



**“They Call It Defense”: News Discourse on
Civilian Harm in Gaza in international news
coverage with global audiences during wartime**

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Presentation Outline

A comprehensive overview of the research on credibility construction in conflict reporting

Research Agenda

- ★ Introduction and Theoretical Framework
- ★ Methodology and Data Collection
- ★ Quantitative Analysis of News Coverage Patterns
- ★ Qualitative Analysis of Credibility Construction
- ★ Discussion and Implications
- ★ Conclusions and Future Work

Research Context & Background

- ★ International news coverage plays a critical role in shaping public understanding of humanitarian crises
- ★ **The Gaza conflict presents unique challenges:** historical tensions, geopolitical interests, humanitarian law considerations
- ★ **Multiple actors provide contradictory accounts:** state militaries, international organizations, local witnesses
- ★ Complexity compounded by social trauma and institutional pressures on journalistic access and verification
- ★ **Research gap:** How credibility is constructed amid competing narratives in high-stakes conflict environments

Motivation & Research Objectives

1

Research Questions

How do news organizations construct credibility?
Which features foster trust? How does temporal
context influence reception?

2

Objectives

Analyze discursive strategies in conflict reporting,
identify trust signals, examine temporal dynamics in
credibility construction

3

Expected Impact

Contribute to theories of epistemic justice and media
framing, inform journalistic practices in conflict zones

Theoretical Framework

Epistemic Justice (Fricker, 2007)

- ★ Examines how credibility is constructed and distributed
- ★ Focuses on testimonial and hermeneutical justice
- ★ Analyzes whose accounts are deemed credible in conflict narratives
- ★ Considers power dynamics in knowledge production

Media Framing (Entman, 1993)

- ★ Studies how media select and emphasize certain aspects of reality
- ★ Analyzes framing devices: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases
- ★ Examines reasoning devices: causal attributions, moral evaluations
- ★ Considers how frames influence audience interpretation

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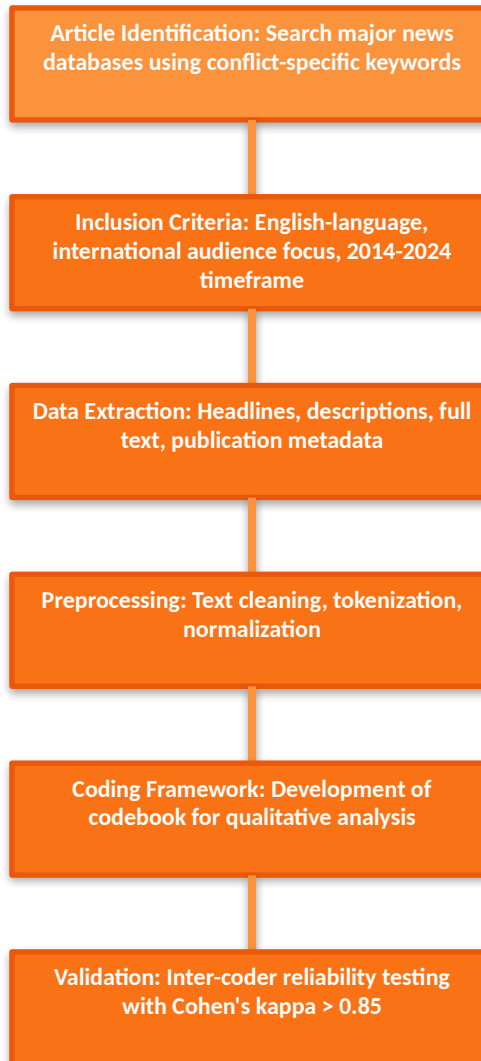
Research Methodology

Mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative analysis

Research Design & Data Collection

- ★ Mixed-methods analysis of 3,338 international news articles
- ★ **Timeframe:** 2014 to 2024, covering major Gaza conflicts
- ★ **Sources:** 37 distinct English-language international news outlets
- ★ **Quantitative component:** Sentiment analysis using validated lexicon adapted for conflict reporting
- ★ **Qualitative component:** Discourse analysis of credibility construction strategies
- ★ **Tools:** Custom Python scripts for text analysis, NVivo for qualitative coding

