the complexities of the conflict, acknowledging that there are legitimate grievances on both sides and that a peaceful resolution is the ideal outcome. In recent years, the Russia-Ukraine conflict's impact on global politics and the stability of Eastern Europe has led to a wide range of opinions and debates. Attitudes toward the Russia-Ukraine conflict vary widely both within and among countries, reflecting diverse perspectives on the conflict. In Western countries, particularly in Europe and North America, there is a prevailing sentiment of condemnation and concern over Russia's actions in Ukraine.

It is important to note that individuals' attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict could have been impacted by how the media covered this conflict in their countries. For example, it was found that many individuals in Brazil are not concerned much with the Russia-Ukraine conflict, possibly due to weak reporting of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in Brazil, unlike in the US and

Europe (Fernández et al., 2023; Nordenstreng, 2023). However, another study investigated the impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on the attitudes of Europeans on immigration policies and the acceptance of refugees (Klymak, 2023). It was found the Russia-Ukraine conflict increased the acceptance of refugees residing in their countries, showing that the Russia-Ukraine conflict can have an impact on internal politics of some countries.

Individuals' attitudes following the annexation of Crimea

Given that the Russian invasion of Ukraine occurred in Feb. 2022, there are a dearth of studies on this area, due to its recency. However, following the annexation of Crimea to Russia in 2014, there have been a plethora of studies that have explored the attitudes of individuals regarding the Russia-Ukraine crisis at the time. Below, these studies are discussed, as they are relevant to the current Russia-Ukraine conflict.

For example, Giuliano (2018b) found that Russian-identifying and speaking individuals who reside in Ukraine showed mixed opinions on separationism of Crimea, that is, being independent from Ukraine and either joining Russia or becoming an independent autonomous region. Interestingly, Giuliano (2018b) found that the reason underlying supporting separationism (i.e., Crimea to become independent and separate from Ukraine) is not Russian identity or language but more of being ignored by Ukrainian politicians. This is also supported by data showing that Crimea has been very unstable region, since Ukraine independence in 1991 (Kubicek, 2000).

Many individuals view Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 as a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and international law. They see Moscow's ongoing support for separatist groups in Eastern Ukraine as an evidence of destabilizing Ukraine and of Russia's aggressive expansionist agenda (Balzer, 2015; Katchanovski, 2015). However, some Russian individuals view the annexation of Crimea as a restoration of historical Russian territory and see Moscow's support for separatist groups as a means of protecting Russian-speaking populations in Eastern Ukraine, which is over 60% of Crimea population. As a result, a segment of the Russian population supports their government's actions in Ukraine (which are discussed in more detail below), although this is debated (Morris, 2023). Along these lines, public opinions and attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict is related to several factors. For example, it was found Russian individuals who are supportive of Russian annexation of Crimea also hold negative views related to the West's interference (Ash et al., 2023).

Individuals' attitudes following the recent 2022 Russia-Ukraine conflict

As mentioned above, given that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is recent, there are few studies that have covered its implications and consequences. In this section, these studies are discussed in some detail.

Many studies on the Russia-Ukraine conflict were conducted using datasets from Twitter or similar social media platforms (Boatwright & Pyle, 2023; ELİGÜZEL, 2023; Wadhwani et al., 2023). For example, Mir et al. (2023) analysed Twitter's contents on this topic, and found that most individuals are supportive of Ukraine. In another study, Agarwal et al., (2022) found that most tweets on the Russia-Ukraine conflict are negative (for similar results, also see Vahdat-Nejad et al., 2023). Similarly, another study analysed the emotional contents of Tweets posted on the first day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and also found that most of them are negative, with the war being among the most commonly used terms (Garcia & Cunanan-Yabut, 2022). However, using sentiment analysis on Twitter datasets, one recent study found that positive sentiments were over 50% of the tweets, while negative ones were in 10% of the tweets (Xu et al., 2023). In the same study, it was found that around 30% of the tweets are neutral.

The reasons underlying the difference in above-mentioned results could be related to the timing of the tweets. It is possible that immediately following Russian invasion of Ukraine, most individuals had negative sentiments, but as time passes, some could see positives perhaps due to international relations and support for Ukrainians at home and elsewhere. In another study, Vahdat-Nejad et al. (2023) analyzed Twitter data following Russian invasion of Ukraine across several countries. The study found that Western countries' views on the war are different from those of Eastern countries. Another study also found that individuals from different countries view the Russia-Ukraine conflict differently (Ash et al., 2023). For example, it was found that most European and Americans see Russia as an aggressor, while individuals in India and Turkey focus more on ending the war (Ash et al., 2023). Several studies were conducted which involve the analysis of Twitter data (Chaudhari et al., 2023). For example, Tao and Peng (2023) conducted a comparative media analysis of posts in both X (formerly known as Twitter) and Weibo. They found that posts in Weibo aligns well with opinions shown in mainstream media in China, while posts in Twitter were significantly different.

The attitudes of individuals on the Russia-Ukraine conflict depends on where they are from or where they are based. For example, in Belarus, it been reported that the media has been very supportive of the Russian invasion on Ukraine. Mudrov (2022) argued that most individuals in

Belarus sympathise with Moscow attack on Ukraine, except opposition parties, which may hold supportive views of Ukraine.

As for Russian individuals' view on the Russia-Ukraine War, many polls show that around two-thirds of Russian individuals are supportive of the Russian invasion (Yudin, 2022). However, Kizilova (2022) argued that the use of manipulation methods and censorships may explain the high number of Russian individuals supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Interestingly, one recent study has questioned the validity of the high number of Russian individuals supporting the War. In a very interesting study, (Chapkovski & Schaub, 2022) used an experiment to investigate whether many Russian individuals support the Russian invasion on Ukraine or not. They have employed two conditions. First, as in prior studies, they asked 3000 Russian individuals directly whether they support the War. The second condition is known as the list experiment. In this condition, half of the participants were asked to indicate how many of these items do they support: 1) monetary monthly transfers for poor Russian families; 2) legalisation of same-sex marriage in Russia; 3) state measures to prevent abortion; and 4) the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine. The other half of the participants were asked to indicate how many of the first 3 items they support. Results show that while two-third of respondents indicated support for the War using the direct question (condition 1), around 50% show support of the war in the list experiment. The list experiment is more indicative of telling the truth.

