Muslim Women's Tourist Gaze: A Comprehensive Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

This literature review examines the overlooked experiences of Muslim tourists in particular women within tourism studies, focusing on their perspectives through the "tourist gaze." It explores the cultural, religious, and gendered encounters of Muslim women in tourism, addressing the challenges and opportunities influenced by their beliefs and contexts. Despite their increasing presence, there's a lack of comprehensive understanding of how Muslim women perceive tourist spaces. Employing a systematic approach, the review synthesizes existing literature, using keywords to identify relevant studies and applying stringent criteria for selection. Through rigorous analysis, key themes emerge, including religious observance, cultural identity, gender roles, empowerment, and challenges. The review sheds light on how Muslim women's gaze is shaped by faith, cultural practices, and societal expectations, influencing their interactions with tourist destinations and other tourists.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a notable surge in academic interest towards examining tourism through diverse cultural and gender lenses. Within this discourse, the exploration of the Muslim women tourist gaze has emerged as a crucial area of investigation, shedding light on the distinctive experiences, perspectives, and motivations of Muslim women travellers across different global destinations. This paper aims to delve into the phenomenon of the "tourist gaze," a concept popularized by John Urry, which pertains to how tourists perceive and interpret the places they visit. While extensively studied in Western tourism contexts, there remains a dearth of research focusing on the tourist gaze among Muslim women travellers (Asbollah & Said, 2019).

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In response to this gap, this systematic review delves into the intricate realm of Muslim women's tourist gaze, aiming to unravel the complexities and nuances that define their travel experiences. Han et al. (2021) reveal that Muslim women's tourism experiences are unique and multifaceted, shaped by a myriad of factors including culture, religion, and societal expectations. This review embarks on a comprehensive exploration of existing literature, spanning various disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and gender studies. By employing a systematic approach, this paper critically analyses a diverse range of scholarly articles and research papers, synthesizing their findings to offer a holistic understanding of Muslim women's tourist gaze.

Ahmed (2012) previously emphasized that the representation and inclusion of Muslim women, or Muslimah, in travel and tourism research, are paramount for fostering a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of their experiences. He continued to highlight the importance of centring Muslim women's voices, perspectives, and agency within scholarly discourse, addressing gaps in research and promoting cultural sensitivity in tourism practices.

Suid et al (2017) further stated that Islamic attributes within destination development and marketing strategies play a pivotal role in shaping the tourist experience for Muslim travellers. By validating constructs and measuring the impact of Islamic attributes on tourist satisfaction, researchers elucidate the significance of religious and cultural considerations in destination management and branding efforts (Khattab & Gokovali, 2018). In conclusion, the exploration of Muslim women's tourist gaze encompasses a rich tapestry of cultural, religious, and gender dynamics, offering valuable insights into the complexities of contemporary tourism practices.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The aims of this paper involve a thorough investigation into the perspective of Muslim women tourists through two distinct approaches: (1) detection and (2) classification. Subsequently, the paper conducts a comprehensive review and synthesis of literature to identify, select, and evaluate significant related studies. To achieve this, the research employs the pre-recording systematic reviews and meta-analysis (PRISMA) technique, recognized as a standard for conducting systematic literature reviews. The establishment of publication guidelines serves to aid authors in assessing the accuracy of a review by furnishing essential and requisite information. Furthermore, PRISMA underscores the importance of incorporating randomized investigation assessments, a vital component in systematic analysis reports across various research types (Moher et al., 2009). Given their reliability, this research methodology utilizes three databases: Scopus, Emerald, and ScienceDirect. However, it is noted that no single database, including Scopus, Emerald, and ScienceDirect, offers comprehensive coverage. Additionally, the section also delves into the four primary sub-sections: identification, screening, eligibility, and data abstraction and analysis.

