

# Response to Reviewers

“Numbers That Speak”: Digital Witnessing and Moral Trust in the War in Gaza Dataset  
Manuscript ID: [Manuscript ID]

Dear Editor,

We thank you for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript, “Numbers That Speak”: Digital Witnessing and Moral Trust in the War in Gaza Dataset. We are grateful to the reviewers for their thoughtful, detailed, and constructive feedback. Their critiques have been invaluable in helping us to substantially strengthen the methodological rigor, transparency, and clarity of our work.

In this revision, we have undertaken a comprehensive overhaul to address the core concerns raised. The key revisions include:

- **Enhanced Methodological Rigor:** We have significantly expanded our quantitative analysis by incorporating inferential statistical modeling (Poisson/Negative Binomial regression) to test associations between incident characteristics and casualty outcomes, moving beyond descriptive statistics. The results are presented in a new Table 3.
- **Improved Transparency and Reproducibility:** We now provide a detailed, structured codebook for our qualitative thematic analysis in Appendix A, complete with theme definitions, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and example quotes. We have also explicitly stated our commitment to sharing the dataset and analysis code in public repositories upon acceptance and have specified the software and packages used.
- **Clarified Scope and Positionality:** We have clarified the empirical focus on the West Bank subset while explaining the broader conceptual applicability, and we have integrated a more explicit statement regarding our positionality as researchers conducting secondary data analysis.
- **Strengthened Integration and Presentation:** We have added a new joint display table (Table 8) that explicitly maps quantitative findings onto qualitative themes, demonstrating the integration of our mixed-methods approach. We have also revised the text throughout to reduce jargon and improve clarity.

We believe these revisions have directly addressed the reviewers’ major concerns and have resulted in a more robust, transparent, and impactful manuscript. Our point-by-point responses to each reviewer comment are detailed below.

## Response to Reviewers

### Reviewer 1

**Comment 1:** “*Scientific Rigor / Methodology... Quantitative Analysis: Limited to descriptive statistics and correlations, with no inferential tests (e.g., regression, causality analysis). The absence of confidence intervals or uncertainty measures undermines robustness.*”

**Response:** We agree that inferential statistics would strengthen the analytical claims. In response, we have significantly expanded our quantitative methodology and results.

- In Section 4.4 (Quantitative Analysis), we now describe the implementation of Poisson regression models (with negative binomial alternatives where appropriate) to examine associations between incident type, region, time period, and fatality counts. We report Incidence Rate Ratios (IRRs) with 95% confidence intervals and p-values. We also mention model diagnostics and robustness checks. (Page 9, lines 210-225).
- A new Table 3 (Page 11) presents the results of the Poisson regression for fatalities.
- The Results section (Section 5.1) has been updated to report and interpret these inferential findings, noting the significant associations found. (Page 12, lines 280-290).

**Comment 2:** *“Qualitative Analysis: Thematic coding procedures are described, but examples of raw data (e.g., excerpts from “remarks” fields) are omitted, preventing assessment of interpretive validity.”*

**Response:** We have greatly enhanced the transparency of our qualitative analysis.

- We now provide a detailed codebook in Appendix A (Page 18). This codebook includes each theme name, a clear definition, specific inclusion/exclusion criteria, and **representative example quotes** extracted directly from the ‘remarks’ field of the dataset.
- The methodology section (Section 4.5) has been updated to reference this codebook and describe the process of its development and validation. (Page 10, lines 235-245).

**Comment 3:** *“Reproducibility & Transparency... The dataset is not shared, and no DOI or repository link is provided. Code for quantitative/qualitative analysis is unavailable.”*

**Response:** We fully commit to open science principles. We have added explicit statements regarding data and code availability.

- In Section 4.2 (Participants and Sampling), we now state: “The dataset is publicly available at [REPOSITORY DOI/LINK WILL BE INSERTED UPON ACCEPTANCE], and all analysis code is available at [CODE REPOSITORY LINK] to ensure full reproducibility.” (Page 8, lines 185-187).
- In Section 4.4 (Quantitative Analysis), we specify the software and packages used: “All quantitative analyses were conducted using standard statistical software... Specifically, analyses were performed in R version 4.3.2 using the ‘tidyverse’, ‘MASS’, and ‘lubridate’ packages.” (Page 9, lines 226-228).

**Comment 4:** *“Clarify why Gaza data is omitted despite the title.”*

**Response:** We have clarified the scope of our empirical analysis versus the conceptual framework.

- The Abstract now states: “The primary empirical analysis is conducted on the ‘west\_bank\_daily.csv’ subset (n=213 daily entries) to ensure regional specificity and data coherence, though the conceptual framework applies to the broader conflict.” (Page 1, lines 15-18).
- This clarification is reiterated in the Background section (Section 3): “For the purposes of focused empirical analysis, this study utilizes the ‘west\_bank\_daily.csv’ subset... The conceptual arguments, however, are intended to apply to digital witnessing in the broader conflict context.” (Page 6, lines 140-145).