Interestingly, several studies found public opinions regarding political entities do changes based on current financial situations (Seitz & Zazzaro, 2020). For example, it was found that individuals who were impacted by the increase in gas prices in Ukraine, due to sanctions by Russia, were more likely to oppose Russia and support joining the European Union. For example, Alyukov (2022) studied Russian individuals' views of Ukraine-related events covered in Russian media. They found that most individuals were not politically motivated. They also suggested that individuals' views depend on whether they live in an authoritarian or democratic country.

Interestingly, in China, Turcsányi et al. (2022) found that most Chinese citizen hold positive views of Russia and negative views of the US. Many individuals in China saw the Russian invasion on Ukraine as the right decision to counter the US interference in the region. This is, however, very different from a survey conducted in Poland, which shows that most individuals in Poland are supportive of Ukraine (Staniszewski, 2022). In a study conducted in Germany, it was found that participants believe in confrontational Russian policy and military spending (Mader & Schoen, 2023).

Methods

Design

A survey study was designed to investigate emotional, cognitive, and socio-behavioural attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Details on the survey is discussed below.

Study Sample

In total, 377 participants were recruited in this current study, which consisted of individuals from the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC), namely Kuwait (2.7%), Oman (1.9%), Qatar (29.7%), Saudi Arabia (3.7%) and United Arab Emirates (2.4%). Seven participants were outliers, and thus excluded, as their scores were more than 3 standard deviations far from the mean. So final sample is 370 participants. These participants were mainly residing in Qatar and Egypt (~80%). Of these 5 countries of origin, 76 were males and 294 females, with ages ranging from 18 to 52 years, and a mean age below 25 years. Eighteen percent of the participants had post graduate studies, 54% had bachelor studies, 0.7% had diplomas and 20% had finished high school.

Instrument

A new scale was developed to measure attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict (details of the survey are in the Appendix). The survey has 3 sections: cognitive, emotional, and socio-behavioural aspects of the attitudes. The survey has 21 questions in total. The first 7 items of this survey were designed to measure cognitive awareness and knowledge of the crisis with statements such as “I am well informed about the current situation in the Russian-Ukrainian crisis” and they were instructed to rate the strength of their agreement on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree).* Score for each attitude topic could range between 7 and 35. The second 8 items were implemented to measure feelings towards the crisis, mainly focusing on levels of worry, empathy towards each side and support in providing humanitarian care (e.g., “I am worried about the humanitarian aspect of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis”). In addition, the last 6 items measured to social and behavioral response to the conflict with items such as “I regularly follow the news about the Russian-Ukrainian crisis”. Participants were instructed to rate their emotional and behavioral responses on a scale of 1 to *(strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree)*. Further, demographic data were collected from all participants including age, gender, country of residence and citizenship, academic qualifications, specialization, type of Job, and Income.

Data collection

The sample for the study consisted of 377 participants, who were selected from a varied population encompassing persons from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations as well

as Egypt. The study included a diverse group of individuals, consisting of both students and faculty members from different educational institutions. The sample was deliberately designed to be inclusive, encompassing a diverse range of characteristics such as age, gender, nationality, relationship status, educational background, annual income, and degree of academic accomplishment. This approach was used to ensure a full representation of the population.

The sample was collected using a straightforward sampling procedure. The participants for this study were principally recruited from three prominent academic institutions, namely Qatar University, Al Ain University, Sultan Qaboos University, Arabian Gulf University and Tanta University. The recruiting procedure employed a two-pronged strategy, including both face-to-face engagement with individuals on campus to foster a more intimate contact, as well as extending invitations for participation using online platforms, notably utilizing Google Forms, in order to enhance the study's reach and accessibility.

The data collection was undertaken over a duration of eight weeks throughout the academic year 2022/2023. The selection of this specific time frame was purposefully made to coincide with the established academic calendar, with the intention of optimizing the availability and active involvement of participants. The expanded duration of the study enabled a comprehensive and meticulous data gathering procedure, therefore assuring the inclusion of a diverse and representative sample. This would enhance the strength and dependability of the study's results.

Data analysis

Given that this is a new scale, a factor analysis was initially conducted to investigate the nature of the survey. Further, the impact of the demographic variables on the attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict was investigated. Further, group differences were analyzed and regression and correlational analysis were conducted. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 28.

Results

First, we discuss our factor analysis results to show differences in support for Ukraine vs. Russia. Following that, we provide descriptive statistics as well as group comparisons to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 (described above).

Factor Analysis

The following factor analyses reinforces the differences detected between those who supported Ukraine and participants who supported Russia.

The goal of this section to address objective 1 mentioned above, which is to vvalidate our newly developed scale on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Cognitive Awareness

To investigate the underlying structure of the 7-item survey on cognitive awareness of the conflict, dataset including responses from 374 participants was analyzed using main axis factoring with varimax rotation. Before doing the primary axis factoring analysis, it was observed that not all variables exhibited complete adherence to a normal distribution. Considering the inherent resilience of factor analysis, the aforementioned variations were not seen to be harmful. Additionally, a linear correlation was seen between the variables.

The analysis revealed the presence of two variables, each with Eigenvalues more than 1, that may be considered as the underlying factors for the seven survey questions. Please refer to Table 1 and Figure 1 for further details. Collectively, these variables were responsible for approximately 42.32% of the variability seen in the questionnaire results.