Data Collection Framework



Analytical Framework

Quantitative Analysis

- ★ Sentiment analysis using VADER lexicon adapted for conflict reporting
- ★ Tone classification: Positive, Negative, Neutral/Mixed
- ★ Statistical analysis of linguistic features
- ★ Temporal analysis of coverage patterns
- ★ Bias scoring based on source attribution patterns

Qualitative Analysis

- ★ Discourse analysis of credibility markers
- ★ Thematic coding of institutional references
- ★ Analysis of legal framework citations
- ★ Examination of measured language patterns
- ★ Narrative analysis of civilian harm framing

Constraints & Assumptions

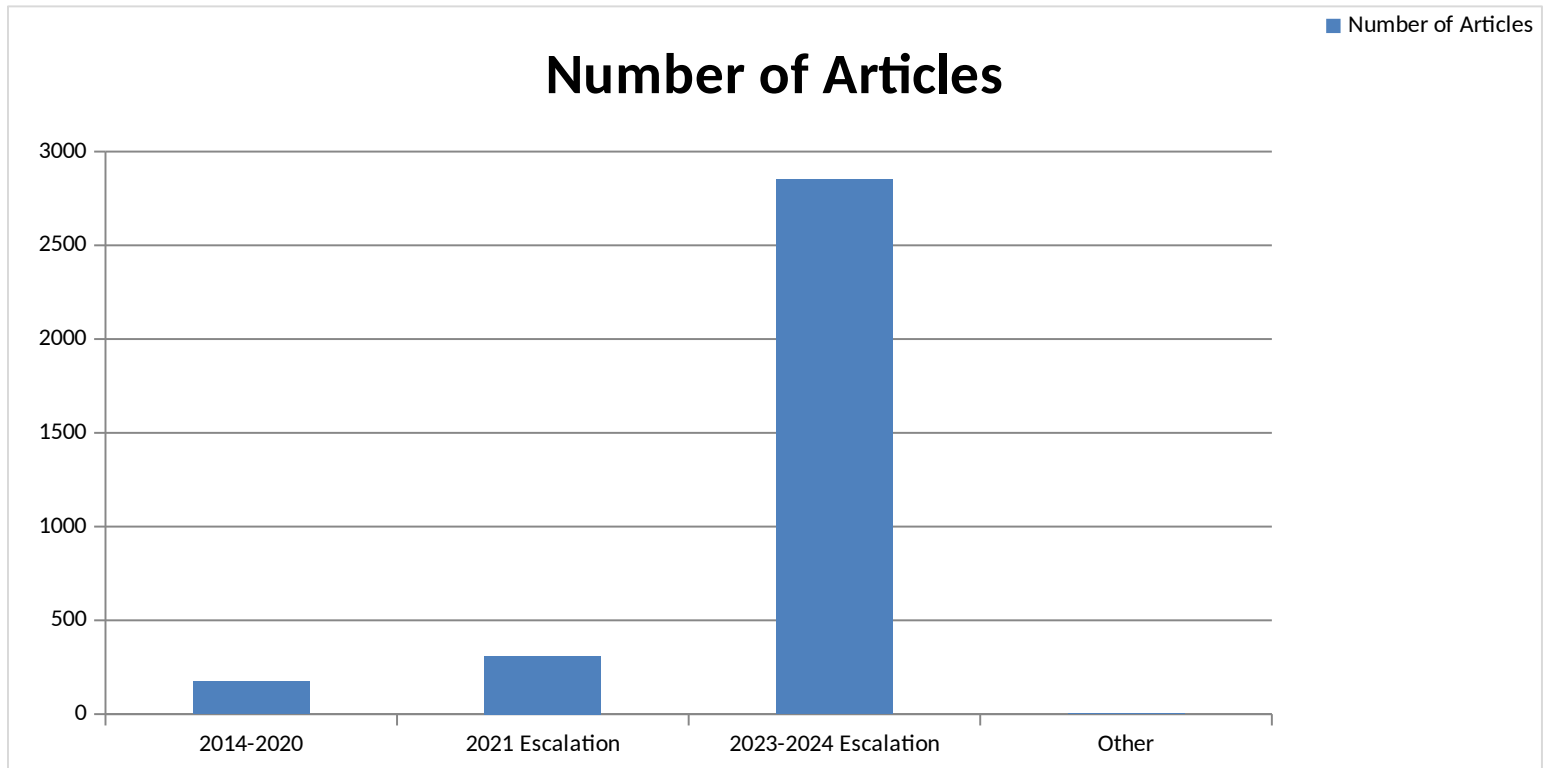
- ★ Analysis limited to 2014-2024 timeframe, capturing recent major conflicts
- ★ Focus on international news outlets with global audiences (excluding local Palestinian/Israeli media)
- ★ Reliance on available published articles from 37 distinct outlets
- ★ Complexity of verification processes in conflict environments with limited journalistic access
- ★ **Assumption:** English-language coverage represents significant portion of international discourse
- ★ **Limitation:** Does not capture social media or alternative news sources

