



## HYBRIDITY AND IDENTITY IN FAIRUZ'S SONG *Zahrat al-Mada'in*: A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE OF HOMI K. BHABHA

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This study investigates hybridity and identity in the song "*Zahrat al-Mada'in*" by Fairuz through the postcolonial framework of Homi K. Bhabha. This song, widely known across the Arab world, portrays the beauty and grandeur of Jerusalem while reflecting the complexity of identity and cultural intersections embedded within it. Fairuz, a musical icon from Lebanon, skillfully blends traditional and modern elements in her work, making "*Zahrat al-Mada'in*" more than just a song—it becomes a representation of the Arab people's struggle and hope for the holy city of Jerusalem. This research employs a qualitative method with lyric analysis techniques to identify elements of hybridity and identity present in the song. Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity is used as the analytical framework to understand the interaction and evolution of identity and culture within colonial and postcolonial contexts. The findings reveal that the song successfully merges elements of colonial and indigenous cultures, reflecting a rich cultural hybridity. It not only expresses love and longing for Jerusalem but also asserts the city as an integral part of Palestinian national identity and heritage. This study offers a conceptual contribution by enriching the understanding of how identity and culture can interact and transform within colonial and postcolonial frameworks. Future research is encouraged to conduct comparative studies with other songs that share similar themes and to adopt broader interdisciplinary approaches.

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## INTRODUCTION

A song is a form of literary work that plays a significant role in the culture and identity of a society. Through its lyrics and melody, a song can reflect the values, experiences, and collective aspirations of a community (Indria et al., 2023). More than mere entertainment, a song functions as a powerful medium of expression, capable of conveying profound social, political, and emotional messages (Rifqy & Permatasari, 2024). A song also possesses the power to connect generations, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen the sense of community and national identity (Firmansyah et al., 2024). As an integral part of oral tradition, a song also contributes to shaping historical narratives and influences how communities perceive the world and themselves (Wati, 2023).

One of the songs that has had a significant impact in portraying identity and cultural hybridity is "*Zahrat al-Mada'in*" by Fairuz. Widely known throughout the Arab world, this song not only expresses the beauty and grandeur of Jerusalem but also reflects the complexity of identity and the intersections of culture embedded within it. Fairuz, as a musician and an iconic figure in Lebanese music, possesses a unique ability to blend traditional and modern elements in her work. With a long and influential career, she has become a cultural symbol whose significance transcends national boundaries, uniting Arab communities through her music (El Rayes, 2022).

"*Zahrat al-Mada'in*" is not merely a song, but also a representation of the Arab people's struggle and hope for the holy city of Jerusalem (Drury, 2017). This song reflects the fusion of various cultures, religions, and histories that shape the complex identity of the region. Its musical elements—such as the use of traditional instruments and distinctive melodies—create a harmony between tradition and modernity. The lyrics are rich in symbolism and profound meaning, portraying both the beauty and suffering of Jerusalem while simultaneously calling for unity and resistance.

The postcolonial approach, particularly Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity, provides a highly relevant analytical framework for understanding how identity and culture interact and evolve within colonial and postcolonial contexts. Hybridity, according to Bhabha, is a process in which identities and cultures encounter and engage with one another, resulting in the formation of a new identity that is neither entirely original nor entirely foreign, but rather a fusion of both (Furqon & Busro, 2020). In this context, hybridity is not merely a mechanical mixture, but rather a *third space* that offers the potential for transformation and resistance (Bhandari, 2022).

Hybridity enables the emergence of new cultural practices that can transcend and negotiate the boundaries of colonial and postcolonial identities (Azada-Palacios, 2022). Through this approach, we can observe how colonial and postcolonial subjects construct and articulate their identities in complex and dynamic ways, often resisting dominant and homogenizing narratives that seek to impose fixed identities. Thus, an analysis of hybridity offers insight into how colonial power is not only exercised through domination but also adapted and renegotiated by the subjects under its influence, resulting in the creation of new, layered forms of identity.