Table 1

Varimax Rotated Factor Structure of the seven Items on Cognitive Attitudes Towards the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis

	Loadings	
Item	Factor 1[a]	Factor 2[a]
1. I am well informed about the current situation in the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.	.580	
2. I understand the main factors that led to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.	.634	
3. I agree with Russia's policy in the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.		.722
4. I agree with Ukraine's policy in the Ukrainian-Russian crisis.	.380	
5. I understand the role that Arab countries play in the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.	.550	
6. I derive my information about the Russian-Ukrainian crisis from objective sources.	.688	
7. I am concerned about the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on the world.	.507	
Percentage of variance	27.44%	14.87%

Note. [a]= "Cognitive response to the conflict"; [b]= "Support for Russia"

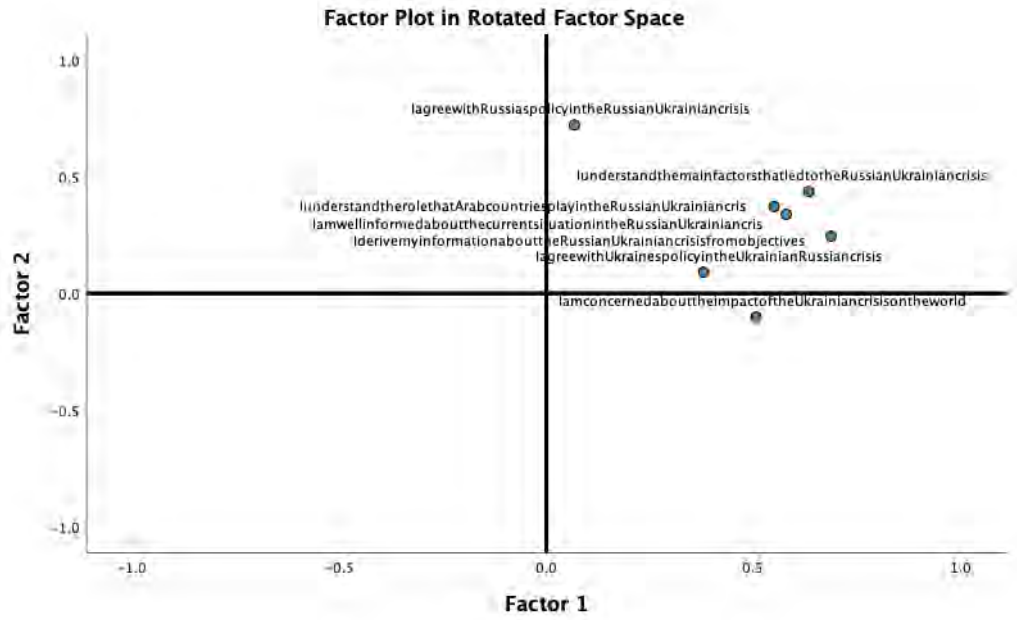

Figure 1. Factor Plot in Rotated Factor Space where it shows 6 items loading onto factor 1 and 1 item loading onto factor 2.

Behavioral Awareness

To investigate the underlying structure of the 7-item survey on cognitive awareness of the conflict, a dataset consisting of responses from 365 participants was analyzed using main axis factoring with varimax rotation. Before doing the principal axis factoring analysis, a preliminary assessment of the data revealed that not all variables exhibited complete adherence to a normal distribution. Considering the inherent robustness of factor analysis, the aforementioned variances were not deemed worrisome. Additionally, it was observed that there exists a linear connection between the variables.

The analysis revealed the presence of two variables, each with Eigenvalues greater than 1, which were found to underlie the eight survey questions (refer to Table 2 and Figure 2). Collectively, these characteristics explained approximately 48.10% of the variability observed in the questionnaire results.

Table 2

Varimax Rotated Factor Structure of the seven Items on Emotional Responses Towards the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis

	Loadings	
Item	Factor 1[a]	Factor 2[a]
1. I empathize with the Russian side in the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.		.786
2. I empathize with the Ukrainian side in the Ukrainian-Russian crisis.	.577	
3. I feel the impact of the crisis on the Russian people.		.504
4. I am worried about the humanitarian aspect of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.	.548	
5. My country should help those affected in the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.	.770	
6. I discuss the Russian-Ukrainian crisis with others.	.357	
7. I support my country in providing humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees.	.891	
8. I support my country in providing humanitarian aid to Russian refugees.	.682	
Percentage of variance	33.72%	14.38%

Note. [a]= "Emotional response to conflict"; [b]= "Russian side of the conflict"

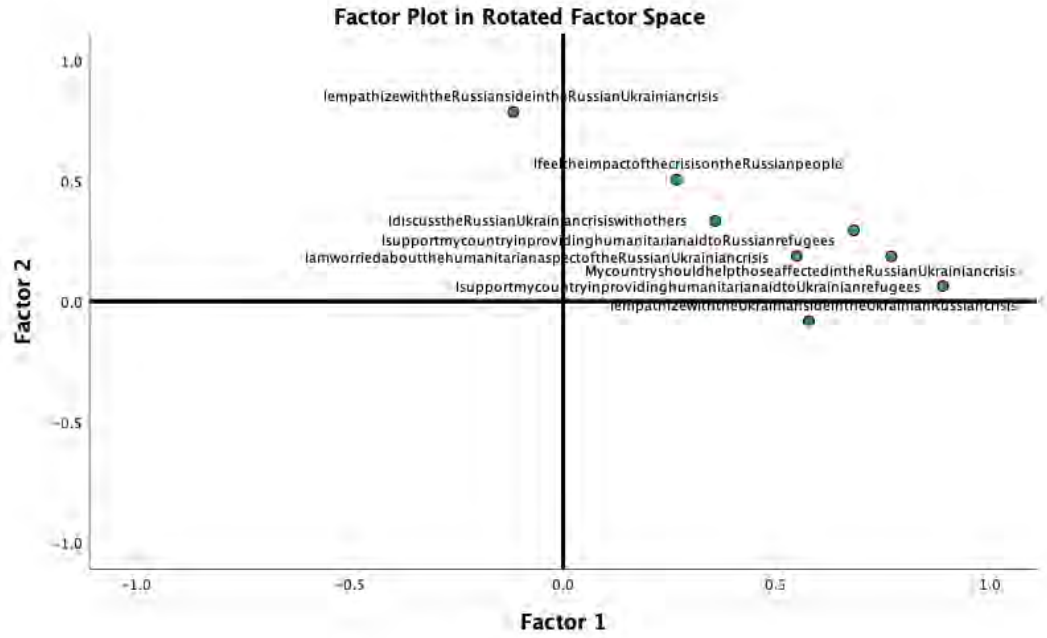

Figure 2. Factor Plot in Rotated Factor Space where it shows 6 items loading onto factor 1 and 2 items loading onto factor 2.