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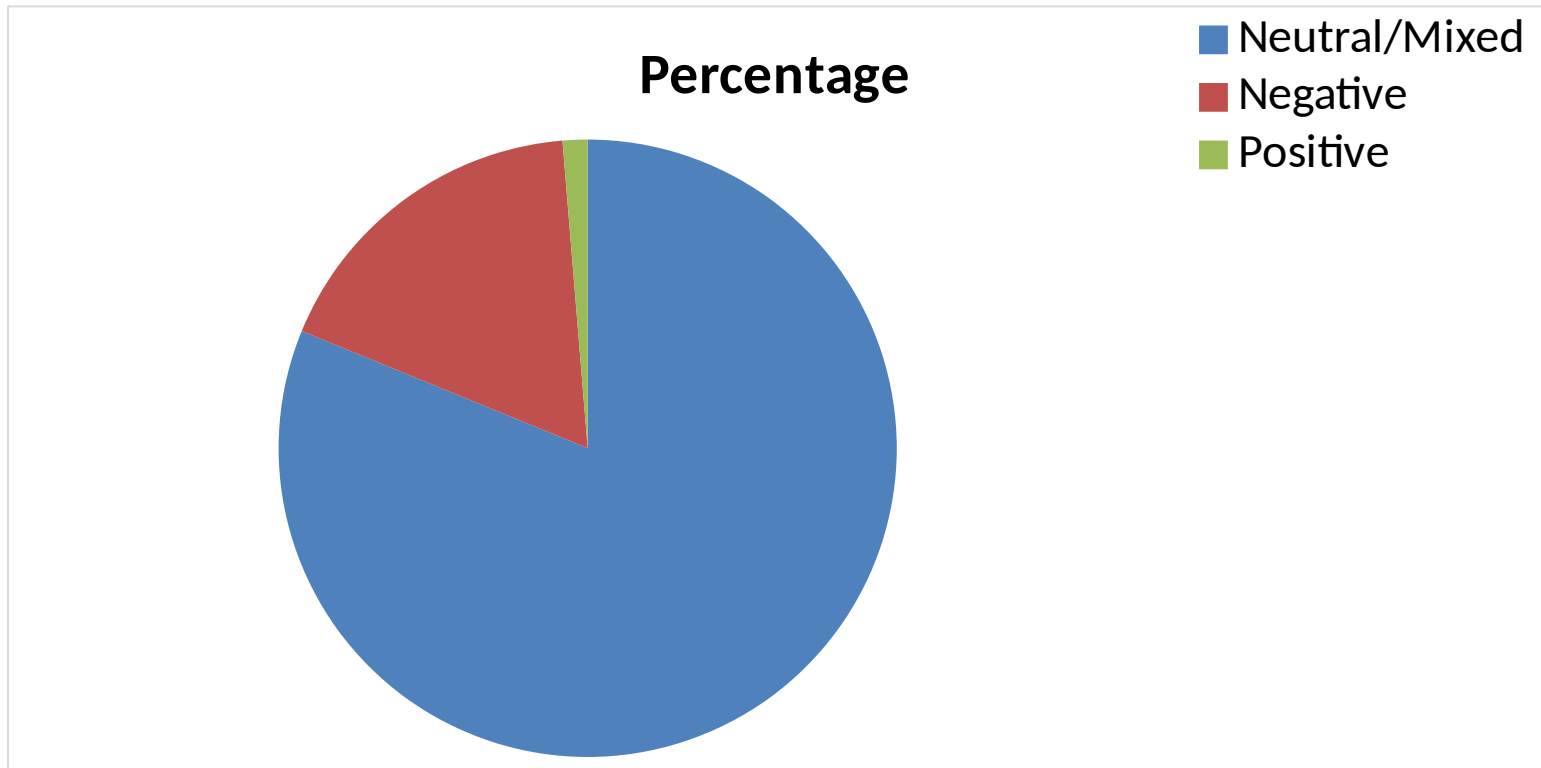
Quantitative Findings

