

# Unknown Paper

## AI Reviewer 1 - Comprehensive Review

*This reviewer provides a thorough and balanced assessment*

**\*\*Review of "THELAWSPEAKS FOR THE SILENCED: TRUST, MORAL WITNESSING, AND COMMUNICATIVE AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTH AFRICA V. ISRAEL GENOCIDE PROCEEDINGS (2023–2024)"\*\***

\\ **\*\* Step 1. Summary of the Paper\*\*** This manuscript analyzes the construction of trust and credibility in international legal discourse surrounding the South Africa v. Israel genocide case at the International Court of Justice (2023–2024). Using a mixed-methods approach, the authors examine 2,200 official statements, court filings, and media reports. The paper claims to: 1. Develop a framework for analyzing trust construction in legal-ethical communication. 2. Demonstrate how Global South initiatives influence epistemic authority in international law. 3. Identify communicative strategies (e.g., empathetic framing) correlating with perceived legitimacy (quantified as  $r = 0.63$ ). 4. Explore the interplay between legal formalism and moral witnessing.

\\ **\*\* Step 2. Evaluation Criteria\*\***

\\\\ **\*\*1. Originality / Novelty\*\* - \*\*Critique:\*\*** The topic is timely and addresses an understudied area—Global South agency in international law. However, the theoretical frameworks (epistemic injustice, moral witnessing) are well-established, and the application to this specific case feels more like a contextual extension than a conceptual breakthrough. The mixed-methods approach is standard in discourse analysis. - **\*\*Score:\*\*** 6/10

\\\\ **\*\*2. Scientific Rigor / Methodology\*\* - \*\*Critique:\*\* - \*\*Flaws:\*\*** The methodology lacks critical details. For example: - How were "empathy," "bias," and "legitimacy" operationalized and measured? - The claim of a correlation ( $r = 0.63$ ) between empathetic framing and perceived legitimacy is unsupported—no explanation of how "perceived legitimacy" was quantified or validated. - Sampling bias is likely, as the dataset relies on publicly available documents, potentially overlooking non-English or non-Western sources. - **\*\*Ethics:\*\*** No ethical approval was sought, but the use of public data may justify this. However, the sensitivity of the topic warrants explicit ethical reflection. - **\*\*Score:\*\*** 4/10

\\\\ **\*\*3. Clarity \ Presentation\*\* - \*\*Critique:\*\*** The paper is generally well-structured, but key sections are ambiguous. For instance: - The abstract overstates findings (e.g., "correlations"

presented as causal insights). - Tables (e.g., Tables 1–10) are descriptive but lack contextual interpretation (e.g., what does a "bias score" of 0.36 mean?). - The conclusion repeats claims without critical nuance. - **Score:** 5/10

\\\\ **4. Reproducibility \ Transparency** - **Critique:** - The dataset is cited as "open-source on Kaggle," but the paper does not provide a link or access details. - Methods for qualitative coding (e.g., how themes like "moral agency of the state" were derived) are inadequately described. - Statistical analyses (e.g., correlation matrices) are presented without justification for methods or robustness checks. - **Score:** 3/10

\\\\ **5. Significance \ Impact** - **Critique:** The paper addresses an important problem—epistemic marginalization in international law—and could inform legal communication and human rights advocacy. However, methodological flaws undermine its potential impact. The findings are incremental rather than field-changing. - **Score:** 6/10

\\\\ **6. Ethics \ Integrity** - **Critique:** - While the authors declare no conflicts of interest, the paper's framing (e.g., phrases like "giving voice to marginalized perspectives") risks appearing advocacy-driven rather than analytically neutral. - Limitations (e.g., reliance on public documents) are acknowledged but not thoroughly discussed in the context of bias. - **Score:** 5/10

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\\ **Step 3. Specific Suggestions for Improvement**

\\\\ **Major Flaws to Address:** 1. **Methodological Transparency:** - Clarify how variables (e.g., "empathy," "perceived legitimacy") were defined, measured, and validated. - Justify statistical methods (e.g., why Pearson's r? How were missing data handled?). 2. **Theoretical Contribution:** - Differentiate this work more clearly from existing literature on epistemic injustice and moral witnessing. 3. **Data Representation:** - Provide access to the dataset and detailed coding protocols.

\\\\ **Minor Flaws:** 1. **Writing:** Avoid overstatement (e.g., "substantially advance the field"). 2. **Tables:** Include captions explaining how scores were calculated (e.g., "bias score"). 3. **References:** Ensure all citations (e.g., Fricker, 2007; Margalit, 2002) are contextually integrated.

\\\\ **Additional Experiments/Analyses:** 1. Conduct inter-coder reliability tests for qualitative themes. 2. Include sensitivity analyses for correlation metrics. 3. Expand the dataset to include non-Western media sources (e.g., Al Jazeera, TRT World).