Identification

To select suitable papers for this report, the systematic review followed a structured process involving three main stages. Initially, the researchers identified relevant keywords and related terms by consulting thesauruses, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and prior studies. Once the essential keywords were determined, search strings were crafted for databases such as Scopus, Emerald and ScienceDirect (as detailed in Table 1). During this initial phase of the systematic review, the research successfully located 1171 papers from all three databases.

Table 1. The search strings

Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (female OR women OR woman) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (tourist gaze) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (touris* OR traveller OR visitor OR excursionist) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Muslim OR Islam)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))
Emerald	(content-type:article) AND (gaze AND (female OR women OR woman) AND (touris* OR traveller OR visitor OR excursionist) AND (Muslim OR Islam))
ScienceDirect	female OR women AND gaze AND tourist OR traveller OR visitor OR excursionist AND Muslim OR Islam

Screening

During the first stage of the study, 849 papers were rejected, and in the second stage, papers were screened based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria set by scholars. The primary criterion for inclusion was literature, particularly research articles, which also encompassed systematic reviews, meta-syntheses, meta-analyses. Additionally, the review was confined to publications in English. It's crucial to note that the study was designed to cover a ten-year period, from 2013 to 2023. In the initial screening phase also, only one duplicate paper was identified.

Eligibility

In the third phase, referred to as eligibility assessment, a total of 321 articles were assessed. During this stage, the titles and essential content of these articles were meticulously examined to ensure they met the inclusion criteria and aligned with the current research objectives. Consequently, 290 articles were excluded as they were not relevant to the field, had insignificant titles, or lacked abstracts related to the study's objectives. As a result, 31 articles remained for the final review, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. The selection criterion is searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2013 – 2023	< 2013
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book,
Publication Stage	Final	In Press

Data Abstraction and Analysis

One of the assessment procedures used in this study to look over and combine several research designs (qualitative, mixed, and quantitative) was integrative analysis to fulfil the study's goal of identifying relevant subjects and subtopics. The process of developing the theme began with the data collection phase. The authors carefully examined a compilation of 31 articles, as shown in Figure 1, to look for claims or information pertinent to the subjects of the current study. In the second stage, the writers evaluate Muslim women travellers' studies by identifying and creating meaningful groups. The three main themes that emerged from the method are the impact of categorization and detection. In collaboration with fellow authors, the writer developed topics based on the facts inside the research setting. A log was maintained during the data analysis process to document any analyses, opinions, puzzles, or other ideas relevant to the interpretation of the data. To identify any discrepancies in the theme design process, the writers finally