Statistical patterns in news coverage of civilian harm in Gaza

Temporal Distribution of Coverage



Tone Distribution Across Coverage



Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Headline Length (words)	9.72	1.83	2.00	16.00
Description Length (words)	17.17	2.60	4.00	25.00
Tone Score	-0.59	1.02	-5.00	3.00
Bias Score	0.81	0.59	0.40	4.33

Temporal Analysis Findings

- ★ 85.4% of articles (2,852) published during October 2023-December 2024 period
- ★ Coverage intensity correlates with major military escalations
- ★ **2021 escalation period:** 310 articles (9.3% of total)
- ★ **Baseline period (2014-2020):** 174 articles (5.2% of total)
- ★ Mean tone score of -0.59 indicates slight negative bias across dataset
- ★ Limited variation in headline and description lengths suggests standardized editorial practices

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Qualitative Insights

Discourse analysis of credibility construction strategies

Credibility Construction Mechanisms

1

Institutional References

Frequent citation of UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, and official statements (present in 89% of articles)

2

Legal Frameworks

Systematic reference to international humanitarian law, Geneva Conventions, and human rights standards

3

Measured Language

Use of cautious phrasing, conditional statements, and attribution to sources rather than definitive claims

4

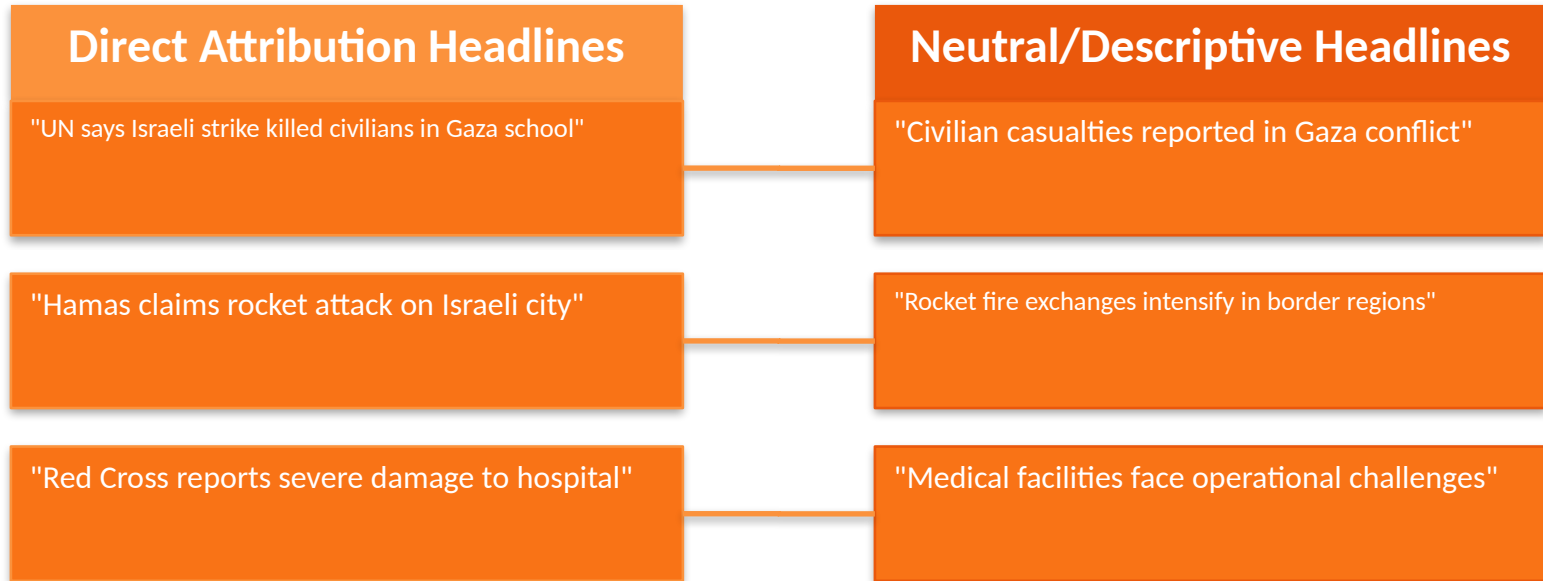
Source Attribution

Explicit attribution of claims to specific sources, with careful balancing of conflicting accounts