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\\ **Step 4. Final Decision \ Justification**

- **Overall Score:** 4/10 - **Recommendation:** **Reject** - **Justification:** While the topic is socially and academically relevant, the manuscript suffers from critical methodological flaws that undermine its credibility. The lack of transparency in variable operationalization, unvalidated correlation claims, and potential sampling bias render the findings unreliable. The paper requires substantial revision—particularly in methodology and data presentation—before it can be considered for publication. In its current form, it does not meet the rigorous standards of a high-impact journal.

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**\*\*Confidential Comments to the Editor:\*\*** This paper tackles a politically sensitive topic with potential for impact, but the authors must address the methodological weaknesses highlighted above. If revised, I recommend a second round of review with a focus on empirical rigor.

## AI Reviewer 2 - Critical Review

*This reviewer provides critical analysis and identifies potential weaknesses*

**\*\*Overall Recommendation: Weak Reject (2/5)\*\***

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### \\ 1. Overall Impression

**\*\*Immediate Reaction:\*\*** This manuscript presents an ambitious mixed-methods analysis of a timely and politically charged international legal case. However, it suffers from fundamental methodological flaws that undermine its scientific validity and a pervasive lack of objectivity that compromises its scholarly contribution. It reads more as a normative, advocacy-oriented commentary disguised as empirical research than as a rigorous, dispassionate academic study.

**\*\*Characterization:\*\*** The study feels **\*\*overhyped and methodologically weak\*\***. While the topic is undoubtedly significant, the execution fails to meet the standards of a Tier-1 journal. The central claims about trust and credibility are not convincingly supported by the evidence presented, and the analysis appears to be constructed to confirm a pre-determined narrative.

**\*\*First Impression Strengths:\*\*** \* **\*\*Topical Relevance:\*\*** Addresses a highly contemporary and significant case in international law and global politics. \* **\*\*Interdisciplinary Ambition:\*\*** Attempts to bridge communication studies, international law, and political science. \* **\*\*Theoretical Framing:\*\*** Draws on relevant and sophisticated theoretical frameworks (epistemic injustice, moral witnessing).

**\*\*First Impression Concerns:\*\*** \* **\*\*Methodological Opacity:\*\*** Critical details on data collection, coding, and measurement are absent or vague. \* **\*\*Lack of Objectivity:\*\*** The language, framing, and interpretation exhibit a clear and unacknowledged bias. \* **\*\*Unsubstantiated Claims:\*\*** Major quantitative findings (e.g., the central  $r=0.63$  correlation) are presented without sufficient methodological grounding to be credible.

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### \\ 2. Technical \ Scientific Assessment

**\*\*A. Problem Definition: Score 4/5\*\*** The research question is clearly motivated, non-trivial, and of substantial importance. The authors effectively argue why understanding the construction of credibility in such a high-stakes, geopolitically divisive case matters for international law and human rights discourse.

**\*\*B. Methodological Soundness: Score 1/5\*\*** This is the paper's fatal flaw. The methodology is described with a level of vagueness that precludes replication or verification. \* **\*\*Unspecified Measures:\*\*** The paper fails to define its core variables. How was "empathetic framing" operationalized and measured? How was "perceived legitimacy" quantified? Who did the perceiving? These are not minor details; they are the foundation of the analysis. The reported correlation of  $r=0.63$  is scientifically meaningless without this information. \* **\*\*Coding Process:\*\*** The description of the qualitative coding process ("tone classification, bias score") is insufficient. What was the codebook? What was the inter-coder reliability score? The claim of "analytic credibility" is hollow without these standard practices. \* **\*\*Bias Score:\*\*** The repeated use of an undefined "bias score" is particularly egregious. The authors present this as an objective metric without explaining how

it was derived, by whom, or against what benchmark. This gives a false impression of scientific neutrality to what is likely a highly subjective judgment.

**C. Results \ Evidence: Score 2/5** **Reproducibility:** The results are not reproducible based on the information provided. **Exaggeration of Claims:** The discussion heavily interprets the data to support a specific narrative (e.g., "Global South credibility gap," "re-humanization through law") that is not neutrally demonstrated by the presented tables. The data in Tables 1, 5, and 8, for instance, show clear asymmetries in the dataset and speaker representation, but this is not critically discussed as a potential limitation affecting the results. **Lack of Critical Baselines:** There is no comparison to other, similar ICJ cases to establish whether the observed "communicative strategies" are unique to this case or typical of international legal discourse.

**D. Contribution to the Field: Score 2/5** The potential contribution is significant but unrealized. In its current form, the paper's findings are too compromised by methodological weaknesses to be a reliable foundation for future research. Other researchers would be unable to build upon these results confidently.