compared the outcomes. Noteworthy is the fact that the writers debate any differences in understanding among the notions. The generated themes were eventually adjusted to make sure they were coherent.
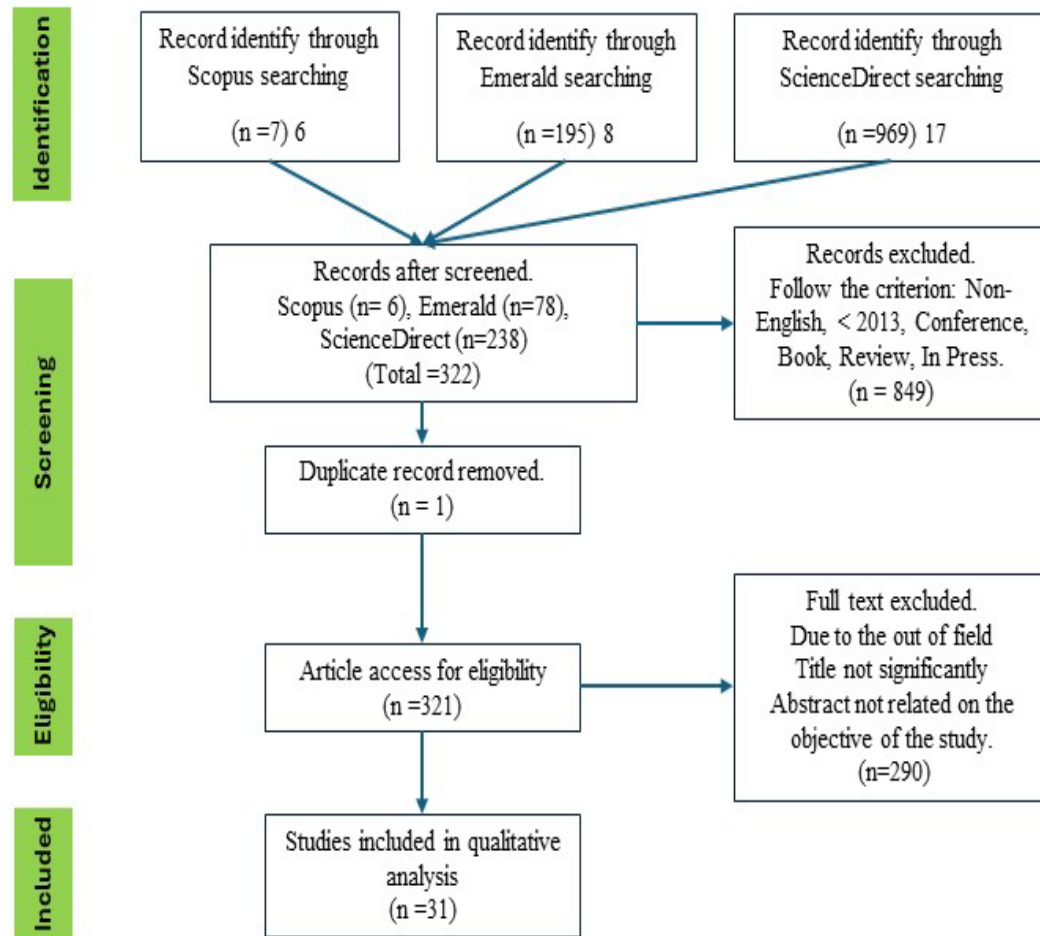

Fig. 1. Flow Diagram of the proposed searching study

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the searching technique, 31 articles were extracted and analysed. All articles were categorised based on three main themes, which are Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender (12 articles), Tourist Gaze and Perception (10 articles) as well as Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour (9 articles) (Table 3 below).

Table 3. The research article findings based on the proposed searching criteria

No	Authors	Source Title	Title	Publisher	Remarks
1	Brown et al.	Annals of Tourism Research (2017)	The female tourist experience in Egypt as an Islamic destination	Scopus	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
2	Asbollah et al.	Tourism Analysis (2013)	The tourist's gaze: From the perspective of a Muslim woman	Scopus	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
3	Shakona, M. *et al.*	International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research (2015)	Understanding the travelling behaviour of Muslims in the United States	Scopus	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
4	Nisha & Cheung	Tourism Management Perspectives (2022)	Locating Muslimah in the travel and tourism research	Scopus	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
5	Battour *et al.*	International Journal of Tourism Research (2014)	Islamic attributes of destination: Construct development and measurement validation, and their impact on tourist satisfaction	Scopus	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
6	Kamal & Kashif	South Asian Journal of Marketing (2022)	Haq Allah Hu: tourists' phenomenological experiences of visiting shrines as Islamic spiritual destinations	Emerald	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
7	Yang *et al.*	Tourism Review (2019)	The meanings of solo travel for Asian women	Emerald	Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour
8	Yuhanis Abdul Aziz *et al*	Journal of Islamic Marketing (2018)	The effect of socio-demographic variables and Travel Characteristics on the motivation of Muslim family tourists in Malaysia	Emerald	Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour
9	Yang *et al.*	Tourism Management (2018)	Power and empowerment: How Asian Solo Female travellers perceive and negotiate risks	ScienceDirect	Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour
10	Berdychevsky *et al.*	Annals of Tourism Research (2013)	Women's Sexual Behavior in Tourism: Loosening the Bridle	ScienceDirect	Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour
11	Yang *et al.*	Tourism Management (2017)	A systematic literature review of risk and gender research in tourism	ScienceDirect	Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour
12	Moufakkir	Tourism Management (2020)	Experience of Arab/Muslim women visiting relatives in the West and the management of stigma by association	Scopus	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender

