


# Thyroid dysfunction in heart failure with preserved ejection fraction: A systematic review and meta-analysis

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## Abstract

**BACKGROUND:** Despite controversial findings regarding the association between thyroid hormones and heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF), thyroid dysfunction is widely assumed to be independently associated with this condition. Herein, we sought to systematically review the existing literature and estimate the prevalence of thyroid dysfunction in patients with HFpEF.

**METHODS:** We conducted a comprehensive search in PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Embase, and ProQuest up to the end of November 2024. Observational studies assessing thyroid dysfunction prevalence in patients with HFpEF were included in this study. The prevalence of overt thyroid dysfunction, low T3 syndrome, and subclinical hypothyroidism (SCH) was pooled using a random-effects model. Duval and Tweedie's Trim and Fill test, funnel plot, and Egger's test were utilized for publication bias assessment. All analyses were conducted with R Version 4.5.1 and Comprehensive Meta-Analysis Version 3 software.

**RESULTS:** Fourteen studies involving 3,931 subjects with HFpEF were included in this analysis. The pooled prevalence of overt thyroid dysfunction, based on six studies, was 15% (95% CI: 7%–29%). The pooled prevalence of low T3 syndrome was 22% (95% CI: 20%–25%), and for SCH, it was 15% (95% CI: 1%–68%).

**CONCLUSION:** Despite heterogeneity among the included studies, our findings suggest that thyroid dysfunction is relatively common in patients with HFpEF and may be associated with more severe symptoms and worse outcomes.

**Keywords:** Thyroid Dysfunction, Heart Failure with Preserved Ejection Fraction, Subclinical Hypothyroidism, Prevalence, Thyroid Hormones

## Introduction

Heart failure (HF) is one of the major causes of mortality, morbidity, and health expenditure worldwide<sup>1-3</sup>. Up to 50% of patients suffering from HF symptoms have normal ( $\geq 50\%$ ) left ventricle ejection fraction (LVEF)<sup>4</sup>. HF with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF) is defined as the presence of the signs and symptoms of HF alongside a normal EF, which is commonly accompanied by diastolic dysfunction<sup>4</sup>. In contrast to the conventional treatments for HF with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF), management strategies of HFpEF are yet to be proven beneficial in reducing mortality and morbidity<sup>5</sup>. Although the role of ischemic heart disease (IHD) in developing HFpEF is noticeable, IHD is less prevalent in HFpEF patients than HFrEF<sup>6</sup>. Instead, patients with HFpEF generally suffer from a more serious burden of comorbidities. Obesity, hypertension (HTN), diabetes mellitus (DM), chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD), atrial fibrillation (AF), chronic kidney disease (CKD), and older age are the best-known comorbidities associated with HFpEF<sup>7</sup>. Another comorbidity, which is somehow less considered, is thyroid dysfunction<sup>8</sup>. The prevalence of thyroid dysfunction in the general population varies from below 1% to up to 5%, according to the type of thyroid disorder and the characteristics of the studied population<sup>9,10</sup>. When it comes to patients with HFpEF, although controversial, the prevalence of thyroid dysfunction is reported to be up to 18%, which could be categorized into hyperthyroidism, clinical and subclinical hypothyroidism (SCH), and low levels of serum triiodothyronine (T3)<sup>11-13</sup>. Although thyroid hormone imbalances could induce HFrEF and diastolic dysfunction, the main aspect of HFpEF is reported to be associated with hypo- and hyperthyroid states<sup>14,15</sup>.

Apart from diastolic dysfunction, thyroid dysfunction may lead to the development of other comorbidities associated with HFpEF, such as HTN, obesity, and AF<sup>16-18</sup>. In this regard, studies have proposed thyroid dysfunction, particularly SCH, as comorbidities and potential treatment targets in patients with HFpEF<sup>19-21</sup>. Furthermore,

a dysfunctional thyroid could independently predict worse outcomes in HFpEF patients. Also, in the general population, thyroid dysfunction could predict the incidence of HFpEF<sup>22,23</sup>. Accordingly, thyroid dysfunction might need to be considered a more serious and prevalent comorbidity in patients with HFpEF. However, the reports regarding the prevalence and impact of thyroid dysfunction in HFpEF are conflicting. Thus, in this study, we attempt to systematically review the available literature surrounding the prevalence of thyroid dysfunction in HFpEF, the prognostic role of thyroid dysfunction, and the distribution of different subtypes of thyroid dysfunction (including hypo- and hyperthyroidism, SCH, and low T3 syndrome) among patients with HFpEF.

