

Response to Reviewers

Cover Letter

To the Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the constructive and detailed feedback on our manuscript, **”Postcolonial Labor Metrics: Quantifying Inequality and Resilience in Occupied Palestine”** (Manuscript ID: OPLM-2024-027). The reviewers’ insightful comments have been invaluable in strengthening the methodological rigor, transparency, and clarity of our work.

In response to the critiques, we have undertaken comprehensive revisions. The most significant changes include:

- **Correcting the Temporal Scope:** We have clarified the data collection period as 2020–2024, removing any reference to 2025 data and explaining the citation date in the revised manuscript (Abstract, Method).
- **Enhancing Methodological Transparency:** We have added detailed descriptions of quantitative variable construction, model specifications, handling of missing data, and the qualitative coding process. A full qualitative codebook is now provided in Appendix A.
- **Strengthening Statistical Analysis:** We have incorporated multivariate regression analysis to better isolate associations between demographic factors and labor outcomes, tempering language that could imply causality.
- **Addressing Ethical and Transparency Standards:** We have added a Positionality Statement, detailed our ethical approval and consent procedures, and outlined our data availability plan in Appendix B.
- **Including All Referenced Tables:** All tables referenced in the text (Tables 1–7) are now present in the Results section.

We believe these revisions have substantially addressed the reviewers’ concerns, resulting in a more robust, transparent, and scientifically rigorous manuscript. Our point-by-point responses to each comment are detailed below.

Reviewer-by-Reviewer Detailed Responses

Reviewer 1

Comment 1: Temporal Scope Issues: The paper claims data through 2025, but data collection ended in 2024. This represents either a serious methodological error or misrepresentation. **Response:** We thank the reviewer for identifying this critical error. The reference to 2025 was incorrect; our analysis uses Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Labor Force Survey data from 2020 through 2024. The citation `pcbs2025labor` reflects the PCBS’s publication date for the compiled dataset, not the data collection period. We have corrected this throughout the manuscript.

- The abstract now states: "...from 2020 to 2024..." (Page 1, lines 4-5).
- The Method section clarifies: "The study utilizes...the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Labor Force Survey from 2020 to 2024" and explains that "The reference to 2025 in the citation reflects the PCBS publication date; the analytical dataset contains actual survey waves through 2024." (Page 8, Section 4.2, lines 10-14).

Comment 2: Missing Methodological Details: No information provided about quantitative variable construction, model specifications, or handling of missing data. **Response:** We have significantly expanded the Method section to provide complete methodological transparency.

- **Variable Construction:** Added details on how employment status, wages, education, and sector were defined and constructed (Page 8, Section 4.3, lines 18-24).
- **Handling Missing Data:** Added: "Missing wage data (approximately 8% of employed respondents) were handled using multiple imputation with chained equations..." (Page 8, Section 4.3, lines 24-26).
- **Model Specifications:** Added a detailed description of the three-stage quantitative analysis, including the use of multivariate OLS regression, survey weights, robust standard errors, and checks for multicollinearity (Page 9, Section 4.4, lines 1-12).
- The full regression results are now presented in Table 7 (Page 17).

Comment 3: Sampling Bias: Purposive sampling through NGOs/community networks likely over-represents politically engaged participants, potentially skewing narratives toward resistance frameworks. **Response:** We acknowledge this potential limitation. We have added a discussion of this bias in the Method section and described our mitigation strategies.

- Added to Participants and Sampling: "We acknowledge that recruitment through established community networks may introduce selection bias... To mitigate this, we included participants from diverse organizational affiliations and conducted sensitivity analyses comparing themes across recruitment channels." (Page 7, Section 4.2, lines 22-27).
- We further address this as a study limitation in the Discussion: "...the qualitative sample, while diverse, was recruited through community networks which may over-represent individuals with stronger social connections or specific political perspectives." (Page 20, lines 28-30).

Comment 4: Causality Claims: The analysis frequently implies causal relationships (e.g., "occupation policies produce") from correlational data. **Response:** We have carefully revised the language throughout the manuscript to temper causal claims and clarify that our findings demonstrate associations.

- The abstract now states: "Quantitative analysis employed multivariate regression to isolate *associations* between demographic factors and labor outcomes..." (Page 1, lines 12-13).
- The note under Table 7 explicitly states: "All coefficients represent associations, not causal effects." (Page 17).
- In the Discussion, we state: "The observational nature of the data limits causal inference... The associations reported should not be interpreted as causal effects." (Page 20, lines 24-26).
- We have replaced phrasing like "produces" or "causes" with "is associated with," "shapes," or "constrains" where appropriate.

Comment 5: Qualitative codebook not provided. Response: We have provided a complete qualitative codebook as Appendix A (Page 21, after the Conclusion). It includes code names, definitions, example quotations, and decision rules for application (see Table in Appendix A).

Comment 6: Ethical approval and consent procedures mentioned only vaguely. Response: We have added specific details regarding ethical approval and informed consent.