13	Höckert *et al.*	Annals of Tourism Research (2018)	Gazes and faces in tourist photography	ScienceDirect	Tourist Gaze and Perception
14	Samarathunga *et al.*	Tourism Review (2021)	Tourist gaze and beyond: State of the art.	Emerald	Tourist Gaze and Perception
15	Wearing and Foley	Annals of Tourism Research (2017)	Understanding the tourist experience of cities	ScienceDirect	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
16	Stephenson	Tourism Management (2014)	Deciphering 'Islamic hospitality': Developments, challenges and opportunities	ScienceDirect	Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour
17	Preko *et al.*	Journal of Islamic Marketing (2020)	Islamic tourism: travel motivations, satisfaction and word of mouth, Ghana	Emerald	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
18	Shekari *et al.*	International Journal of Tourism Cities (2022)	Investigating literary gaze through the orchestra model of the tourist experience	Emerald	Tourist Gaze and Perception
19	Zhang, K., *et al.*	Tourism Review (2021)	Tourist gaze through computer vision: where, what, how and why	Emerald	Tourist Gaze and Perception
20	Li, M., *et al.*	Tourism Review (2022)	Chineseness and behavioural complexity: rethinking Chinese tourist gaze studies	Emerald	Tourist Gaze and Perception
21	Tavakoli & Mura	Tourism Management (2015)	Journeys in Second Life' – Iranian Muslim women's behaviour in virtual tourist destinations	ScienceDirect	Tourist Gaze and Perception
22	Zheng, *et al.*	International Journal of Hospitality Management (2021)	Integrating the tourist gaze with the social servicescape: Implications for creating memorable theme park experiences.	ScienceDirect	Tourist Gaze and Perception
23	Jafari & Scott	Annals of Tourism Research (2014)	Muslim world and its tourism	ScienceDirect	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
24	Bernard *et al.*	Tourism Management Perspectives (2022)	Breaking barriers for Bangladeshi female solo travellers	ScienceDirect	Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour
25	Pereira *et al.*	Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research (2022)	Impact of Travel Motivation on Tourist's Attitude Toward Destination: Evidence of Mediating Effect of Destination Image.	ScienceDirect	Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour
26	Papastathopoulos *et al.*	Tourism Management Perspectives (2020)	What services do Muslim tourists want? Uncovering nonlinear relationships and unobserved heterogeneity	ScienceDirect	Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour

27	Eid & El-Gohary	Tourism Management (2015)	The role of Islamic religiosity on the relationship between perceived value and tourist satisfaction	ScienceDirect	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
28	Oktadiana *et al.*	Tourism Management Perspectives (2016)	Muslim travellers' needs: What don't we know?	ScienceDirect	Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender
29	Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*	Annals of Tourism Research (2015)	Tourism gender research: A critical accounting	ScienceDirect	Tourist Gaze and Perception
30	Shang *et al.*	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management (2022)	Tourist gaze upon a slum tourism destination: A case study of Dharavi, India	ScienceDirect	Tourist Gaze and Perception
31	Szadziewski *et al.*	Geoforum (2022)	Territorialization on tour: The tourist gaze along the Silk Road Economic Belt in Kashgar, China	ScienceDirect	Tourist Gaze and Perception

Theme 1: Exploring Islamic Tourism and Gender

The research findings underscore the significant influence of religious and gender identities on the travel experiences of female Muslims, shedding light on the complexities they navigate in destinations like Egypt and Setiu, Malaysia (Nisha & Chung, 2022; Brown, 2017; Shakona et al., 2015; Asbollah et al., 2013). These studies reveal the prevalence of unwanted attention and harassment, prompting adaptations to local norms for safety, while also highlighting how Islamic beliefs shape leisure and travel behaviours (Shakona et al., 2015).