## Method

### *Protocol and registration*

This study was conducted and reported according to the instructions provided by the Cochrane Handbook of Systematic Reviews, Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Manual for Evidence Synthesis, and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement<sup>24-26</sup>. The study protocol has been registered at the International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (PROSPERO) with code CRD42022360165. The protocol of this study has been approved by the ethics committee of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences.

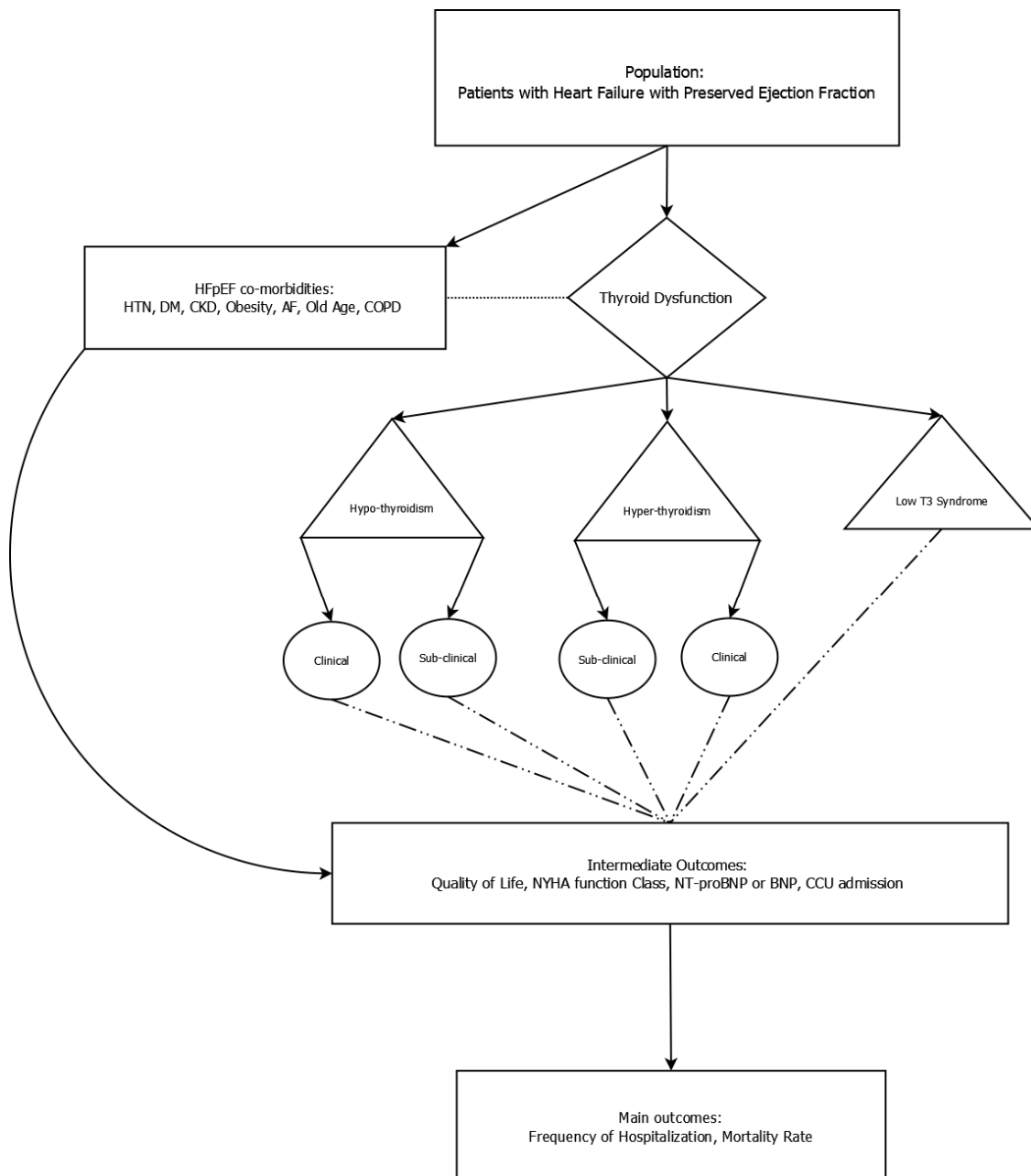
### *Review questions*

The population of interest is patients with HFpEF. The condition investigated is thyroid disorders, including clinical and subclinical hypo- and hyperthyroidism and low T3 syndrome. According to our hypothetical framework, thyroid dysfunction may affect the intermediate outcomes, including New York Heart Association (NYHA) functional class, quality of life, level of N-terminal pro-brain natriuretic peptide (NT-proBNP) or brain natriuretic peptide (BNP), or incidence of renal failure. Furthermore, we may observe the association of thyroid dysfunction

with main outcomes, including hospitalization and mortality, and thyroid dysfunction may be considered a prognostic factor for the incidence of the main outcomes. Moreover, thyroid dysfunction may be associated with a greater burden of comorbidities and adverse predictive factors, including HTN, obesity, DM, COPD, and AF. This study investigates the prevalence of thyroid dysfunction (E) in patients with HFpEF

(P) and its potential impact on clinical outcomes (O). **Figure 1** demonstrates a concept map for this framework. Accordingly, the review questions were designed as follows:

- What is the prevalence of clinical and subclinical hypo- and hyperthyroidism and low T3 syndrome in patients with HFpEF?
- How is the association of thyroid dysfunction



**Figure 1.** A concept map for review questions.

with intermediate outcomes, including NYHA functional class, quality of life, and level of NT-proBNP in patients with HFpEF?

- What is the effect of thyroid dysfunction on the prognosis of HFpEF regarding the incidence of the main outcomes, including hospitalization and death?

- Is there any association between thyroid dysfunction and the presence and severity of other comorbidities and adverse predictive factors in patients with HFpEF?