**Comment 5:** *“Add visualizations (e.g., time-series plots, thematic maps).”*

**Response:** While we have added significant analytical depth through inferential statistics and the joint display table, we have chosen to prioritize these textual and tabular enhancements in this revision to maintain focus. We agree that visualizations could be beneficial and will consider them for future, expanded work. The current tables (1-7) present the core temporal, regional, and demographic patterns clearly.

**Comment 6:** *“Replace repetitive phrases like “digital witnessing” with synonyms.”*

**Response:** We have reviewed the manuscript and, where appropriate, varied our terminology by using phrases such as “numerical testimony,” “quantitative documentation,” and “data as testimony” to improve readability and reduce repetition.

**Comment 7:** *“Fix formatting inconsistencies in references (e.g., incomplete Creswell citation).”*

**Response:** Thank you for catching this. We have reviewed the entire bibliography and ensured all citations are complete and formatted consistently according to the required style.

## **Reviewer 2**

**Comment 1:** *“Methodological Soundness:... Quantitative Analysis: Basic descriptive statistics and correlations provide minimal analytical depth. No inferential statistics, regression modeling, or causal inference despite claims about “systematic patterns.””*

**Response:** As detailed in our response to Reviewer 1 (Comment 1), we have comprehensively addressed this by adding inferential Poisson regression models. This provides statistical tests for the patterns we describe, moving the analysis beyond description to modeling associations. See new methodology in Section 4.4, new Table 3, and updated Results in Section 5.1.

**Comment 2:** *“Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis of narrative descriptors lacks methodological rigor. No evidence of systematic coding process or validation beyond reported kappa coefficient.”*

**Response:** We have substantially strengthened the reporting of our qualitative methodology.

- We now describe a more detailed, iterative process for codebook development in Section 4.5 and present it in a new Table 2 (Page 10).

- Crucially, we provide the full, validated codebook in Appendix A (Page 18), which serves as direct evidence of the systematic coding process. It includes definitions and examples, allowing for assessment of interpretive validity.
- We reiterate the inter-coder reliability check ( $\kappa = 0.87$ ) in the context of this more transparent framework. (Page 10, line 240).

**Comment 3:** *“Integration: Claims of ”methodological triangulation” are superficial—quantitative and qualitative findings remain largely parallel rather than integrated.”*

**Response:** This is a crucial point. We have now made the integration explicit and concrete.

- We added a new subsection in the Method: “Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Components” (Section 4.8, Page 11). It describes how integration was achieved through a joint display analysis.
- We created a new **Table 8: Joint Display: Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings** (Page 12). This table directly maps specific quantitative patterns (e.g., high fatality rate of airstrikes) onto the qualitative themes (e.g., “Data as Moral Replacement”), followed by an interpretive insight. This demonstrates true integration rather than parallel reporting.
- The Discussion (Section 6) uses this joint display to inform the interpretation, explicitly linking statistical results to narrative themes. (Page 14, lines 335-340).

**Comment 4:** *“Conceptual Overreach: Claims about ”moral testimony” and ”epistemic trust” far exceed empirical support.”*

**Response:** We have tempered our claims to more closely align with the empirical evidence provided by our strengthened analysis.

- Throughout the manuscript, we have revised language to frame our findings as *demonstrating mechanisms* through which data *can function* as or *extend* moral testimony, rather than making definitive, overarching claims. The conclusions are now more carefully qualified.
- The strengthened methodology (inferential stats, transparent codebook, explicit integration) provides a more robust empirical foundation for the theoretical claims we do make. We argue that these additions allow us to more credibly discuss the “moral weight” and “epistemic trust” fostered by the documented patterns and their narrative framing.

**Comment 5:** *“Ethical & Transparency Standards:... No IRB approval mentioned for analysis of sensitive conflict data. Data/code availability not addressed.”*

**Response:**

- Regarding IRB: As noted in the Ethics subsection (Section 4.7), our study uses **publicly available archival data** containing no personally identifiable information. This typically falls under exempt review in many institutional frameworks. We have clarified this point in the Background section by stating our role is one of secondary analysis. (Page 7, lines 155-160).
- Regarding Data/Code: This has been addressed as per our response to Reviewer 1 (Comment 3). We now explicitly state availability upon acceptance and specify the software environment.

**Comment 6:** *“Positionality: The authors do not disclose their relationship to the conflict or data sources, risking perceived bias.”*

**Response:** We have integrated a clear positionality statement.

- In the Background section (Section 3), we now state: “Our positionality as researchers analyzing secondary, archival data from a distance is explicitly acknowledged; we do not have direct involvement with the data collection on the ground, which shapes our interpretive lens and necessitates heightened reflexivity...” (Page 7, lines 155-158).
- This is revisited in the Discussion (Section 6) to reflect on how this positionality influences interpretation. (Page 15, lines 365-370).

## **Closing Note**

We sincerely thank both reviewers again for their rigorous and insightful critiques. Their feedback challenged us to improve our work substantially. We believe the revised manuscript presents a more methodologically sound, transparent, and nuanced analysis of digital witnessing in conflict contexts. We are hopeful that it now meets the journal's standards for publication and look forward to your decision.

Sincerely,

Corresponding Author Name

On behalf of all authors.