Socio-Behavioural Awareness

To investigate the underlying structure of the 6-item survey on socio-behavioural awareness of the conflict, principal axis factorization with varimax rotation was applied to the data gathered from 370 participants. Prior to conducting principal axis factoring, a thorough analysis of the data revealed that certain variables did not exhibit a precisely normal distribution. Due to the robustness of factor analysis, these deviations were not deemed to be significant. In addition, a

linear correlation between the variables was established. It was determined that one (with Eigenvalues greater than 1) underpinned the six survey items (refer to Table 3). This factor constituted approximately 56.37% of the overall variance observed in the questionnaire data.

Table 3

Varimax Rotated Factor Structure of the six Items on Socio-Emotional Responses Towards the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis

	Loading
Items	Factor 1[a]
1. I regularly follow the news about the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.	.368
2. I support a political solution to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.	.638
3. I believe that the Russian-Ukrainian crisis affects the global economy	.838
4. I believe that the Russian-Ukrainian crisis affects international peace and security.	.884
5. I believe that the Russian-Ukrainian crisis affects the global order.	.874
6. I believe that the Russian-Ukrainian crisis has an impact on the structure of both Russian and Ukrainian societies.	.770
Percentage of variance	56.37%

Note. [a]= "Socio-Behavioural response to the conflict"

Correlation Analyses

The goal of this section to also address objective 1 mentioned above, which is to validate our newly developed scale on the Russia-Ukraine conflict as well as to understand the relationship among all subsections of the newly developed scale.

Cognitive-Emotional

As normality assumption is violated, Kendall's tau-b was carried out to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between cognitive and emotional responses to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. The results indicated that the correlation between cognitive scores and emotional level responses was strong and positive, $\tau = .42$, $p < .001$, two tailed, $N = 363$.

Cognitive-Socio-Behavioural

As normality assumption is violated, Kendall's tau-b was carried out to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between cognitive and socio-behavioural responses to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. The results indicated that the correlation between cognitive scores and socio-behavioural responses was strong and positive, $\tau = .47$, $p < .001$, two tailed, $N = 367$.

Emotional-Socio-Behavioural

As normality assumption is violated, Kendall's tau-b was carried out to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between cognitive and socio-behavioural responses to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. The results indicated that the correlation between cognitive scores and emotional level responses was strong and positive, $\tau = .41$, $p < .001$, two tailed, $N = 361$.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis was supported as participants showed more empathy and agreed more with the Ukrainian side of the conflict (cognitive and emotional). However, participants overall agreed that their country should provide aid to refugees irrespective of their origin and regardless of their own emotional and political preferences. Table 4 provides results according to whether they showed more support for Ukraine or Russia on the cognitive, emotional and socio-behavioral scales.

Table 4

Results summarized according to whether they showed more support for Ukraine or Russia on cognitive, emotional and socio-behavioral scales.

Survey Results	Support for Russia *M* and *SD*	Support for Ukraine *M* and *SD*
Cognitive	2.74 (1.056)	2.77 (.963)
Emotional	2.84 (1.065)	3.11 (1.017)
Socio-Emotional	3.17 (1.151)	3.25 (1.195)
Average	2.92 (1.091)	3.04 (1.056)

Descriptive Statistics

The goal of this section is to assess objective 2, which is to assess cognitive, emotional, and social-behavioral attitudes of Middle Eastern Individuals on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Table 4 shows the means and medians of cognitive awareness, emotional response, and socio-behavioural response of the newly developed survey on attitudes. Further, the distributions of the responses in each of the cognitive, emotional, and social-behavioural sections are shown in Figures 3,4,5, respectively. These figures complement findings shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Survey on Russian-Ukrainian crisis. Scores are summarized into three categories: Cognitive, Emotional and Socio-Behavioral awareness and attitudes towards the conflict.

Category	*M (SD)*	*Mdn*	Range Reponses
Cognitive Awareness (*N*=374)	22.42 (4.63)	23	7-35
Emotional Response (*N*=365)	25.71 (5.51)	26	8-40
Socio-Behavioural Response (*N*=370)	21.98 (4.74)	22	6-30