### Search Strategy

We performed a systematic search in PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Embase, and ProQuest without time or country restrictions using the following search line: “Heart failure with preserved ejection fraction” AND (thyroid OR “thyroid gland” OR “T4 hormone” OR “levothyroxine” OR tetraiodothyronine OR T3 OR triiodothyronine OR T4 OR thyroxine OR tyroxine OR “T3 hormone” OR triiodothyronine OR liothyronin OR liothyronine OR lyothyronin OR lyothyronine OR T3 OR triiodothyronin OR hypothyroidism OR hyperthyroidism)\* up to the end of November 2024. The details of the search string were summarized in [Supplementary File 1](#). The search terms were restricted to the titles, abstracts, and keywords in all databases. We restricted our search results to articles written in the English language. We further screened the reference lists of all included studies. In order to assess the grey literature, the results of the first 10 pages of Google Scholar were also screened. In addition, the databases were manually screened by two authors independently (M.B. and P.R.). After removing duplicate records, the included studies were primarily reviewed by P.R. and Z.F., independently, concerning the relevance of the title and abstract to the aims of the review. The full texts of the potentially relevant articles were further retrieved. We contacted the corresponding authors of the studies with unavailable full texts, requesting them to provide the full texts. The included papers were eventually reviewed by M.B. and M.F., considering the details of the inclusion and

exclusion criteria of the review. In this review, archiving, duplicate removal, and management of the group library were performed using EndNote Reference Manager software.

### Eligibility criteria and study selection

Observational studies, including cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies surrounding the prevalence, prognosis, and clinical outcomes of thyroid dysfunction in patients with HFpEF, were included in our review. Case reports, clinical trials, animal studies, conference abstracts, brief reports, and review articles were excluded. Studies reporting the incidence or prevalence of HFpEF in patients with thyroid dysfunction were excluded. We also excluded studies evaluating thyrotoxic cardiomyopathy or hypothyroid cardiomyopathy. The study selection process was performed in two steps: one using the study’s title and abstract, and one using the full text of the studies. M.B. and M.F. independently performed the study selection process, and the debated points were discussed in a team meeting with Z.F., A.P.A., and D.S.

