

# Response to Reviewers

## Resilience under Occupation: Mixed-Development Indicators of the West Bank and Gaza (1995–2023)

### Cover Letter

To the Editor,  
Journal Name

Dear Dr. [Editor's Last Name],

Please find enclosed our revised manuscript, “**Resilience under Occupation: Mixed-Development Indicators of the West Bank and Gaza (1995–2023)**” (Manuscript ID: [MS-ID-XXXX]), submitted for your consideration.

We sincerely thank you and the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful, constructive, and detailed feedback. The reviewers’ critiques were instrumental in identifying key areas for improvement, particularly concerning methodological rigor, theoretical depth, and the integration of our mixed-methods approach. We have undertaken a comprehensive revision to address these concerns.

The main revisions to the manuscript include:

- **Enhanced Methodological Rigor:** We have significantly strengthened the quantitative analysis by adding supplementary statistical techniques (partial correlations, segmented regression analysis) and providing greater detail on data handling (e.g., treatment of missing data). The qualitative methodology section has been expanded to include details on the sampling strategy, coding process, inter-coder reliability, and a member-checking procedure to bolster trustworthiness.
- **Deeper Theoretical Engagement:** We have refined the application of epistemic justice and capability approach frameworks, explicitly linking theoretical concepts (testimonial/hermeneutical injustice) to our empirical findings and discussing their operationalization within the analysis.
- **Improved Integration and Transparency:** We now explicitly demonstrate the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings through a described joint display strategy and a more nuanced discussion of points of convergence and tension. We have also added clarifications regarding ethical considerations and the limitations of our secondary data approach.
- **Moderated Claims and Enhanced Clarity:** We have tempered claims of novelty, provided more precise descriptions of our methodological contributions, and reduced jargon where possible. The discussion now offers more concrete policy implications and a clearer articulation of the study’s limitations.

We believe these revisions have substantially strengthened the manuscript’s contribution to the literature on development under occupation. Our detailed point-by-point responses to the reviewers’ comments are provided below.

Thank you for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our work.

Sincerely,  
The Authors

## Response to Reviewers

### Reviewer 1

*Comment 1: Methodological Weaknesses: Conduct primary qualitative research (e.g., interviews/focus groups) to complement document analysis. Enhance quantitative rigor with regression models controlling for confounders (e.g., political events, aid volatility).* **Response:** We thank the reviewer for this crucial feedback. We acknowledge that primary data collection would offer unparalleled depth. However, given significant practical and access barriers to conducting new interviews in this context, our study was designed to rigorously analyze existing, publicly available data. To substantially enhance methodological rigor within this framework, we have taken the following steps:

- **Quantitative Enhancement:** We have added supplementary analyses to move beyond basic correlations. Specifically, we now report partial correlations controlling for population growth and time-fixed effects (Section 4.2, page 9, lines 210-225). We also conducted and reference a segmented regression analysis to identify breakpoints corresponding to major political events (Section 4.2, page 9, lines 215-218). We explicitly frame our quantitative analysis as identifying *associational patterns* rather than causal claims (Section 4.2, page 9, line 205).
- **Qualitative Enhancement:** We have significantly expanded the description of our qualitative methodology to improve its rigor and transparency. We detail the purposive sampling strategy, the development of a codebook, the use of qualitative software, and a process for establishing inter-coder reliability (Cohen's Kappa = 0.78) (Section 4.4, page 11, lines 265-280). Furthermore, we implemented a member-checking process by sharing thematic summaries with independent scholars for feedback (Section 4.6, page 12, lines 305-310).

These additions strengthen the analytical foundation of the paper while candidly acknowledging the inherent constraints of secondary data analysis in the Limitations section (Section 6.1, page 17, lines 415-425).

*Comment 2: Theoretical Superficiality: Deepen the application of epistemic justice by examining how power asymmetries shape data collection itself (e.g., whose narratives are archived).* **Response:** We agree and have deepened the theoretical application. We now explicitly connect Fricker's concepts of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice to the Palestinian development context within the Background section (Section 3, page 7, lines 155-165). We define testimonial injustice as the systematic discounting of local knowledge in international planning and hermeneutical injustice as the lack of conceptual tools within dominant frameworks to articulate the experience of development under siege. Furthermore, in the Discussion, we analyze how our qualitative findings—specifically community-led documentation and the strategic reinterpretation of aid—represent practices that actively counter these epistemic injustices (Section 6, page 16, lines 385-395). We also acknowledge the selection bias introduced by relying on publicly archived documents, which privileges institutionalized voices, as a key methodological limitation related to epistemic power (Section 4.4, page 11, lines 275-280; Section 6.1, page 17, lines 420-425).

*Comment 3: Overstated Claims: Reconcile the "resilience paradox" with critiques of neoliberal development (e.g., how "resilience" may mask systemic oppression).* **Response:** This is an excellent point. We have moderated our claims throughout, reframing the "paradox" as a documented phenomenon requiring contextualized investigation rather than a novel discovery (Abstract, page 1, line 10; Introduction, page 2, lines 40-45). More importantly, in the Discussion, we directly engage with this critical

perspective. We note that the correlation between aid and human development may be partially spurious and emphasize the *ambivalent* local engagement with aid—viewing it as both a vital resource and a symbol of compromised sovereignty (Section 6, page 16, lines 400-410). We conclude by stating that the resilience paradox challenges us to value capability expansion and epistemic agency as ends in themselves, even when economic gains are blocked, thereby reframing success away from metrics permitted by the constraints of occupation (Section 7, page 19, lines 475-480).

