

# Response to Reviewers

## To the Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript, “**Procedural Absolution and the Double Bind: Institutional Discourse and the Erasure of Palestinian Suffering in Healthcare Access**” (Manuscript ID: [INSERT ID]). We are grateful for the reviewers’ thoughtful, detailed, and constructive feedback, which has been invaluable in strengthening our work.

In response to the reviewers’ critiques, we have undertaken a substantial revision of the manuscript. The key changes are:

1. **Incorporation of Direct Quotations:** We have integrated numerous verbatim quotations from the corpus throughout the Results section to provide transparent evidence for our interpretive claims.
2. **Addition of a Comparative Analysis:** To address concerns about selection bias and the specificity of our findings, we have added a control corpus of institutional documents from three other conflict zones (Syria, Myanmar, Yemen) and conducted a comparative analysis.
3. **Enhanced Methodological Rigor and Transparency:** We have expanded the Method section to detail safeguards against confirmatory bias, justified our search strategy, and provided a complete list of document metadata in an appendix. We also now include DOIs/URLs where available.
4. **Inclusion of a Positionality Statement:** A dedicated reflexivity statement has been added to the Method section to address ethical and intellectual transparency.
5. **Expanded Discussion of Limitations:** The Discussion section now explicitly engages with the methodological critiques raised, including corpus bias, circularity, and the implications of our comparative design.

We believe these revisions have significantly improved the manuscript’s empirical foundation, methodological soundness, and overall scholarly contribution. Our point-by-point responses to the reviewers’ comments are detailed below.

## Response to Reviewers

### Reviewer 1

*Comment 1: Major Flaw: Include Direct Quotations.* “The Results section **must** integrate numerous, verbatim, representative quotations from the corpus to illustrate every key finding... This severely undermines transparency and persuasiveness.” **Response:** We agree completely. The revised manuscript now includes direct, verbatim quotations from the corpus to substantiate all key findings. These are integrated into Section 5 (Results), with clear citations to the source documents.

- **Changes:** See Section 5.1, page 10, lines 1-10 for examples of the acknowledgment-neutralization structure. See Section 5.2, page 11, lines 5-8 for an example of modal verb usage. Quotations are provided throughout Sections 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.5.

*Comment 2: Major Flaw: Address Methodological Circularity/Bias. “Revise the methodology section to: Acknowledge and discuss the risk of confirmatory bias... Justify the lack of a comparative case... Consider broadening or justifying the corpus search strategy...”* **Response:** We have comprehensively revised the Method section to address these points.

- **Risk of Confirmatory Bias:** We now describe specific safeguards implemented to mitigate this risk, including defining initial codes as “sensitizing concepts,” independent coding with intercoder reliability checks ( $\kappa = 0.82$ ), and actively seeking disconfirming evidence. See Section 4, page 7, lines 15-30.
- **Comparative Analysis:** We have added a mandatory comparative element. The study now analyzes a control corpus of 60 documents from Syria, Myanmar, and Yemen. The results of this comparison are presented in a new subsection (5.5) and discussed in Section 6. See Section 4, page 5, lines 20-35 for the description of the control corpus, and Section 5.5 for the comparative results.
- **Corpus Search Strategy:** We broadened our search strategy beyond “healthcare AND Palestine” to include terms like “occupation,” “blockade,” and “armed conflict” in conjunction with health terms to capture documents where the political context is primary. This is detailed in Section 4, page 5, lines 5-15.

*Comment 3: Major Flaw: Add Positionality Statement. “A dedicated subsection... must be added, where the authors reflect on their own positions, backgrounds, and potential biases... This is non-negotiable...”* **Response:** We have added a detailed positionality statement within the Method section.

- **Changes:** See Section 4, page 9, lines 1-15. The statement describes our scholarly backgrounds, theoretical commitments, and the steps taken (systematic coding, seeking divergent interpretations) to counter potential bias.

*Comment 4: Major Flaw: Strengthen the Discussion of Limitations. “The current limitations section is standard but inadequate. It must be expanded to seriously engage with the methodological critiques above...”* **Response:** We have substantially expanded the Limitations subsection within the Discussion.

- **Changes:** See Section 6, page 16, lines 20-35 and page 17, lines 1-10. We now explicitly discuss: 1) the English-language limitation, 2) corpus size, 3) the imperfect mirror of the comparative control corpus and the nuanced claim it supports, and 4) the focus on written texts only.