### Data extraction

Two reviewers performed the data extraction process independently (S.M-T and A.P.A.). Data regarding the baseline characteristics of the HFpEF population (including mean  $\pm$  standard deviation [SD] of age, BMI, BNP or NT-proBNP, and number of participants with AF, DM, CKD, COPD, HTN, and anemia) in each study were extracted. Furthermore, available data about the prevalence of thyroid dysfunction (or subtypes of thyroid dysfunction), intermediate outcomes (NYHA functional class, BNP or NT-proBNP, quality of life, hospital readmission, and CCU admission), and main outcomes (hospitalization and mortality) were extracted from each study. We also extracted data on the association between thyroid dysfunction and comorbidities, as well as adverse prognostic factors in HFpEF, including a higher E/E ratio, atrial fibrillation (AF), hypertension (HTN), advanced age, obesity, and chronic kidney disease (CKD). These associations were analyzed in studies in which

the population was categorized according to the presence or subtypes of thyroid dysfunction.

#### *Quality assessment*

For studies reporting data regarding the prevalence of overt thyroid dysfunction (which we planned to include in the meta-analysis of prevalence), we used the JBI tool for critical appraisal of studies reporting prevalence. This checklist is composed of nine questions assessing the sampling method, methods of measuring the evaluated condition, statistical analysis, and response rate of the study<sup>27</sup>. For cohort studies, this checklist includes eleven questions addressing the similarity between study groups, sampling method, methods of measuring the exposure, study follow-up, methods of outcome ascertainment, and statistical analysis<sup>28</sup>. Accordingly, for analytical cross-sectional studies, this checklist consists of eight questions addressing the study sampling and setting, methods for assessing the outcomes of interest and confounding factors, and statistical analysis<sup>28</sup>. All of the JBI critical appraisal tools are answered through four options: “yes,” “no,” “unclear,” and “not applicable”<sup>28</sup>. We calculated a standardized quality score for each study by dividing the sum of the scores associated with domains of each checklist (Yes = +1, No = -1, Unclear = 0) by the number of questions in that checklist. The quality assessment process was performed by two independent reviewers (S.M-T and A.P.A.). Any discrepancies were resolved by consensus with a third reviewer (M.H.).

#### *Statistical analysis*

Regarding the considerable heterogeneity among studies, a narrative synthesis of results was performed for intermediate and main outcomes. Furthermore, we performed a narrative synthesis of results for the association of comorbidities and negative prognostic factors in HFpEF with thyroid dysfunction. We used the metaprop function from the meta package with the Hartung-Knapp adjustment method to calculate the pooled prevalence and its 95% confidence interval (CI). Given the high

methodological and statistical heterogeneity across the studies, we used the random-effects model. Publication bias was evaluated using a funnel plot and Duval and Tweedie’s Trim and Fill test. All analyses were performed using R Version 4.5.1 and Comprehensive Meta-Analysis Version 3 software.

## **Results**

### *Study selection*

As demonstrated in [Figure 2](#), the systematic search in databases resulted in 380 records, which were reduced to 222 records after removing duplicate results, of which 24 were considered potentially relevant after screening the titles and abstracts of the studies. From the 24 retrieved full-text articles, four were review articles, one study evaluated the incidence of HFpEF in patients with thyroid dysfunction, one was a case series, one study compared the dose of levothyroxine in hypothyroid patients with and without HF, one study was about thyrotoxic cardiomyopathy, two studies evaluated echocardiographic parameters in patients with thyroid dysfunction, and two studies did not divide the HF population according to EF. Two studies were included during citation searching and grey literature screening in Google Scholar. Eventually, 14 studies included in this review underwent the data extraction and quality assessment process<sup>11,12,23,29-39</sup>.