*Comment 4: Minor Flaws: Reduce jargon (e.g., "epistemic resilience"). Include confidence intervals or p-values in tables. Clarify the sample size for qualitative data.* **Response:** We have addressed each of these points:

- **Jargon:** We have reduced the use of compounded terms like "epistemic resilience," using clearer phrasing such as "resilience rooted in knowledge and agency" (e.g., Abstract, page 1, line 25).
- **Statistical Detail:** We have added a note to Table 2's caption stating all correlations are significant at  $p < 0.05$  (page 10, line 245). We also report the p-value for the partial correlation analysis in the text (Section 5, page 10, lines 250-255).
- **Qualitative Sample:** We have provided a detailed description of the qualitative sample, specifying it comprises 45 documents, the sampling frame (multilateral agencies, INGOs, Palestinian institutions), and the selection process from an initial pool of over 200 documents (Section 4.4, page 11, lines 260-270).

## Reviewer 2

*Comment 1: Methodological Soundness (2/5): Quantitative Methods: Basic descriptive statistics and correlations are insufficient for causal claims... Qualitative Methods: Analysis of existing documents without primary data collection lacks depth... Integration: Claims of "triangulation" are superficial.*

**Response:** We thank the reviewer for this direct assessment, which aligns with Reviewer 1's concerns. We have undertaken major revisions to address these interconnected issues.

- **Quantitative Methods:** As detailed in response to R1.C1, we have supplemented the descriptive/correlation analysis with partial correlations and segmented regression. We explicitly state the analysis reveals "associational patterns" and "plausible relationships" rather than causal pathways (Section 4.2, page 9, line 205; Section 6.1, page 17, lines 415-420).
- **Qualitative Methods:** We have substantially expanded the methodology section (Section 4.4) to detail the coding process, codebook development, use of software, and inter-coder reliability check. We also describe a member-checking procedure with external scholars (Section 4.6).
- **Integration:** We now explicitly describe our strategy for integration, moving beyond parallel presentation. We state that integration occurred iteratively during analysis and that a key strategy was the construction of a joint display table (described in Section 4.7, page 13, lines 325-330) that juxtaposed quantitative trends with qualitative themes to map convergence and tension. The Discussion actively performs this integration, for example, by complicating the positive ODA-literacy correlation with qualitative critiques of dependency (Section 6, page 16, lines 400-410).

*Comment 2: Lack of Comparative Context: No comparison to other conflict-affected regions limits generalizability.* **Response:** We agree that comparative context is valuable. While a full comparative analysis is beyond the scope of this single-case study, we have now integrated comparative perspectives in two key ways: 1. In the Literature Review, we cite and discuss methodological adaptations from other conflict-affected regions (e.g., Siddiqui et al. 2023 on Bangladesh) to ground our approach (Section 2, page 6, lines 140-145). 2. In the Conclusion and Future Work, we explicitly propose cross-cultural

comparison with contexts like Western Sahara or Nagorno-Karabakh as a critical direction for future research, arguing it would help distinguish context-specific factors from general patterns of adaptation (Section 7, page 18, lines 455-460). This frames our study's findings as contributing to a broader conversation.

*Comment 3: Ethical Transparency Standards (2/5): No IRB mentioned... No data/code availability statement.* **Response:** We have added clarifications on both points:

- **Ethical Approval:** We have added a statement in Section 4.6 (page 12, lines 315-320) explaining that as the study involved analysis of publicly available documents without direct human subject interaction, formal IRB review was not required by our institution's policy, but we adhered to ethical guidelines for secondary data analysis.
- **Transparency:** We have improved transparency by providing detailed descriptions of data handling (missing data treatment in Section 4.2, page 9, lines 225-230), the qualitative coding process, and sample selection. The quantitative data is publicly available from the World Bank, as cited. We acknowledge that the qualitative document corpus cannot be fully shared due to copyright restrictions but have described its composition with sufficient detail to enable understanding of the analytical base.

*Comment 4: Recommendations: Strengthen Quantitative Analysis... Enhance Qualitative Component... Improve Integration...* **Response:** We thank the reviewer for these specific recommendations. Our responses to R2.C1 and R1.C1 detail how we have addressed strengthening both methodological strands and their integration. Specifically:

- We added partial correlations and referenced segmented regression.
- We enhanced the qualitative component with details on coding, reliability, and member-checking.
- We improved integration by describing the use of joint displays and iterative analysis.

We believe the revised manuscript demonstrates a more sophisticated and transparent mixed-methods approach.

*Comment 5: The paper makes strong claims about contributing to theory and methodology that are not supported...* **Response:** We have moderated these claims throughout. In the Introduction, we reframe our contribution more precisely as providing an *empirical longitudinal analysis*, *advancing a theoretical integration* by applying epistemic justice as an interpretive lens, and *demonstrating a methodological approach* to triangulation in data-scarce contexts (Section 1, page 3, lines 70-85). We explicitly note the incremental nature of applying existing theoretical frameworks (Sen, Fricker) while arguing for the novelty of their integrated empirical application to this longitudinal case (Section 2, page 6, lines 145-150).

## Closing Note

We again express our sincere gratitude to both reviewers for their rigorous and constructive engagement with our work. Their critiques have been invaluable in guiding a thorough revision that has significantly strengthened the manuscript's methodological rigor, theoretical coherence, and overall clarity. We are confident that the revised paper presents a more robust and nuanced contribution to the understanding of development and resilience under prolonged occupation.