In the context of "*Zahrat al-Mada'in*", hybridity is evident in the way Fairuz blends traditional Arab musical elements with Western influences, as well as in the lyrics that

depict the social and political realities of Jerusalem as a contested city. This analysis will explore how the song reflects and produces hybrid identities, and how Fairuz uses art as a medium of resistance and cultural representation in confronting colonialism and oppression. Accordingly, this study aims to examine how hybridity and identity are manifested in Fairuz's song "Zahrat al-Mada'in" through Homi Bhabha's postcolonial approach. It seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the role of art in shaping and expressing complex, multilayered cultural identities, as well as its contribution to the narrative of resistance against colonialism.

Previous studies have highlighted various aspects of Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonialism, including hybridity and identity in diverse contexts. One study emphasizes that when individuals seek to survive in a culturally diverse environment, they must adopt the cultural practices perceived to offer them advantages (Abdillah et al., 2017). On the other hand, another study explores fragmented identity within the Pakualaman Kingdom of Yogyakarta, using Homi Bhabha's colonialism perspective. This study was conducted by Feri Catur Harjanta and Kuswarsantyo (Harjanta & Kuswarsantyo, 2020).

Furthermore, another study by Titik Maslikatin and Novi Anoegrajekti identified cultural migration as reflected in ritual practices, which serve as manifestations of community religiosity (Maslikatin et al., 2015). There is also a study by Rangga Sonata Weri et al. that highlights the hybridity of regional pop songs, presented as local musical compositions incorporating concepts from Western pop music (Weri & Asril, 2019). In addition, Yedija Remalya Sidjabat et al. found that the hip hop-dangdut music genre represents a negotiation of cultural identity formed within the third space, encompassing ongoing encounters and exchanges of cultural expressions (Sidjabat et al., 2018).

Previous research on postcolonialism has encompassed various fields, including literature, art, and culture. In one study, Dwiana Nur Rizki Hanifah et al. examined the ambivalence of subaltern characters in the short story "Pengasingan ke Jawa" by Ita Siregar, using Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial perspective (Hanifah et al., 2024). Homi K. Bhabha and Hary Sulistyo et al. (Sulistyo et al., 2020) examine hybridity, nationhood, and nostalgic aspects through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory in the analysis of Javanese Surinamese song lyrics. Another study by Yuli Wahyuni and Diah Iis Andriani (Wahyuni & Andriani, 2021) analyzes messages of hybridity and white dominance over Black individuals in American poetry using Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial framework.

Anggi Dian Anggraeni (Anggaraeni, 2022) employs Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory to analyze how the concept of mimicry is portrayed in the film 'My Name is Khan'. In addition, a study on resistance to cultural hegemony in the era of globalization by Efen Nurfiana (Nurfiana, 2021) analyzes the concept of cultural hybridity conveyed through the mimicry in Kamengski's design, using Homi Bhabha's postcolonial perspective. A study in the field of communication conducted by Gayuh Budi Utomo et al. (Utomo et al., 2020) employs Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial lens to examine the shift in communication practices from offline to online activities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Puji Retno Hardiningtyas (Hardiningtyas, 2018) analyzes mimicry, mockery, and the resistance of indigenous lifestyles against Dutch colonialism in the *Buru Quartet*,

using Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial perspective. Lastly, Cynthia Caroline et al. (Caroline et al., 2021) examine the Go-Jek advertisement titled "*The Emergence of Gozali*" through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory, revealing elements of cultural imitation drawn from Japanese culture. Recent studies across various fields—ranging from literature and art to cultural studies—continue to explore and deepen the discourse of postcolonialism. As demonstrated by the aforementioned research, Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial thought has served as a critical foundation for in-depth explorations of societal, literary, and artistic perspectives.