### *Study characteristics*

The summary of the included studies is demonstrated in [Table 1](#). Overall, 3,931 patients with HFpEF participated in the included studies. Regarding study design, ten studies were cross-sectional<sup>11,29-32,34-37,39</sup>, and four were cohort<sup>12,23,33,38</sup>. Six studies (1,176 patients) from the 14 included articles reported the prevalence of overt thyroid dysfunction in the HFpEF population<sup>12,29-32,39</sup>, which were included in the meta-analysis. In line, four studies (678 patients) reported the prevalence of low T3 syndrome in HFpEF patients, which were included in the meta-analysis for the prevalence of low T3 syndrome in HFpEF patients<sup>11,12,32,38</sup>.

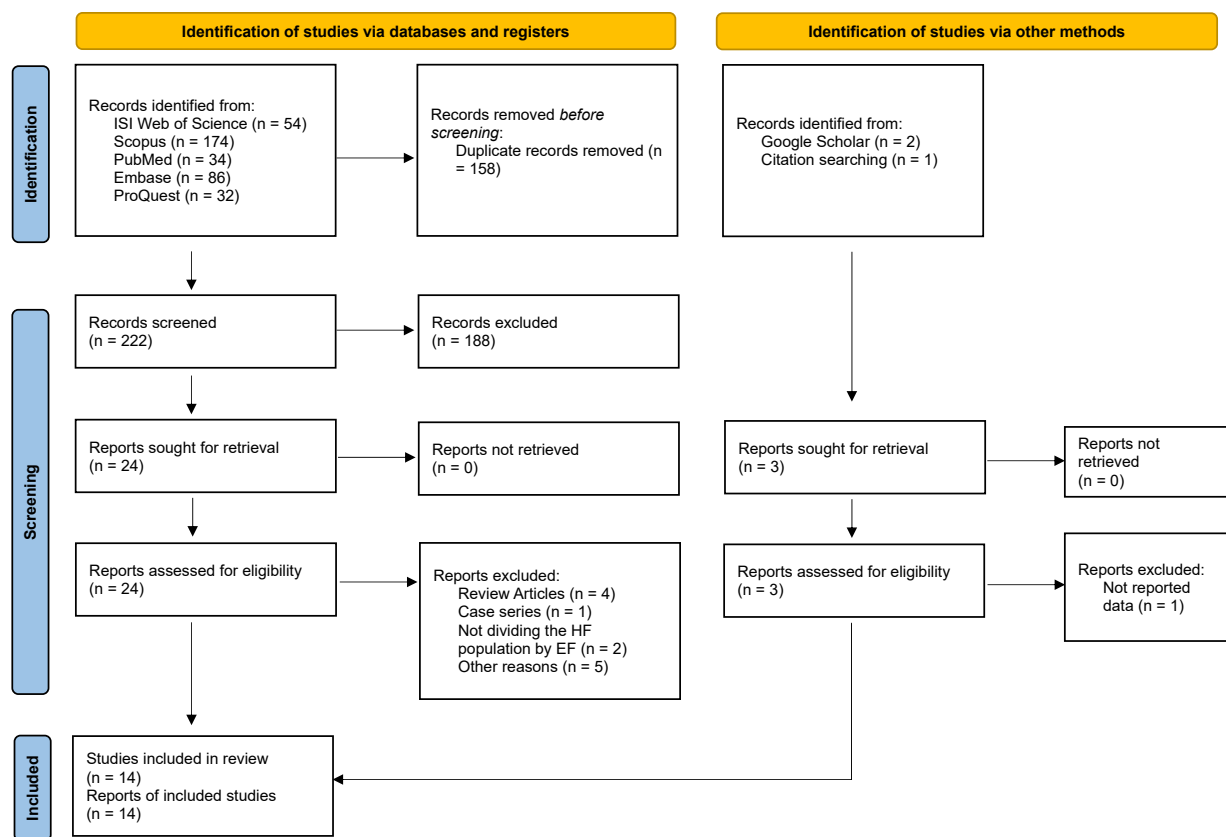


Figure 2. PRISMA flow diagram demonstrating study selection.