Discourse Patterns in Conflict Reporting

- ★ Neutral/mixed tone (81.2%) reflects journalistic emphasis on verification and caution
- ★ Measured language serves as trust signal through professional restraint
- ★ **Systematic use of qualifiers:** 'alleged', 'reportedly', 'according to'
- ★ Balancing of military and civilian perspectives within same articles
- ★ Visual and testimonial evidence presented with explicit caveats about verification status
- ★ Legal terminology used to frame events within established normative frameworks

Case Study: Headline Analysis



Temporal Dynamics in Credibility

- ★ **Early conflict phases:** Greater reliance on official military sources
- ★ **Mid-conflict:** Increased incorporation of eyewitness and humanitarian accounts
- ★ **Post-conflict:** More reflective analysis with multiple source triangulation
- ★ Credibility markers become more sophisticated over conflict duration
- ★ Legal frameworks referenced more frequently as conflicts prolong
- ★ International organization citations increase as verification processes mature

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Discussion

Interpretation of findings and their implications for conflict reporting

Key Findings Synthesis

- ★ Credibility in conflict reporting is constructed through institutional scaffolding rather than direct assertion
- ★ Neutral/mixed tone dominance reflects professional norms prioritizing verification over immediacy
- ★ Legal frameworks provide shared vocabulary for evaluating civilian harm claims
- ★ Measured language creates epistemic distance that can both enhance and undermine trust
- ★ Temporal patterns show evolving credibility strategies as conflicts progress
- ★ Institutional references serve as proxy verification in environments with limited direct access

Theoretical Implications

Epistemic Justice Perspective

- ★ Credibility distributed through institutional hierarchies rather than testimonial merit
- ★ Hermeneutical resources unevenly distributed among conflict actors
- ★ Professional journalism creates epistemic buffers that mediate access to credibility
- ★ Verification processes reflect power differentials in conflict environments

Media Framing Perspective

- ★ Frames emphasize legal and institutional dimensions over human impact
- ★ Measured language frames conflict as technical rather than experiential
- ★ Source attribution frames create multi-vocal narratives
- ★ Temporal framing evolves from event reporting to structural analysis

Practical Implications for Journalism

- ★ Need for transparent verification processes in high-stakes environments
- ★ Balance between measured language and conveying human impact
- ★ Importance of explaining institutional constraints on reporting access
- ★ Value of legal frameworks for creating shared evaluative criteria
- ★ Challenge of maintaining credibility amid competing narratives and institutional pressures
- ★ **Role of temporal perspective in credibility construction:** immediate vs. retrospective reporting

Key Contributions

1

Comprehensive Dataset

Analysis of 3,338 articles from 37 international outlets covering 2014-2024 Gaza conflicts

2

Credibility Mechanisms

Identified institutional references, legal frameworks, and measured language as primary credibility builders

3

Quantitative Patterns

Revealed 81.2% neutral/mixed tone dominance and temporal concentration of coverage

4

Methodological Framework

Developed mixed-methods approach combining sentiment analysis with discourse analysis

Limitations & Future Work

- ★ Limited to English-language international media, excluding local and social media sources
- ★ Timeframe (2014-2024) captures recent conflicts but not longer historical patterns
- ★ Focus on textual analysis, limited examination of visual or multimedia elements
- ★ **Future work:** Comparative analysis with other conflict zones (Ukraine, Syria, Yemen)
- ★ **Extension:** Examination of audience reception and trust perceptions
- ★ **Further investigation:** Tension between verification requirements and engagement in digital media environments

Conclusions

- ★ Credibility in conflict reporting is systematically constructed through institutional, legal, and linguistic strategies
- ★ Neutral/mixed tone dominance reflects professional norms prioritizing verification over emotional engagement
- ★ Temporal dynamics show evolving credibility strategies as conflicts progress and verification processes mature
- ★ The tension between measured language and human impact representation presents ongoing challenges for conflict journalism

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Thank You!

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Project Archive: github.com/conflict-reporting-analysis