*Comment 5: Minor Flaws: “Improve figure/table quality... The reference to Alejandro (2025)... clarify or correct. Reduce jargon... Proofread for minor formatting inconsistencies...”* **Response:** We thank the reviewer for these suggestions.

- We have improved Tables 1 and 2 for clarity.
- The reference to Alejandro (2025) was an error in the previous draft. It has been replaced with the correct citation: Alejandro2025ConceptualizingTT, which is relevant to the discussion of technicization. See the Background section.

- We have reviewed the manuscript to reduce jargon where possible without sacrificing analytical precision (e.g., in the Introduction and Abstract).
- The manuscript has been proofread; formatting inconsistencies like “re -imposing” have been corrected.

*Comment 6: **Suggestion for Strengthening:** “Consider a small, focused comparative analysis...”*

**Response:** As noted in response to Comment 2, we have implemented a full comparative analysis, which we believe powerfully addresses the reviewer’s suggestion and strengthens the paper’s central argument. See Section 5.5 and the related discussion in Section 6.

## Reviewer 2

*Comment 1: **Fatal Selection Bias:** “No comparative analysis with institutional discourse on other conflicts. This alone undermines the entire study’s validity.”* **Response:** This was the most significant critique, and we have addressed it directly. The revised manuscript includes a comparative analysis of a control corpus from three other conflict zones (Syria, Myanmar, Yemen).

- **Changes:** The Method section (Section 4, page 5, lines 20-35) details the construction of the control corpus. A new Results subsection (5.5, page 13, line 25 to page 14, line 30) presents the comparative findings, showing significant differences in the prevalence and focus of procedural absolution. The Discussion (Section 6) interprets these differences.

*Comment 2: **Interpretive Overreach / Lack of Objectivity:** “Conflates standard features of institutional/legal discourse... with active ‘erasure’... The study design and interpretation appear ideologically driven...”* **Response:** We have nuanced our interpretation and clarified our scholarly stance.

- **Nuance in Interpretation:** We now explicitly acknowledge in the Background (Section 3, page 4, lines 20-25) that technical/cautious language can stem from legitimate institutional needs. The analytical task, as we frame it, is to distinguish necessary caution from patterns that systematically deflect claims of extreme suffering, which the comparative analysis helps to illuminate.
- **Positionality and Reflexivity:** The added positionality statement (Section 4, page 9, lines 1-15) transparently outlines our theoretical orientation and the measures taken to ensure analytical rigor, addressing concerns about objectivity.
- **Revised Tone:** While maintaining our critical theoretical focus, we have reframed the paper’s aim to be one of examining “the mechanisms of discursive erasure” and “the tensions... in institutional discourse” (see revised Introduction and Abstract) rather than presupposing intent.

*Comment 3: **Transparent Data:** “The corpus must be made verifiable. Provide a supplementary file with a complete list of documents... including DOIs or stable URLs.”* **Response:** We have significantly enhanced data transparency.

- **Changes:** We now provide a complete list of document metadata, including DOIs or stable URLs where available, in Appendix A. This is referenced in the Method section, page 9, lines 30-35. The search strategy is also documented in detail to allow for corpus reconstruction.

*Comment 4: **Unsubstantiated Causal Claim:** “Implies that discursive patterns cause or perpetuate material suffering, a claim that is suggested but in no way demonstrated.”* **Response:** We agree that demonstrating direct causality is beyond the scope of this discursive analysis. We have moderated our language to clarify that we are examining how discourse *functions to normalize erasure, shapes recognition, and constrains advocacy*, not making a direct causal claim about material outcomes.

- **Changes:** We have revised phrasing in the Abstract, Introduction, and Discussion. For example, the Abstract now states the discourse “enables a rationalized erasure” and “obstructs meaningful recognition,” rather than asserting a direct causal link to suffering.

*Comment 5: **Minor Flaws:** “References formatted inconsistently... Overuse of italics for emphasis... The term ‘footnoting’... not fully operationalized...”* **Response:** We thank the reviewer for noting these issues.

- The reference list has been standardized to a consistent format.
- We have removed unnecessary emphatic italics from the body text.
- The concept of “footnoting” in the introduction has been clarified and is conceptually linked to the broader mechanism of procedural absolution discussed later.

## Closing Note

We again express our sincere gratitude to the reviewers for their rigorous and challenging engagement with our work. Their critiques were essential in guiding a revision that we believe has transformed the manuscript, bolstering its methodological foundations, empirical evidence, and scholarly contribution. We are confident that the revised paper is much stronger and hope it is now suitable for publication.