

Unknown Paper

AI Reviewer 1 - Comprehensive Review

This reviewer provides a thorough and balanced assessment

****Review of "Mapping Moral Visibility: Communicative Credibility in Reporting the 2023–2025 Palestine–Israel Conflict"****

\\ **** Step 1. Summary of the Paper****

This manuscript examines how credibility is constructed in conflict reporting during the 2023–2025 Palestine–Israel conflict, using the ACLED dataset of 9,427 events. The authors argue that data collection under asymmetric power becomes a form of "moral communication," where institutional collapse and power disparities shape whose testimony is trusted. The paper employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative analysis of event data with qualitative thematic analysis of textual narratives. Key findings include systematic disparities in verification thresholds (e.g., Palestinian accounts face higher scrutiny), a correlation between empathy language and perceived credibility ($r = 0.64$), and the concept of "courage of enumeration"—where documenting casualties becomes an act of resistance. The paper claims to extend frameworks of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007) and moral witnessing (Margalit, 2002) to data-driven testimony in conflict zones.

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

\\\\ ****1. Originality / Novelty**** ****Score: 8/10**** The paper's integration of epistemic injustice theory with quantitative conflict data is innovative. While studies have examined media bias or asymmetric reporting in the Palestine–Israel conflict, few have systematically analyzed credibility construction using mixed methods and large-scale event data. The concept of "moral visibility" and "courage of enumeration" adds theoretical novelty. However, the core idea—power asymmetries shaping credibility—is not entirely new, and the paper could better distinguish its contribution from prior decolonial and critical media studies.

\\\\ ****2. Scientific Rigor / Methodology**** ****Score: 6/10**** - ****Strengths:**** The mixed-methods design is appropriate for capturing both statistical patterns and narrative depth. The use of ACLED data is rigorous, and the sampling strategy for qualitative analysis (1,000 narratives) is justified. - ****Weaknesses:**** - ****Causality vs. Correlation:**** The correlation between empathy language and credibility ($r = 0.64$) is presented as evidence of moral framing's influence, but no experimental or longitudinal analysis establishes causality. - ****Selection Bias:**** The ACLED

dataset may underrepresent Palestinian-sourced events due to communication blackouts, but the paper does not fully address how this biases findings. - **Missing Controls:** The regression models lack discussion of confounding variables (e.g., media access, source diversity). - **Ethics:** Ethical approval for secondary data use is appropriately addressed.

\\\\ **3. Clarity \ Presentation** **Score: 7/10** The paper is generally well-structured, with clear sections and theoretical grounding. However: - **Jargon Overload:** Terms like "hermeneutical injustice" and "communicative action" are used without sufficient explanation for interdisciplinary audiences. - **Figure/Tables:** Tables are informative but lack contextual interpretation (e.g., Table 7's verification rates need clearer links to epistemic injustice). - **Abstract/Conclusion:** The abstract accurately summarizes the paper, but the conclusion overstates policy implications without evidence of feasibility.

\\\\ **4. Reproducibility \ Transparency** **Score: 5/10** - The methods section describes data sources and coding procedures but omits critical details: - How exactly was "empathy language" operationalized and measured? - No access to raw data or code is mentioned, despite ACLED being public. - The qualitative coding process (e.g., codebook, inter-rater reliability) is inadequately described. - Statistical analyses (e.g., regression, correlation) are reported but lack robustness checks (e.g., sensitivity analysis for missing data).

\\\\ **5. Significance \ Impact** **Score: 9/10** The paper addresses an urgent, high-stakes problem: how credibility asymmetries perpetuate epistemic injustice in conflict zones. Its findings could influence humanitarian documentation protocols, media ethics, and policy frameworks. The emphasis on Palestinian testimonies fills a critical gap in conflict studies and aligns with growing scholarly interest in decolonial approaches. Experts in media studies, human rights, and political science would find this work provocative and impactful.

\\\\ **6. Ethics \ Integrity** **Score: 8/10** The authors transparently acknowledge limitations (e.g., reporting biases) and avoid sensationalism. However: - **Positionality:** While researcher reflexivity is mentioned, the paper does not disclose whether the team includes scholars with direct ties to the conflict, which could affect interpretation. - **Conflict of Interest:** No conflicts are declared, but given the contentious topic, explicit disclaimers would strengthen integrity.

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

\\\\ **Major Flaws** 1. **Causal Claims:** Replace causal language (e.g., "empathy language influences credibility") with correlational framing unless supported by experimental design. 2. **Methodological Transparency:** Provide a codebook for qualitative themes and details on inter-rater reliability. Share regression model specifications (e.g., variables, goodness-of-fit metrics). 3. **Bias Addressing:** Quantify and discuss the potential impact of underreporting Palestinian events during communication blackouts. Use imputation or weighting methods if possible.

\\\\ **Minor Flaws** 1. **Clarity:** Simplify jargon in the introduction and theoretical framework. 2. **Tables:** Add footnotes explaining how verification rates were calculated (Table 7). 3. **Copyediting:** Fix formatting inconsistencies (e.g., "C OMMUNICATIVE" in the title).

\\\\ **Additional Analyses** 1. Conduct a sensitivity analysis to test how missing data (e.g., unreported Palestinian events) affects the correlation between empathy language and credibility. 2. Compare verification thresholds for Palestinian vs. Israeli accounts using a matched-sample design

(e.g., pairing events with similar characteristics but different sources). 3. Incorporate sentiment analysis or NLP tools to validate the "empathy language" metric.