Moreover, there's a recognition of the positive correlation between Islamic attributes of destinations and tourist satisfaction, encouraging for more inclusive and interactive approaches to the tourist experience (Battour et al., 2014; Wearing & Foley, 2017; Moufakkir, 2020). In other words, this acknowledgement implies that elements like Islamic heritage, culture, and customs greatly enhance visitors' overall pleasure and may draw a wider spectrum of travellers looking for experiences that are culturally enriching. This insight encourages those involved in the tourism sector to take a more inclusive and participatory approach to influencing the traveller experience. In parallel, thematic analyses done by Kamal and Kahif (2022) also provide similar insights into tourists' encounters at Islamic spiritual destinations, uncovering dimensions of their religious values and commercial interactions, thereby informing strategies for both religious and commercial stakeholders aiming to enhance visitor satisfaction and engagement.

The complicated relationship between religious and secular facets within Islam emphasizes the multifaceted nature of Islamic tourism, highlighting the importance of catering to diverse needs and fostering cultural understanding (Jafari & Scott, 2014; Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Oktadiana et al., 2016). Exploration of push-pull motivations in destinations like Ghana further illuminates the drivers of Islamic tourism and their impact on tourist satisfaction (Preko et al., 2020). Overall, these findings offer a nuanced understanding of Islamic tourism, paving the way for more inclusive and enriching travel experiences for Muslim women travellers worldwide.

In summary, the findings within this theme underscore the importance for tourism stakeholders to prioritize the safety of female Muslim travellers, addressing issues like unwanted attention and harassment through policies and cultural sensitivity training. By creating safe and inclusive environments, destinations can attract more Muslim women travellers and foster repeat visits. Additionally, tourism stakeholders can

enhance satisfaction by incorporating Islamic elements into offerings, ultimately tapping into a growing market segment and distinguishing themselves in the competitive tourism landscape.

Theme 2: Examining the Tourist Gaze and Perception

The amalgamation of studies in the realm of tourist gaze and perception highlights intriguing insights and varied perspectives. Höckert et al. (2018) propose a paradigm shift towards relational ethics, emphasizing a departure from the conventional tourist gaze and a focus on the observed individual. Conversely, Samarathunga et al. (2021) underscore the continued importance of the tourist gaze within tourism research, indicating its enduring relevance. Furthermore, Shekari et al. (2022) shed light on the intricate dimensions of the literary gaze, unravelling factors such as sensory experiences, affective elements, cognitive processes, behavioural dynamics, and relational aspects.

Additionally, Zhang et al. (2021) corroborates the notion that the tourist gaze is intricately influenced by geographical and cultural contexts, shaping tourists' perceptions and experiences. Moreover, the findings from studies by Tavakoli and Mura (2021), Zheng et al. (2021), and Li et al. (2022) emphasize the complex interplay between gender stereotypes, cultural essentialism, and tourists' behaviours in virtual and physical tourist spaces.

Furthermore, Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2015) offer insight into the potential trajectories of gender-aware tourism research, suggesting either stagnation or advancement. Meanwhile, Shang et al. (2022) illuminate tourists' primary focus on the local environment and residents during their visits. Finally, Szadziewski et al. (2022) provide a critical examination of the utilization of the tourist gaze by states in contested regions, revealing its role as a biopolitical mechanism to control narratives and reshape cultural identities. In short, the collective body of research underscores the complexity and significance of the tourist gaze and perception in understanding tourist behaviour, cultural dynamics, and power relations within tourism contexts.

In short, given the influence of geographical and cultural contexts on tourist perceptions, tourism stakeholders should prioritize cultural sensitivity guidance for both industry personnel and visitors. On top of that, understanding the role of the tourist gaze as a mechanism for shaping cultural identities and controlling narratives, tourism stakeholders should be mindful of the narratives presented within their tourism offerings. By consciously shaping narratives to promote diversity, inclusivity, and authenticity, destinations can establish themselves as responsible and culturally aware tourist destinations, attracting a broader range of visitors and fostering positive perceptions.