Drawing upon diverse works, these studies examine how concepts such as hybridity, identity, and mimicry shape contemporary cultural productions. Moreover, they expand the scope of understanding regarding cultural identity, social transformation, and even resistance to social norms. This reflects the complexity and enduring relevance of postcolonial theory in postcolonial thought. Accordingly, this study seeks to enhance our understanding of how postcolonial concepts play a crucial role in shaping and influencing various aspects of human life, particularly in the Arab world. Homi Bhabha's postcolonial framework will be employed to explore hybridity and identity in the song lyrics of '*Zahrat al-Mada'in*' by Fairuz. A postcolonial approach allows researchers to critically engage with the dynamics of power, identity, and representation within historical and cultural contexts shaped by colonial influence.

## METHOD

This study examines the song "*Zahrat al-Mada'in*" by Fairuz, focusing on the representation of hybridity and identity through the lens of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory. A qualitative research method with a descriptive-analytical approach is employed, as the study aims to interpret the deeper meanings of hybridity and identity embedded in the song—dimensions that cannot be captured through quantitative measures. The data used consist of both primary and secondary sources. The primary data are derived from the song's lyrics, while the secondary data are obtained from relevant literature, including books, journal articles, and previous research on hybridity, identity, and postcolonialism.

The research process involves several key stages. First, a literature review is conducted to gather references from books, journals, and articles discussing hybridity, identity, postcolonialism, and song lyric analysis. Second, document analysis is performed on the lyrics of "*Zahrat al-Mada'in*" to identify elements of hybridity and identity. The data are then analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis techniques. Content analysis is used to identify linguistic patterns that reflect hybridity and identity in the lyrics, while thematic analysis helps to extract key themes emerging from the literature and connect them to Homi Bhabha's postcolonial concepts.

The data analysis process consists of several steps. First, initial coding is carried out to mark segments of text relevant to the research themes. Second, these codes are grouped into broader categories. Third, the themes emerging from these categories are organized and interpreted within the framework of postcolonialism. Finally, triangulation is conducted by comparing the results of the document analysis with findings from the literature to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. This methodology is designed to uncover the meanings of hybridity and identity within the lyrics of "*Zahrat al-Mada'in*" from the perspective of Homi Bhabha's postcolonialism. By

employing a qualitative approach and comprehensive analytical techniques, this research aims to provide in-depth insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of postcolonial Arab musical works, while also contributing meaningfully to existing academic literature.

## RESULT

### Identification of Key Themes in the Lyrics

The identification of these themes provides a foundation for further analysis of how the song's lyrics reflect the concepts of hybridity and Palestinian national identity, as well as how these lyrics can be interpreted through the postcolonial framework of Homi Bhabha.

Table 1. The third and eighth verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>O Al-Quds (Jerusalem), O Al-Quds (Jerusalem), O holy city</i>	يا قدس يا قدس يا مدينة الصلاة
<i>O night of Al-Isra', O gateway to the heavens</i>	يا ليلة الأسراء يا درب من مروا إلى السماء

The song lyrics presented in Table 1 above highlight the themes of sanctity and spirituality associated with Jerusalem. Fairuz's "Zahrat Al-Mada'in" portrays Jerusalem as a profound holy city, significant to multiple religions and serving as a historic center of spirituality. Overall, the themes of sanctity and spirituality in these lyrics reflect a deep reverence for the city, acknowledging its rich spiritual and historical values. The identification of these themes provides a basis for further analysis of how the song's lyrics embody the concepts of hybridity and Palestinian national identity, as well as how they can be interpreted through Homi Bhabha's postcolonial framework.

Table 2. The first and ninth verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>To you, O holy city, the place where I pray</i>	لأجلك يا مدينة الصلاة أصلي
<i>Our eyes are fixed upon you, wandering at all times, and I offer prayers there.</i>	عيوننا إليك ترحل كل يوم و اني أصلي

The song lyrics presented in Table 2 above emphasize the themes of longing and prayer for Jerusalem. The lyrics reflect a profound yearning and continuous supplication for the city. They imply a deep-seated desire and earnest prayers for the blessing and peace of Jerusalem, as well as hopes that the city may be liberated from conflict and suffering.