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

Overall Score: 7/10 **Recommendation: Borderline**

Justification: This paper offers a timely, theoretically sophisticated, and socially significant analysis of credibility in conflict reporting. Its mixed-methods approach and emphasis on epistemic injustice are strengths, and the findings could inform both scholarship and practice. However, methodological gaps—especially regarding causal inference, transparency, and bias mitigation—undermine its rigor. The correlation between empathy language and credibility is compelling but not conclusive, and the lack of reproducibility details limits its utility. With major revisions (e.g., clarifying methods, tempering causal claims, addressing biases), this paper could meet the high standards of a journal like *Nature* or *BMJ*. As it stands, it is not yet acceptable for publication but has strong potential.

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AI Reviewer 2 - Critical Review

This reviewer provides critical analysis and identifies potential weaknesses

****REVIEWER COMMENTS****

****1. Overall Impression****

My immediate reaction is one of methodological skepticism and concern about analytical overreach. While the topic of epistemic injustice in conflict reporting is timely and important, this manuscript suffers from significant flaws in research design, analytical transparency, and causal inference. The paper presents as a breakthrough contribution but reads more like an ideologically-driven analysis dressed in academic language.

Strengths: - Addresses an important and understudied aspect of conflict documentation - Ambitious mixed-methods design - Theoretically sophisticated framing

Major concerns: - Fundamental methodological flaws in causal attribution - Lack of transparency in analytical procedures - Potential confirmation bias in interpretation - Overstated claims relative to evidence

****2. Technical \ Scientific Assessment****

****A. Problem Definition: 3/5**** The research question is clearly motivated and non-trivial, addressing credibility construction in asymmetric conflict. However, the framing appears predetermined toward finding systematic bias against Palestinian testimonies rather than open inquiry.

****B. Methodological Soundness: 2/5**** Critical flaws undermine the methodological rigor: - No clear protocol for how "credibility" was operationalized or measured - The reported correlation ($r=0.64$) between empathy language and credibility lacks methodological explanation - Mixed-methods integration is described but not demonstrated with sufficient transparency - Potential cherry-picking in qualitative theme identification

****C. Results \ Evidence: 2/5**** - Quantitative findings are descriptive rather than explanatory - No statistical controls for confounding variables in correlation analysis - Claims about "systematic patterns" of verification bias lack rigorous statistical testing - Qualitative analysis appears to confirm pre-existing theoretical positions rather than test them

****D. Contribution to the Field: 3/5**** The theoretical extension of epistemic injustice to data-driven testimony is potentially valuable, but the empirical support is weak. The findings would be more convincing with rigorous causal identification.

****E. Writing \ Presentation: 3/5**** The paper is well-written and logically organized, but key methodological details are obscured behind theoretical language. Figures and tables referenced in text are missing from the submission.

****F. Ethical \ Transparency Standards: 2/5**** - No data/code availability statement - Qualitative coding framework not provided - Potential for researcher bias given the politically charged context - IRB approval status unclear for qualitative components

****3. Strengths****

- Important theoretical synthesis of epistemic injustice and conflict documentation - Large-N dataset provides comprehensive coverage of conflict events - Attempts to bridge quantitative and qualitative methodologies - Identifies a genuine problem in conflict reporting ethics

****4. Weaknesses****

****Major Flaws:**** - Causal claims without causal identification strategies - Opaque measurement of key constructs (credibility, verification thresholds) - No demonstration of intercoder reliability for qualitative analysis - Potential confirmation bias in interpretation of asymmetric verification requirements - Missing robustness checks and sensitivity analyses

****Minor Flaws:**** - Inconsistent citation style - Missing tables and figures - Ambiguous phrasing about methodological procedures - Overuse of theoretical jargon obscuring empirical findings

****5. Recommendations for Improvement****

****Required Revisions:**** 1. Provide complete methodological transparency: coding protocols, measurement strategies, and analytical procedures 2. Conduct proper statistical testing of verification bias claims using multivariate regression with controls 3. Demonstrate intercoder reliability for qualitative analysis with Cohen's kappa or similar metrics 4. Include robustness checks for all quantitative findings 5. Substantially temper causal claims or implement causal inference methods

****Path to Acceptance:**** - Rigorous statistical analysis of verification patterns with proper controls - Transparent documentation of qualitative coding procedures - Balanced discussion of alternative explanations for observed patterns - Public availability of data and analysis code - Clear distinction between descriptive patterns and causal claims

****6. Verdict****

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

****Justification:**** This paper addresses an important question with sophisticated theoretical framing but suffers from fundamental methodological flaws that undermine its conclusions. The lack of analytical transparency, weak causal identification, and potential confirmation bias prevent the findings from meeting the evidentiary standards required for publication in a Tier-1 venue. While the topic merits investigation, the current execution does not provide convincing empirical support for its central claims about systematic epistemic injustice in conflict documentation.

The paper could potentially be reconsidered after major revisions that address the methodological shortcomings, but in its current form, it represents a fundamentally flawed contribution that would not withstand scholarly scrutiny.

****Reviewer 2 Style Enforcement:**** I have applied heightened skepticism regarding causal claims, demanded stronger methodological justification, and highlighted potential biases in interpretation. The burden of proof rests squarely with the authors to demonstrate their claims with rigorous evidence, which they have not met in the current submission.

Human Reviewer

Expert human review providing domain-specific insights

Reviewer: Zalme Khalil

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

Total Score: 9 / 10

Reviewer Notes:

Submitted at: 2025-12-24 18:36:29

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): 8.0 / 10 - AI Reviewer 2 (Critical): 0.0 / 10
- Human Reviewer (Zalme Khalil): 9 / 10

Aggregate Score: 5.67 / 10

Overall Assessment: The paper received an average score of 5.67 out of 10 across all three reviewers.

Final Decision: Minor Revision

Justification: The paper shows promise but requires minor improvements before publication.

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