Moreover, three studies (1,396 patients) reported the prevalence of SCH among patients with HFpEF<sup>23,32,33</sup>. The intermediate outcomes in HF, including quality of life, NYHA functional class, serum levels of BNP or NT-proBNP, and echocardiographic parameters, were reported in four studies<sup>11,12,23,34</sup>. Furthermore, four studies reported the main outcomes, including hospitalization and mortality in HFpEF patients with different types of thyroid dysfunction<sup>12,23,33,38</sup>. Table 2 demonstrates the quality score associated with each study evaluated by the JBI's critical appraisal tools. The median quality score was 77%. The highest quality score was reported by Sato et al., and the study by Mohamud et al. received the lowest quality score<sup>31,38</sup>. Eight studies were evaluated by the JBI tool for critical appraisal of prevalence studies, two were evaluated by the JBI checklist for cohort studies, and four were evaluated by the tool for analytical cross-sectional studies.

#### Prevalence of overt thyroid dysfunction

The greatest prevalence was reported in the study by Rywik et al., in which the prevalence of thyroid disease was 34.7% in a sample population of 662 individuals with HFpEF. On the other hand, the smallest proportion of patients with overt thyroid dysfunction was reported to be 5% (two patients with hypothyroidism) in the study by Favuzzi et al., in a small sample size of 40 patients with HFpEF. Figure 3 demonstrates the forest plot of pooled prevalence of overt thyroid dysfunction in HFpEF patients. Results from random-effects analysis indicated the estimated pooled prevalence as  $p = 0.15$  [0.07–0.29]. Sensitivity analyses were performed by removing the studies with a non-adequate sample size (Favuzzi et al. and Agrawal et al.)<sup>29,32</sup>. Accordingly, the pooled prevalence increased to  $p = 0.20$  [0.09–0.38] (Figure 4). Furthermore, findings from the funnel plot, Egger's test, and Duval and Tweedie's Trim and Fill test indicated

Table 1. Baseline characteristics of the included studies.

First author (year)	Region	HFpEF population	55c(female=46%), HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50% based on ESC HF guidelines										Reported outcomes	Results
Koen W. Streng(2018)	Europe	Obesity	CKD	COPD	Anemia	NT-proBNP(ng/l)	Age	HTN	DM	AF	Prevalence: overt thyroid dysfunction			17.4%
		235	312	132	253	1559 [511–3998]	78 ± 9.8	386	198	275	Intermediate outcome: Quality of life in patients without and with thyroid dysfunction, respectively			KCCQ overall score: 39 [24–55] Vs 34 [21–48] 0.017, P<0.05 EQ-5D VAS score: 55 [45–70] Vs 50 [41–60], P<0.05 All-Cause mortality: HR= 1.42[1.01,2.00] Hospitalization: HR= 1.52[1.06,2.18] low T <sub>3</sub> : 22% elevated T <sub>3</sub> : 3% low free T <sub>4</sub> : 7% elevated free T <sub>4</sub> : 2% low TSH: 13% elevated TSH: 10%
		HFpEF population										Main outcome: All-cause mortality, Hospitalization		
Senthil Selvaraj (2012)	USA	Obesity	CKD	COPD	Anemia	BNP(pg/ml)	Age	HTN	DM	AF	Intermediate outcome: NYHA function class, BNP, Echocardiography parameters between patients with T <sub>3</sub> (ng/dl) ≥108 and <108, respectively			NYHA FC 1&2 / 3&4: 28/18 vs 15/28, P<0.05  BNP: 133 (46–318) vs 326 (115–874), p<0.05 Echocardiography E velocity(cm/s): 93±27 vs 110±36, P<0.05 E deceleration time (ms): 231±47 vs 206±47, p<0.05 <b>Other parameters were not significantly different between groups</b>
		53	35	21	N/A	214 (66–603)	67±14	73	28	23				N/A 116(32%)
		HFpEF population										Main outcome: Prevalence : Low T <sub>3</sub> syndrome in patients with HFpEF		
YU SATO(2019)	Japan	Obesity	CKD	COPD	Anemia	BNP	Age	HTN	DM	AF				

Table 1. Baseline characteristics of the included studies.