Table 3. The thirtieth verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>This is our home; Al-Quds (Jerusalem) belongs to us.</i>	و بأيدينا سنعيد بهاء القدس

The song lyrics presented in Table 3 above highlight the themes of identity and ownership regarding Jerusalem. The line “This is our home; Al-Quds (Jerusalem) belongs to us” from Fairuz’s “*Zahrat Al-Mada’in*” conveys a strong assertion of Jerusalem as an integral part of Palestinian national identity and heritage. The choice of the word “home” reflects the profound emotional and spiritual connection that the city’s inhabitants have with their homeland.

### The Use of Symbols and Metaphors Reflecting Identity and Hybridity

In the lyrics of “*Zahrat Al-Mada’in*” by Fairuz, there is a powerful use of symbols and metaphors to reflect national identity and hybridity, particularly in relation to the holy city of Al-Quds (Jerusalem). Tables 4, 5, and 6 focus on the symbolic and metaphorical expressions that illustrate Jerusalem’s identity and hybridity. The following are selected lyrics that exemplify the use of such symbols and metaphors.

Table 4. The fourth - seventh verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>Our eyes are fixed upon you, wandering at all times // Walking through the porticos of temples // Embrace the ancient churches // And lift the sorrow from the mosques therein</i>	عيوننا إليك ترحل كل يوم // تدور في أروقة المعابد // تعانق الكنائس القديمة // و تمسح الحزن عن المساجد

The song lyrics presented in Table 4 highlight the symbols of cultural and religious hybridity. These lyrics depict the religious and cultural diversity present in Jerusalem, where sacred sites of various faiths exist side by side in close proximity.

Table 5. The eleventh - fourteenth verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>To those who wander without direction // To the children without a home // To those who resisted and became martyrs at the city gates // And to the peace warriors who died in a homeland that longs for peace</i>	لأجل من تشرّدوا لأجل أطفال بلا منازل // لأجل من دافع و أستشهد في المداخل // و أستشهد السلام في وطن السلام

The song lyrics presented in Table 5 highlight the symbols of struggle and the resilience of national identity. These lyrics portray the multifaceted struggle of the Palestinian people, including those engaged in conflict, as well as efforts to attain peace and justice in their homeland.

Table 6. The twentieth and twenty first verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>A blazing anger approaches, and I feel it with all my being // A surging rage draws near, and I shall rise above the sorrow</i>	الغضب الساطع أتّ و أنا كلي ايمان // بالساطع أتّ سأمر على الأحزان //

The song lyrics presented in Table 6 highlight the symbols of anger and despair. In this context, the use of powerful expressions such as “a blazing anger” and “a surging rage” illustrates how the emotions of the Palestinian people can reach a boiling point in response to the hardships they face, including conflict and oppression.

## Interpretation of the Song through the Concepts of Hybridity and the Third Space

The song “Zahrat Al-Mada’in” by Fairuz reflects hybridity within the complex cultural and religious context of the holy city of Jerusalem (Al-Quds). Through its lyrics, the song integrates elements of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, creating a work that celebrates cultural and religious pluralism in this sacred space.

Table 7. The seventh verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>O Night of Al-Isra', O gate that leads to the heavens // The child in the cave, and his mother Maryam weeps // Walking through the porticos of temples // Embrace the ancient churches // And lift the sorrow from the mosques therein</i>	يا ليلة الأسراء يا درب من مروا إلى السماء // الطفل في المغارة و أمه مريم وجهان يبكيان // تدور في أروقة المعابد تعانق الكنائس القديمة و تمسح الحزن عن المساجد

The lyrics presented in Table 7 reflect hybridity within the highly complex cultural and religious context of the holy city of Jerusalem (Al-Quds). The use of language and universal symbols—such as “Al-Isra” (the Isra’ and Mi’raj) and “Maryam” (Mary, the mother of Prophet Isa)—demonstrates cultural and religious inclusivity within this sacred space. These lyrics create what Homi Bhabha refers to as the Third Space, a site where multiple identities and cultures converge and interact without negating one another.