Theme 3: Navigating Travel Experience – Understanding Behaviour

The collective body of research discussed illuminates various aspects of navigating travel experiences, shedding light on the challenges and dynamics encountered by diverse groups of travellers. Yang et al. (2018) highlight the concerns of Asian solo female travellers, emphasizing the intersectionality of gendered and racialized risks within the tourism space. Their findings underscore the urgent need for inclusivity and a reevaluation of power dynamics to create safer and more equitable travel environments. Additionally, Yuhanis et al. (2018) highlight the significance of comprehending socio-demographic features in influencing travel preferences by revealing subtle differences in travel motivations and behaviours among Muslim tourists. This insight is crucial for destination managers and policymakers in tailoring services to meet the diverse needs of travellers, particularly within Muslim-majority regions.

Prior to that, studies by Berdychevsky et al. in 2013 and later Bernard et al. (2022) delve into the complexities of women's experiences in travel, emphasizing themes of resistance, empowerment, and

constraint. Their research highlights the multifaceted interplay of personal, interpersonal, and structural factors influencing travel behaviours, particularly among Asian Muslim women. This underscores the necessity for a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics and cultural influences in the tourism landscape. The review by Yang et al. (2017) on the other hand, underscores the need for greater diversity in research focus within the field of risk and gender studies, advocating for broader representation beyond Western-centric perspectives. Similarly, Papastathopoulos et al. (2020) and Pereira et al. (2022) contribute to expanding the knowledge base by uncovering novel insights into the dynamics of Muslim travelers' motivations and attitudes toward destinations. In conclusion, the synthesis of these research findings underscores the complexity and diversity inherent in navigating travel experiences.

In other words, this theme highlights the need for tourism stakeholders to prioritize inclusivity and review the complexities of power within the tourism space to create safer and more equitable travel environments, particularly for marginalized groups such as solo female travellers. Understanding the socio-demographic features that influence travel preferences among diverse groups, including Muslim tourists, is crucial for tailoring services to meet their specific needs and preferences. Moreover, there is a pressing need for a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics and cultural influences in the tourism landscape, which can inform the development of more inclusive and culturally sensitive tourism policies and practices.

CONCLUSION

The synthesis of research on Islamic tourism and gender illuminates the significant influence of religious and gender identities on travel experiences, emphasizing the need for nuanced understanding and inclusive practices. Insights into such as motivations and thematic analyses reveal the multifaceted nature of Islamic tourism, advocating for culturally sensitive approaches that cater to diverse tourist needs, particularly for Muslim women. These findings pave the way for more enriching travel experiences worldwide by addressing the intersectionality of identity, cultural norms, and religious beliefs.

In parallel, studies on the tourist gaze and perception offer intriguing insights into observation and representation dynamics within tourism contexts. While some research suggests departing from traditional tourist gaze frameworks towards relational ethics, others highlight the enduring relevance and complexities of the gaze. Additionally, insights into gender stereotypes and cultural essentialism underscore the intricate interplay between power, representation, and cultural identity within tourist spaces.

In addition, future research should explore intersectional analysis to understand the diverse experiences of Muslim women tourists and examine other frameworks, such as social ethics, to encourage inclusive tourist representations. Furthermore, longitudinal studies can track changes in tourist perceptions over time, informing practical strategies for policymakers and industry stakeholders to create a more equitable tourism landscape.

Overall, the combination of the findings above emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to understanding and navigating travel experiences. By addressing diverse Muslim woman tourist's needs, challenging stereotypes, and promoting inclusivity in tourism practices and research, it can strive towards creating more equitable and enriching travel environments for all. This comprehensive understanding not only advances theoretical frameworks but also informs practical strategies for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers in the field of tourism studies, fostering a more sustainable and inclusive tourism landscape.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Asra Zaliza Asbollah carried out the research, wrote and revised the article. Khalilah Zakariya and Mazlina Mansor conceptualised the central research idea, provided the theoretical framework as well as supervised research progress.

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