**E. Writing \ Presentation: Score 3/5** The paper is generally well-structured and readable. However, the use of conclusory and advocacy-oriented language (e.g., "giving voice to the silenced," "epistemic marginalization") undermines its scholarly tone. The tables are numerous but their connection to the central argument is often unclear due to the undefined metrics.

**F. Ethical \ Transparency Standards: Score 3/5** The use of public data is appropriate and the data availability statement is a strength. However, the failure to provide the codebook, detailed coding protocols, and operational definitions of key variables constitutes a major transparency failure. The declaration of no conflict of interest feels disingenuous given the paper's clear normative stance.

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### \\ 3. Strengths

\* Engagement with a critical, real-world case study at the intersection of law, media, and politics.  
 \* Attempt to apply robust theoretical frameworks (Fricker, Margalit) to a contemporary legal proceeding.  
 \* Clear articulation of the potential stakes and implications of the research.

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### \\ 4. Weaknesses

**Major Flaws:** 1. **Methodological Black Box:** The complete lack of operational definitions for primary variables ("empathetic framing," "perceived legitimacy," "bias score") renders the quantitative analysis uninterpretable and invalid. 2. **Unacknowledged Positionality and Bias:** The paper adopts a clear perspective that aligns with one side of the case, framing South Africa as the "moral witness" and discussing "Palestinian well-being" as a given outcome of the case, while presenting Israeli officials' statements primarily as "defensive." This normative framing is not acknowledged or balanced, compromising scholarly objectivity. 3. **Uncritical Dataset:** The analysis does not adequately address the inherent biases and asymmetries within the dataset itself (e.g., the over-representation of certain regions or speaker types, as seen in Table 2 and Table 5) and how these might predetermine the results.

**Minor Flaws:** \* Inconsistent citation formatting (e.g., sometimes full first names, sometimes initials). \* Vague phrases like "methodological triangulation" are used as a talisman of rigor without demonstrating how it was concretely achieved. \* The conflation of "credibility," "trust," and "perceived legitimacy" throughout the text.

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## \\ 5. Recommendations for Improvement

**Required for Resubmission (Anywhere):** 1. **Full Methodological Disclosure:** Provide a complete codebook in supplementary materials. This must include: \* Operational definitions for **every** variable in the tables (Tone, Bias Score, Empathy, Legality, Perceived Legitimacy). \* The exact scales and criteria used for coding. \* Inter-coder reliability statistics for all qualitative codes. \* A clear explanation of how "perceived legitimacy" was measured. Was it coded by the authors? If so, this is circular reasoning. 2. **Acknowledge and Address Bias:** The authors must add a robust positionality statement that explicitly acknowledges the normative lens through which this case is being analyzed. The manuscript's language must be revised to be more neutral and analytical, separating observation from advocacy. 3. **Re-contextualize the Dataset:** The paper must include a critical discussion of the dataset's limitations, including its composition and how the over/under-representation of certain voices might shape the findings.

**What Would Make it Acceptable for a Tier-1 Venue:** \* In addition to the above, a more robust comparative element is needed. Contrasting the communicative strategies in this case with those in a less politically polarized ICJ case (or another international tribunal) would significantly strengthen the claim of novelty. \* A more sophisticated quantitative analysis that moves beyond simple correlations to models that can control for confounding variables (e.g., source type, region). \* A complete rewrite of the results and discussion sections to ground every interpretive claim directly and transparently in the (now properly defined) data.

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## \\ 6. Verdict

**Final Score: 2/5 - Weak Reject**

**Justification:** This paper is **fundamentally flawed** in its current state. The core quantitative findings, which are central to its argument, are built on an undefined and unreproducible methodology. The pervasive normative bias and lack of critical self-reflection regarding the dataset further undermine its scholarly validity. While the topic is important and the theoretical ambition is commendable, the execution is critically deficient. There is a path to a respectable publication, but it requires a foundational re-working of the methodology, a full transparency overhaul, and a commitment to scholarly neutrality that is absent from this submission. It cannot be accepted in its present form.

## Human Reviewer

*Expert human review providing domain-specific insights*

Reviewer: Johsons

Scores (out of 10): - Question 1: 1.5 - Question 2: 1 - Question 3: 1 - Question 4: 0.25 - Question 5: 0.25 - Question 6: 1 - Question 7: 1

Total Score: 6 / 10

Reviewer Notes:

Submitted at: 2025-12-25 01:22:19

## Aggregate Review

*Combined assessment from all reviewers*

### Aggregate Review Report

This report combines the assessments from all three reviewers:

Individual Scores: - AI Reviewer 1 (Comprehensive): 0.0 / 10 - AI Reviewer 2 (Critical): 0.0 / 10  
- Human Reviewer (Johsons): 6 / 10

Aggregate Score: 2.00 / 10

Overall Assessment: The paper received an average score of 2.00 out of 10 across all three reviewers.

Final Decision: Reject

Justification: The paper does not currently meet the minimum standards for publication.

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