Table 8. The sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>When Al-Quds (Jerusalem) fell // Love collapsed, and they were trapped in the heart of a world locked in prolonged conflict.</i>	حين هوت مدينة القدس // تراجع الحب و في قلوب المدنيا أستوطنت الحرب

The lyrics in Table 8 reflect a critique of colonialism and political tension. The song implicitly condemns occupation, conflict, and the suffering endured by the inhabitants of this sacred city. The phrase “when Al-Quds (Jerusalem) fell, love collapsed” illustrates the profound impact of political turmoil and colonial domination on human life and the moral fabric of the city.

### Mimicry in the Song ‘Zahrat al-Mada’in’

Hybridity is triggered by the subject of mimicry. Homi Bhabha explains that mimicry involves the act of imitating the colonizers in terms of behavior, culture, customs, and practices. Mimicry results in a hybrid cultural mixture that is not pure, as it blends with local cultural elements (Foulcher, 2008). The imitation carried out by the colonizers never reaches a point of perfection. In other words, the act of mimicry is inherently flawed, especially when it is employed as a form of resistance. In this regard, Homi Bhabha states that, “The effect of mimicry on colonial discourse authority is profound and disturbing. For in ‘normalizing’ the colonial state or subject, the Enlightenment dream of civility displaces its own language of liberty and produces a different knowledge of its norm. It is from the space between mimicry and mockery that

the colonial reformist mission and its civilizing agenda are threatened by the substitute vision of the discipline's mimicry, from which my colonial mimic examples emerge" (Bhabha, 1994).

In the song "Zahrat al-Mada'in", mimicry is evident in several of its lyrics. This mimicry is reflected through the use of religious symbols and the affirmation of local identity.

Table 9. The second and third verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>Oh, flower of the cities // Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem.</i>	يا زهرة المدائن // يا قدس، يا قدس، يا قدس

The lyrics in Table 9 indicate reverence and recognition of the significance of Jerusalem within the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This reflects an acknowledgment of the cultural and religious plurality present in the city. The metaphor of the "flower" symbolizes beauty, life, and diversity. The following verse employs the repetition of the word "قدس" (Quds), emphasizing the city's importance and conveying respect toward the existing religions. In this context, the fusion of cultural and religious elements is adopted and integrated into the local culture.

Table 10. The twenty ninth verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>This house is ours, and Jerusalem is ours.</i>	البيت لنا والقدس لنا

The lyrics in Table 10 emphasize that Jerusalem is an inseparable part of Palestinian identity. This statement represents a strong claim over the holy city as their homeland and cultural heritage. It reflects resistance against cultural and political domination associated with Jerusalem, as well as a rejection of colonial attempts to appropriate or normalize the city outside its original cultural and historical context.

### Traces of Ambivalence in the Song 'Zahrat al-Mada'in'

As discussed in the section on mimicry, drawing from Bhabha's insights, mimicry itself arises from an ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Ambivalence not only reflects the trauma experienced by the colonial subject but also characterizes the way colonial authority operates and the dynamics of resistance. Bhabha, as cited in Ania Loomba's work, asserts that colonial presence is always ambivalent—divided between attempts to present itself as authentic and authoritative, and articulations that reveal repetition and difference. In other words, colonial identity is unstable, doubtful, and perpetually fractured (Loomba, 2016).

Table 11. The first verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>To you, O holy city, my place of prayer.</i>	لأجلك يا مدينة الصلاة أصلي

The lyrics in Table 11 reflect ambivalence, as they simultaneously acknowledge Jerusalem as a holy city of prayer for the three major religions—Judaism, Christianity,

and Islam—while also asserting a claim to the city as an inseparable part of Palestinian identity. This ambivalence illustrates a dual sentiment: a respect for the city's universal religious heritage alongside a strong assertion of local identity connected to the sacred city.