- Added to Data Collection: "Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Critical Sciences Institutional Review Board (Protocol #2023-147). All participants provided written informed consent..." (Page 8, Section 4.3, lines 30-33).

Comment 7: Lack of researcher positionality statement. Response: We have added a comprehensive "Authors' Positionality Statement" immediately following the author list and before the abstract (Page 1). It details our scholarly backgrounds, long-term engagement with Palestinian institutions, methodological commitments to counter epistemic hierarchies, and reflexive practices to mitigate bias.

Comment 8: Citation Issues: Multiple incomplete citations (e.g., "?", "?"). Response: We have reviewed and corrected the bibliography. All citations in the revised manuscript now point to complete entries in the reference list.

Comment 9: Include all referenced tables and figures. Response: All tables (1 through 7) referenced in the Results section are now included (Pages 13-17).

Reviewer 2

Comment 1: Presentation of 2025 data as collected constitutes irredeemable methodological dishonesty / a fatal methodological flaw. Response: We sincerely apologize for this error, which was not intentional but a serious oversight. As detailed in response to Reviewer 1 (Comment 1), we have corrected the manuscript to state unequivocally that the data analysis covers 2020–2024. The 2025 citation referred only to the PCBS publication date. This correction is made in the Abstract and Method sections (Pages 1–8).

Comment 2: Insufficient statistical rigor - basic descriptive statistics cannot support causal claims. No regression modeling to control for confounding variables. Response: We have substantially strengthened the quantitative analysis.

- We now report results from multivariate ordinary least squares regression analysis controlling for gender, education, experience, region, and sector (Page 9, Section 4.4, lines 4-7; Results, Page 13, lines 15-18; Table 7, Page 17).
- We explicitly avoid causal language, framing findings as associations (see response to Reviewer 1, Comment 4).

Comment 3: Missing methodological details: specific sampling procedures, questionnaires, IRB approval. Response: We have provided these details.

- **Sampling:** Expanded description of the PCBS's "stratified two-stage cluster sampling" and our qualitative "maximum variation sampling" strategy (Page 7, Section 4.2).
- **Questionnaires/Data Collection:** Specified that quantitative data comes from standardized PCBS questionnaires and described the semi-structured interview/focus group protocol for qualitative data (Page 8, Section 4.3).
- **IRB Approval:** Added as noted in response to Reviewer 1, Comment 6.

Comment 4: Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 for qualitative coding is methodologically questionable. Response: We agree that the use of Cronbach's alpha in qualitative research is unconventional. We have clarified its application and interpretation.

- We now state: "The reported Cronbach alpha reflects inter-coder agreement on a subset of double-coded transcripts (n=30) after establishing initial coding frameworks; it should be interpreted as an indicator of coding consistency rather than a psychometric property of a measurement instrument." (Page 9, Section 4.4, lines 20-23).
- We emphasize that our primary approach to qualitative rigor was reflexive thematic analysis, with inter-coder agreement serving as one supplementary check.

Comment 5: No evidence of IRB/ethics approval... Data/code availability not addressed. Response:

- IRB approval details have been added (Page 8, Section 4.3).
- We have added a "Data Availability and Reproducibility" section as Appendix B (Page 22). It states: "De-identified quantitative data and R analysis code will be made available upon publication through the Harvard Dataverse repository... Qualitative data cannot be fully shared due to privacy and security concerns, but anonymized excerpts are provided..."

Comment 6: Overinterpretation of qualitative data... Claims of "economic violence" and "resistance economies" exceed evidentiary support. Response: We have nuanced our language and grounded these concepts more firmly in the data.

- We now more carefully introduce the term "economic violence," linking it directly to participant narratives and quantitative data on loss of employment due to movement restrictions (Page 19, Section 5.13, lines 1-7).
- We describe "resistance economies" as participant-articulated frameworks ("economic sumūd") and link them to measurable growth in community-based initiatives (Page 19, Section 5.15, lines 1-5).
- We have added a limitation noting the potential for overinterpretation.

Comment 7: Tables referenced throughout results section are completely absent. Response: All tables (1-7) are now present in the revised manuscript (Pages 13-17).

Comment 8: Anonymous authorship prevents assessment of researcher qualifications. Response: While author identities are blinded for review, our positionality statement (Page 1) outlines our collective expertise ("scholars of political economy and critical development studies"), sustained engagement with the context ("over a decade"), and methodological training, which should help address concerns about qualifications.

Closing Note

We again express our sincere gratitude to the reviewers for their rigorous and constructive engagement with our work. Their critiques were essential in identifying significant areas for improvement. We believe the revisions detailed above have comprehensively addressed their concerns, resulting in a manuscript with greater methodological transparency, analytical rigor, and ethical clarity. We are confident that the revised paper makes a stronger and more valuable contribution to the fields of political economy, conflict studies, and postcolonial scholarship.