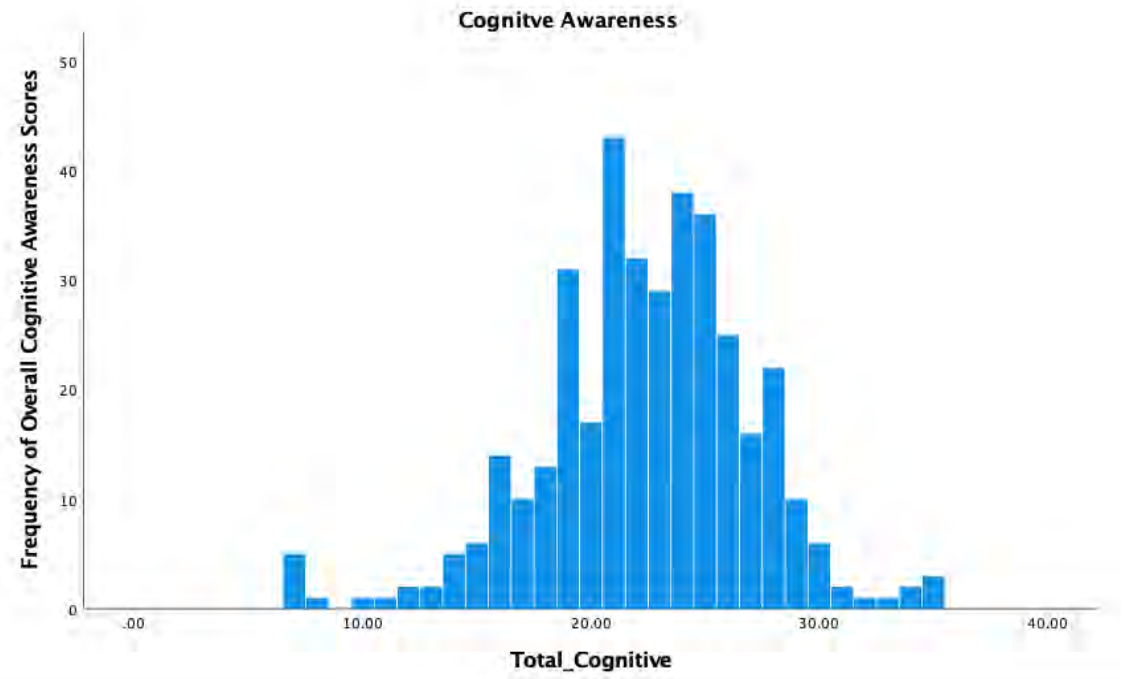

Figure 3. Distribution of overall scores on the Cognitive Awareness dimension

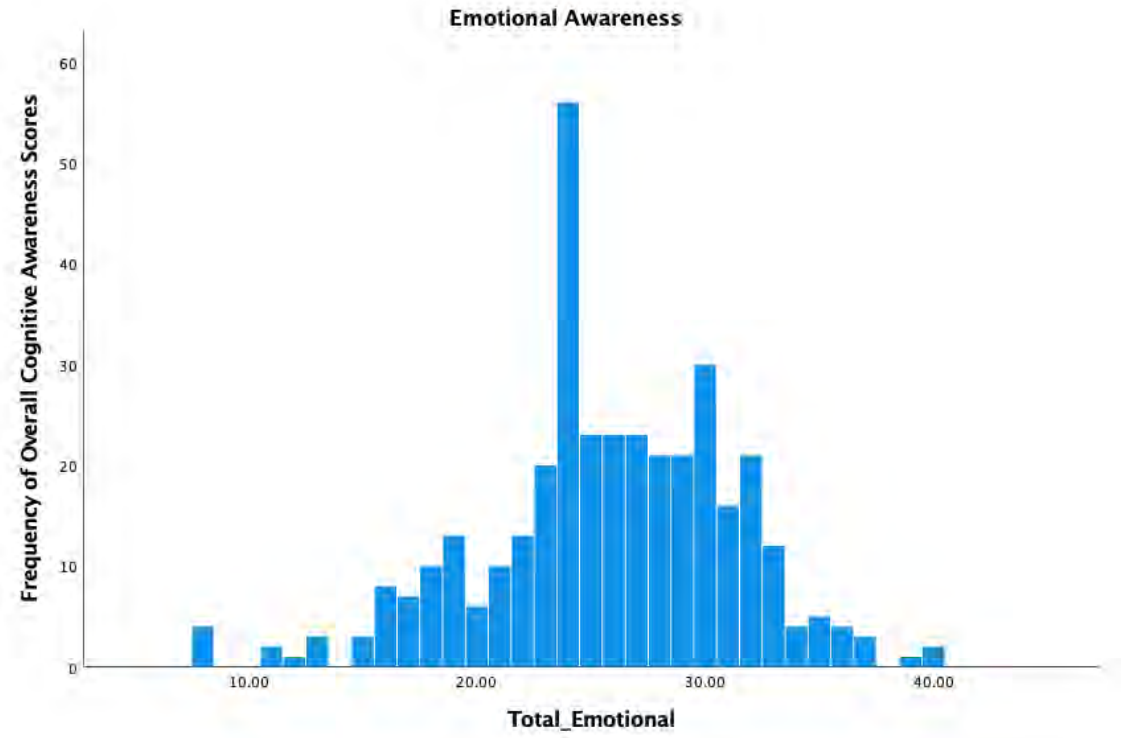

Figure 4. Distribution of overall scores on the Emotional Awareness dimension

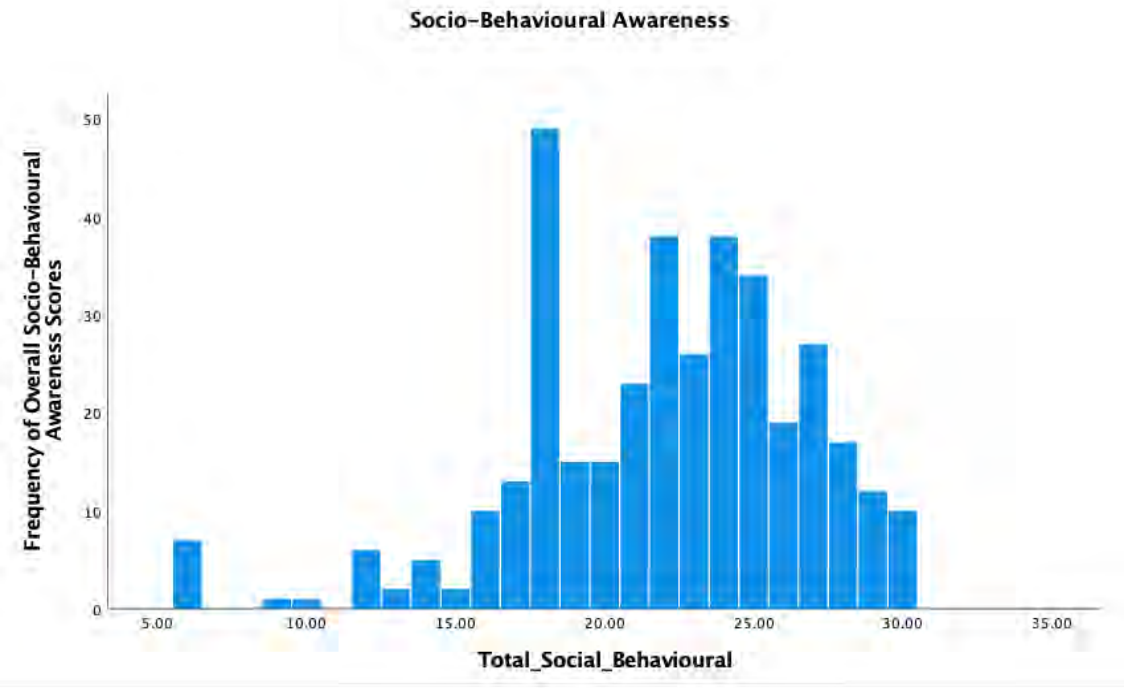

Figure 5. Distribution of overall scores on the Socio-Behavioral Awareness dimension

The means ad standard deviations of all three aspects of attitudes (Cognitive, Emotional and Socio-Behavioural responses) according to age, gender, country of residence and citizenship, are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Summary of means ad standard deviations of Cognitive, Emotional and Socio-Behavioural responses according to age, gender, country of residence and citizenship.