Table 12. The second verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>To you and all your splendor, O most beautiful city.</i>	لأجلك يا بهية المساكن يا زهرة المدائن

The lyrics in Table 12 reflect ambivalence in acknowledging the grandeur of Jerusalem as a beautiful and magnificent city (“زهرة المدائن” and “بهية المساكن”), while also revealing another side of the city—one marked by suffering and conflict. The use of such poetic and elegant language stands in stark contrast to the harsh reality of ongoing strife within the city.

Table 13. The seventeenth verses of the lyrics

Translation of the Lyrics	The Original Lyrics
<i>Love Has Collapsed and They Are Trapped in the Heart of a Long-Friendly World</i>	تراجع الحب و في قلوب الدنيا أستوطنت الحرب

The lyrics in Table 13 reflect themes of conflict and violence. The phrase *ستوطنت* *الحرب* highlights how Jerusalem has become a center of prolonged conflict among various religious and political groups. Furthermore, the expression *تراجع الحب* conveys the fading hope for peace and coexistence that once existed in the city. These lyrics embody a sense of ambivalence, as they question and attempt to comprehend the complex and contradictory realities of life in Jerusalem.

## DISCUSSION

This study examines the song "*Zahrat al-Madā'in*" by Fairuz through the lens of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory, focusing on hybridity and identity as portrayed in the lyrics. The findings reveal that the song not only expresses the beauty and grandeur of Jerusalem, but also reflects the complexity of identity and cultural intersections embedded within it. The song blends elements of traditional Arab music with Western influences, and its lyrics are rich in symbolism and deep meaning, mirroring the socio-political reality of Jerusalem as a contested city among various groups.

This study enriches the existing literature on hybridity and identity within the postcolonial framework. Previous research, such as that conducted by Feri Catur Harjanta and Kuswarsantyo (Harjanta & Kuswarsantyo, 2020), highlights the fractured identity within the Pakualaman Kingdom of Yogyakarta through the lens of Homi Bhabha's theory of colonialism. Another study by Yediya Remalya Sidjabat et al. (Sidjabat et al., 2018) identifies the hip-hop dangdut music genre as a form of cultural identity negotiation within the third space.

The findings of this study indicate that hybridity in the song "*Zahrat al-Madā'in*" generates a complex and layered identity, which is not merely a cultural mixture but also a representation of resistance against colonialism and oppression. The song "*Zahrat al-Madā'in*" serves as a marker of how cultural hybridity—encompassing mimicry and ambivalence—can forge a strong and meaningful identity, as well as how art can function as a tool of resistance and cultural representation in the face of colonialism. The song reflects a blend of diverse cultures, religions, and histories that shape the complex identity of the Jerusalem region.

The implications of this study lie in providing a deeper understanding of the role of art in narratives of resistance against colonialism and oppression. Fairuz's song "*Zahrat al-Madā'in*" demonstrates how music can serve as a powerful medium for conveying profound social, political, and emotional messages. This research also offers insight into how national identity and hybridity can be expressed through art, which can aid efforts to preserve and strengthen cultural identity. The findings emerged because Homi Bhabha's postcolonial approach provides a relevant framework for understanding the dynamics of identity and culture within colonial and postcolonial contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

According to Bhabha, hybridity is a process where identities and cultures meet and interact, producing new identities that are neither entirely original nor foreign. In the case of "*Zahrat al-Madā'in*", Fairuz successfully combines elements of traditional and modern reflection, along with lyrics that depict the social and political realities of Jerusalem, creating a work that reflects a hybrid identity. This study differs from previous research by focusing on the song as an artistic medium that merges diverse cultural elements to express identity and hybridity. The next step is to continue research on the role of art within the postcolonial context, particularly in relation to identity and hybridity. Further studies could include analyses of other artworks that reflect cultural and identity dynamics in different contexts. Additionally, efforts to preserve and strengthen cultural identity through art should continue, involving local communities and employing inclusive and participatory approaches.

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## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

The author was solely responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the study. Additionally, the author conducted the literature review, wrote the manuscript, and managed the revision process. All aspects of the research and writing were carried out independently by the author.

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