		Cognitive Awareness (*N*=374)		Emotional Response (*N*=365)		Socio-Behavioural Response (*N*=370)	
		M (SD)	*n*	*M(SD)*	*n*	*M (SD)*	n
Age							
	Less than 25	21.79 (4.74)	263	25.47 (5.47)	258	21.46 (4.87)	261
	25-34	23.73 (4.23)	59	25.41 (5.63)	56	23.00 (4.38)	58
	Above 35	24.12 (3.77)	52	27.71 (5.40)	51	23.51 (3.91)	51
Gender							
	Male	24.52 (4.13)	77	26.16 (5.93)	74	23.47 (4.86)	76
	Female	21.88 (4.60)	297	25.59 (5.40)	291	21.60 (4.63)	294
Country of Residence							
	Egypt	21.91 (4.79)	159	25.66 (5.52)	156	21.19 (5.26)	159
	Qatar	22.40 (4.77)	139	25.48 (5.42)	134	22.16 (4.25)	136

	Saudi Arabia	23.58 (3.06)	12	26.25 (6.47)	12	23.42 (4.08)	12
	Unites Arab Emirates	22.22 (4.84)	27	25.92 (5.29)	26	21.85 (4.14)	26
	Kuwait	24.70 (3.16)	10	26.50 (6.36)	10	23.40 (4.86)	10
	Jordan	23.75 (2.82)	8	26.88 (4.42)	8	23.50 (5.10)	8
	Oman	32.00	1	40.00	1	30.00	1
	Iraq	24.28 (2.22)	18	25.44 (5.45)	18	24.94 (2.10)	18
Citizenship							
	Egypt	22.05 (4.79)	181	25.77 (5.59)	178	21.57 (5.11)	181
	Qatar	22.57 (4.93)	112	25.88 (5.43)	109	22.32 (4.45)	111
	Saudi Arabia	23.00 (2.77)	14	24.71 (6.81)	14	22.08 (4.50)	13
	Unites Arab Emirates	22.89 (3.76)	9	25.50 (6.36)	8	20.13 (3.09)	8
	Kuwait	24.70 (3.16)	10	26.50 (6.36)	10	23.40 (4.86)	10
	Jordan	23.46 (2.44)	13	26.08 (3.96))	12	22.85 (4.24)	13
	Oman	20.71 (7.34)	7	26.29 (7.02)	7	22.43 (4.54)	7
	Iraq	24.31 (2.33)	16	25.75 (5.67)	16	25.00 (2.03)	16
	Palestine	21.67 (3.06)	3	24.67 (3.06)	3	21.00 (4.00)	3
	Yemen	21.00 (4.87)	8	22.00 (6.22)	7	19.14 (4.41)	7

The means and standard deviations of all three aspects of attitudes (Cognitive, Emotional and Socio-Behavioural responses) according to academic qualifications, specialization, types of jobs, and income, are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Summary of means and standard deviations of Cognitive, Emotional and Socio-Behavioural responses according to Academic Qualifications, Specialization, types of Jobs and Income.

		Cognitive Awareness (*N*=374)		Emotional Response (*N*=365)		Socio-Behavioural Response (*N*=370)	
		M (SD)	*n*	*M (SD)*	*n*	*M (SD)*	*n*
Academic Qualifications							
	Post-Graduate	24.49 (3.49)	49	27.20 (5.22)	49	24.45 (3.88)	49
	Bachelor of Arts	21.91 (4.65)	217	25.51 (5.50)	210	21.44 (4.95)	214
	Diploma	22.88 (4.95)	16	25.53 (4.39)	15	21.93 (4.77)	15
	High School	22.39 (4.95)	90	25.43 (5.83)	89	21.97 (4.25)	90

Academic Specialization							
	Medical	22.53 (3.85)	51	27.60 (5.25)	50	23.27 (4.21)	51
	Engineering	23.50 (3.55)	18	24.33 (6.30)	18	21.72 (4.07)	18
	Social Sciences	22.24 (4.65)	160	25.47 (5.33)	156	21.41 (4.78)	160
	Natural Sciences	21.64 (5.35)	42	24.61 (6.04)	41	21.90 (5.11)	42
	Business	22.15 (4.83)	48	25.49 (5.49)	45	22.22 (5.56)	46
	Arts and Humanities	23.33 (4.78)	55	26.13 (5.33)	55	22.40 (4.08)	53
Jobs							
	Students	21.94 (4.75)	297	25.47 (5.49)	290	21.53 (4.82)	294
	Full Time	24.51 (3.65)	49	26.81 (5.37)	47	23.96 (3.68)	48
	Part Time	20.22 (3.19)	9	24.33 (7.52)	9	19.89 (4.51)	9
	Freelancer	25.14 (1.92)	14	26.07 (4.92)	14	24.85 (3.61)	14
	Not Working	26.60 (2.88)	5	30.60 (2.30)	5	25.00 (3.32)	5
Income							
	Less than 1000*	22.02 (4.56)	234	25.30 (5.40)	230	21.61 (4.80)	232
	1000-1999	21.64 (4.69)	47	26.87 (4.76)	45	22.72 (4.51)	46
	2000-2999	23.06 (4.25)	16	25.75 (5.34)	16	21.13 (4.22)	16
	3000-3999	23.52 (3.99)	25	25.88 (6.18)	24	23.24 (4.06)	25
	4000-5000	23.64 (3.80)	11	25.91 (6.79)	11	21.55 (5.30)	11
	Above 5000	24.37 (5.15)	41	26.59 (6.20)	39	22.95 (4.93)	40

**Note.* USD

Group Comparisons

Below, results for each of the demographical variables are presented.

In this section, we assess objective 3, which is to investigate the impact of several demographical variables including age, gender, country of residence, country of citizenship, academic qualifications, academic specialization, job, and income on cognitive, emotional, and social-behavioural attitudes of Middle Eastern Individuals on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Hypothesis 1

Contrary to the first hypothesis, participants had higher responses on the emotional scale (M=25.71, SD=5.51), compared to cognitive (M=22.42, SD=4.63) and socio-behavioural (M=21.98, SD=4.74). No significant differences were found amongst emotional responses as a factor of the different variables in this study (age, academic qualifications, etc.). However,

there were significant results in cognitive and socio-behavioural responses as per age, job type, academic qualifications and income levels.

Gender

Three independent samples t-test were run, and no significant differences were found between males and females on cognitive, emotional and socio-behavioural attitudes towards the conflict.

Age

Cognitive-Significant differences between age groups.

A one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate the impact that the three different age groups had on cognitive attitudes of participants towards the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

Inspection of the skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilk statistics indicated that the assumption of normality was supported for the three age levels. Levene's statistic was non-significant, F (2,371) =1.03, p= .357, thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated.

The ANOVA was statistically significant, indicating that participants' age group influenced their cognitive responses towards the conflict, F (2, 371) =8.61, p<.001, η^2=.044.

Post hoc analyses with Tukey's HSD (using an alpha of .05) revealed that participants under 25 years old (M=21.80, SD=4.74) had significantly lower cognitive awareness of the conflict than participants who were age 25 to 34 (M=23.73, SD=4.23) and above 35 (M=24.12, SD=3.77). However, there was no significant difference on cognitive attitude scores between the 25-34 and the above 35 age group.

Socio-Behavioral

A one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate the impact that the three different age groups had on socio-behavioural attitudes of participants towards the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

Inspection of the skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilk statistics indicated that the assumption of normality was supported for the three age levels. Levene's statistic was non-significant, F (2,367) =.961, p= .384, thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated.

The ANOVA was statistically significant, indicating that participants' age group influenced their socio-behavioural responses to the conflict, F (2, 369) =5.75, p=.003, η^2=.030.

Post hoc analyses with Tukey's HSD (using an alpha of .05) revealed that participants under 25 years old (M=21.46, SD=4.87) had significantly lower socio-behavioural responses compared to the age group of above 35 (M=23.51, SD=3.91). No significant differences were found between the other age groups.

Academic Qualifications

Cognitive

A one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate the impact that different academic qualifications had on cognitive awareness and attitudes of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. Inspection of the skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilk statistics indicated that the assumption of normality was supported for the three age levels. Levene's statistic was non-significant, F (4,369) =1.49, p= .204, thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated. The ANOVA was statistically significant, indicating that participants' academic qualifications influenced their cognitive responses to the conflict, F (4, 369) =3.39, p=.01, η^2=.035.

Post hoc analyses with Tukey's HSD (using an alpha of .05) revealed that participants with a Bachelor of Arts had significantly lower cognitive awareness scores (M=21.91, SD=4.65) compared to participants with a post graduate degree (M=24.49, SD=3.49). However, there were no significant differences amongst the other academic qualification groups.

Socio-Behavioural

A one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate the impact that different academic qualifications had on socio-behavioural responses and attitudes towards the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. Inspection of the skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilk statistics indicated that the assumption of normality was supported for the three age levels. Levene's statistic was non-significant, F (4,365) =1.60, p= .174, thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated.

The ANOVA was statistically significant, indicating that participants' academic qualifications influenced their socio-behavioural responses to the conflict, F (4, 365) =4.22, p=.002, η^2=.044. Post hoc analyses with Tukey's HSD (using an alpha of .05) revealed that participants with post graduate studies had significantly higher socio-behavioural awareness (M=24.45, SD=3.88) compared to participants with Bachelor of Arts (M=21.44, SD=4.95) and high school students (M=21.97, SD=4.25). No other significant results were found between academic qualification groups.

Jobs

Cognitive

A one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate the impact different job descriptions had on cognitive responses and attitudes towards the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. A review of the skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilk statistics indicated that

the assumption of normality was supported for the three age levels. Levene's statistic was significant, F (4,369) =2.46, p= .045, thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance violated. The ANOVA was statistically significant, indicating that participants' academic qualifications influenced their socio-behavioural responses to the conflict, F (4, 369) =6.37, p<.001, η^2=.065. Post hoc analyses with Tukey's HSD (using an alpha of .05) revealed that participants who were students had significantly lower levels of cognitive awareness of the conflict (M=21.94, SD=4.75) compared to individuals who worked full time (M=24.51, SD=3.65). No other significant differences were found between cognitive levels as a function of job type.

Socio-Behavioural

A one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate the impact different job descriptions had on the socio-behavioural responses and attitudes towards the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. A review of the skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilk statistics indicated that the assumption of normality was supported for the three age levels. Levene's statistic was non-significant, F (4,365) =1.38, p= .239, thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated.

The ANOVA was statistically significant, indicating that participants' job type influenced their socio-behavioural responses to the conflict, F (4, 365) =5.21, p<.001, η^2=.054. Post hoc analyses with Tukey's HSD (using an alpha of .05) revealed that participants who were students had significantly lower levels of socio-behavioural awareness of the conflict (M=21.53, SD=4.82) compared to individuals who worked full time (M=23.96, SD=3.68). No other significant differences were found between socio-behavioural levels as a function of job type.

Income

Cognitive

A one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate the impact different levels of income had on cognitive responses and attitudes towards the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. A review of the skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilk statistics indicated that the assumption of normality was supported for the three age levels. Levene's statistic was non-significant, F (5,368) =.287, p= .920, thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated.

The ANOVA was statistically significant, indicating that participants' job type influenced their socio-behavioural responses to the conflict, F (5, 368) =2.62, p=.024, η^2=.034. Post hoc analyses with Tukey's HSD (using an alpha of .05) revealed that participants who earned less than 1000USD a month had significantly lower cognitive awareness of the conflict (M=22.02,

SD=4.56) compared to those who earned more than 5000USD per month (*M*=24.37, *SD*=5.15). There were no other significant differences in cognitive scores as a function of income.

Other demographic variables: Country Residency, citizenship, academic specializations

In terms of country of residence, all aspects (cognitive, emotional, socio-behavioural) were not significant. The same was found with citizenship, as cognitive, emotional, and socio-behavioral aspects were not significant. As for academic specialization, all ANOVAs were non-significant for all three categories of the Russia-Ukraine attitudes survey

Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, the current study is the first to investigate the attitudes of individuals from the Middel East towards the Russia-Ukraine Conflict. Accordingly, a new survey to investigate the attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict was developed. Importantly, this newly developed scale has three sections: cognitive, emotional, and socio-behavioural aspects of the attitudes.

Significant differences were found in cognitive and socio-behavioural responses according to the different age groups, academic qualifications, job type and income level. It is important to note that most prior studies have conducted sentiment analysis and did not investigate cognitive or socio-behavioural aspects of individuals' attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The significant differences in cognitive and socio-behavioural aspects of the survey based on age groups, academic qualifications, job type and income level, is probably related to the economic impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on the Middle East.

Unlike the cognitive and socio-behavioural aspects of the scale, our findings show that the emotional aspect of the survey did not differ according to different age groups, academic qualifications, job type and income level. This is possibly the case, as the Middle East was less impacted by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, compared to other European countries. This perhaps explains why our findings are different from other studies that have shown most Tweets were sentimental, and thus quite emotional (Agarwal et al., 2022; Vahdat-Nejad et al., 2023; Garcia & Cunanan-Yabut, 2022).

Further, factor analyses suggest that two different factors- questions about the war in general and questions "supporting Russia". Our survey suggests that these are two different types of questions. This is important to note that as perhaps individuals view "supporting Russia" in a historical, political, and social context in general, regardless of the current Russia-Ukraine conflict. This could perhaps be related to sentimental feelings towards War in general (Agarwal et al., 2022; Garcia & Cunanan-Yabut, 2022; Vahdat-Nejad et al., 2023). However, opposing

or supporting Russia is very different as it involves social, cultural, psychological, and historical views of Russia, and not only their involvement in conflict with Ukraine.

Our results as well as prior results (discussed in Introduction above) shows that the opinions on the Russia-Ukraine conflict vary widely among Europeans, Americans, South Americans, Chinese and Arab individuals. This can perhaps be explained in terms of historical ties to Russia and Ukraine, regional interests in both countries, among other factors (Fernández et al., 2023; Nordenstreng, 2023). In Europe, the conflict hits close to home, and opinions are often strongly influenced by proximity and historical experiences. Eastern European nations, such as Poland and the Baltic states, are generally staunchly supportive of Ukraine, viewing Russia's actions as a direct threat to their own security (Klymak, 2023). Recent polls found that Western European countries, on the other hand, often take a more diplomatic approach, seeking to balance their condemnation of Russia's actions with a desire to maintain dialogue and avoid escalation.

In the United States, American politicians, and policymakers generally express strong support for Ukraine, viewing it as a victim of Russian aggression and a symbol of the struggle for democracy. However, interestingly, public opinion in America was found to be more divided, with some Americans questioning the country's involvement in distant conflicts and the potential for military escalation (Holsti, 2004; Russett & Nincic, 2019). Interestingly, historically speaking, Americans' views on Russia have changed from negative to positive and vice versa depending on political ties with the US at the time (Feklyunina, 2008). However, in the Arab world, opinions on the Russia-Ukraine conflict can be diverse, reflecting the complexity of the region and its various geopolitical interests. Some Arab countries maintain cordial relations with Russia, often viewing it as a strategic partner in areas such as energy and arms trade (Blank & Levitzky, 2015; Mason, 2023; Oskarsson & Yetiv, 2013). However, it is not clear if these Russia-Middle East relationships are also reflected in the media and public opinions of individuals in the Middle East. However, many in the Arab world are more sympathetic to Ukraine, particularly in light of Ukraine's historic ties to the Crimean Tatars, a Muslim minority in Crimea, which has faced discrimination under Russian rule (Biletska, 2009; Wilson, 2017). In summary, opinions on the Russia-Ukraine conflict are shaped by a complex web of historical, regional, and psychological factors.

In sum, a novel aspect of our study is two-fold. First, this is the first study to use survey analysis to investigate attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict, thus allowing for investigating the impact of demographic variables. Second, this is the first study to investigate the attitudes of Middle Eastern individuals towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The findings of our study have

several implications. First, public opinions are often related to international relations, as discussed extensively by Kertzer (2018). Further, our factor analysis shows that there was stronger support for Ukraine than Russia among Middle Eastern individuals. This has implications for foreign policy and international relations with Russia.

Conclusions

Our ongoing research delves into the perspectives of individuals hailing from the Middle East regarding the Russia-Ukraine Conflict. To achieve this goal, an innovative survey tool was designed to probe these viewpoints, spanning three distinct facets: cognitive, emotional, and socio-behavioural dimensions of attitudes. Our findings indicate that the emotional aspect of the survey demonstrated consistency across various demographic factors, including age groups, educational backgrounds, occupational roles, and income levels. This uniformity could be attributed to the lesser impact of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict on the Middle East compared to, for instance, other European countries. This discrepancy in outcomes may help explain the disparities with prior research, which predominantly focused on sentiment analysis of social media content, yielding predominantly emotional responses. In contrast to the emotional aspect, noteworthy disparities in cognitive and socio-behavioural responses among different demographic groups, such as age, education, occupation, and income, were observed. It is essential to note that previous studies primarily concentrated on sentiment analysis and neglected the exploration of cognitive and socio-behavioural aspects of public attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine Conflict. These substantial differences in the cognitive and socio-behavioural dimensions of the survey, relative to demographic variables, are likely intertwined with the economic consequences of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict on the Middle East. Furthermore, our factor analyses reveal the presence of two distinct factors: questions relating to the war in a general context and questions concerning "support for Russia." Our survey emphasises that these constitute distinct categories of inquiries, as individuals may view "supporting Russia" within a broader historical, political, and social context, extending beyond the specific context of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine Conflict.

One limitation of the current study is it did not measure views on the economic impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on individuals in the Middle East. It is very likely that the cognitive, emotional, and socio-behavioural aspects of individuals' attitudes towards the conflict are related to their economic views. This should be investigated in future work.

Future work should investigate whether individual differences among individuals can impact their attitudes towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict. For example, religious Ukrainains are

culturally closer to Russia than non-religious Ukrainians (Kappeler, 2014). Future work should investigate whether religious individuals in Ukraine as well as in other countries are more associated with and thus supportive of Russia invasion of Ukraine.

It is important to note that public opinions and poll agencies that collect them in Russia have been criticised, but some, however, still, defend their validity and important (Volkov, 2023). Accordingly, future work should validate their findings by using mixed-methods approach, including surveys as well as publicly available data as in social media.

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