First author (year)	Region	HFpEF population	Reported outcomes										Results	
Salzano (2016)	Europe	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Intermediate outcome:	N/A	All-cause mortality: HR=2.388 [1.556-3.666] Cardiac mortality: HR= 2.045 [0.961-4.352] 6 (16%)
		HFpEF population											Main outcome: all-cause and cardiac mortality in low T <sub>3</sub> vs normal T <sub>3</sub> Prevalence: Low T <sub>3</sub> syndrome in patients with HFpEF	
		36, HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50% based on ESC HF guidelines												
		BMI	CKD	COPD	Anemia	BNP	Age	HTN	DM	AF	Intermediate outcome:	N/A		
		29 ± 4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	66 ± 14	80%	51 %	58%	Main outcome:	N/A		
Saad(2020)	USA	HFpEF population										Prevalence: Subclinical hypothyroidism in patients with HFpEF	63(5.69%)	CCU admission: 7 (11.1%) Vs 131 (12.5%) 1 month readmission: 23 (36.50%) vs 322 (31%) 3 months readmission: 17 (27%) Vs 278 (26.6%) 6 months readmission: 10 (15.9%) Vs 233 (22.3%) One year mortality: 6(9.5%) vs 80(7.7%) Thyroid dysfunction including SCH and low T <sub>3</sub> syndrome : 25(24.27%)
		1107, HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥40%												
		BMI	CKD	COPD	Anemia	BNP	Age	HTN	DM	AF	Intermediate outcomes : CCU admission, readmission in 1, 3, and 6 months in SCH vs non SCH patients with HFpEF			
		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Main outcome: one year mortality in SCH vs non SCH patients with HFpEF Prevalence: thyroid dysfunction in patients with HFpEF			
		103, HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50%												
Abdullahi Mohamed(2022)	Africa	BMI	CKD	COPD	Anemia	BNP	Age	HTN	DM	AF	Intermediate outcomes:	N/A		
		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Main outcome:	N/A		



Table 1. Baseline characteristics of the included studies.

First author (year)	Region	HFpEF population	Reported outcomes	Results
Yusuf Mohamud(2022)	Africa	HFpEF population	Prevalence: prevalence of thyroid disease in patients with HFpEF	13(17.6%)
		74 (female= 44.6%), HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50%	Intermediate outcomes:	N/A
		BMI	DM AF	
		N/A	Main outcome:	N/A
		HFpEF population 146, HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50%	Prevalence:	N/A
Meng(2020)	China	BMI	Intermediate outcomes: BNP, echocardiographic parameters in HFpEF patients with and without SCH	BNP(pg/ml) : 210.45 ± 52.42 vs 188.75 ± 49.08
		eu T	DM AF	
		eu T	eu T	
		eu T	eu T	
		eu T	eu T	
Rywik(2022)	Poland	HFpEF population 662(female=56%), HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50%	Prevalence: thyroid disease in patients with HFpEF	230(34.7%)
		BMI	Intermediate outcomes:	N/A
		N/A	Main outcome:	N/A
		HFpEF population 249(female=56.6%), HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50%	Prevalence: prevalence of SCH among patients with HFpEF	71(28.5%)
		HFpEF population	Intermediate outcomes:	N/A
Hassan(2016)	USA	HFpEF population	Prevalence: prevalence of thyroid disease in patients with HFpEF	230(34.7%)
		BMI	Intermediate outcomes:	N/A
		N/A	Main outcome:	N/A
		HFpEF population	Prevalence: prevalence of SCH among patients with HFpEF	71(28.5%)
		HFpEF population	Intermediate outcomes:	N/A

Table 1. Baseline characteristics of the included studies.

First author (year)	Region	HFpEF population	BMI	CKD	COPD	Anemia	BNP(ng/l)	Age	HTN	DM	AF	Reported outcomes	Results
Favuzzi (2020)	Italy		32.16±10.85	N/A	N/A	N/A	587.27±726.99	72.15±13.40	N/A	N/A	N/A	Main outcome: mortality rate among HFpEF patients with and without SCH (follow-up = 8.75 ± 0.17 years)	29.6% Vs 14.9%
		HFpEF population											Low T <sub>3</sub> syndrome: 9(22.5%) SCH: 8(20%) Hypothyroidism: 2(5%) subclinical hyperthyroidism: 4(10%) N/A
		40(Female=32.5%), HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50%											
Aizpurua (2021)	Netherlands		28.22±24.96	N/A	22	31	2726.33±2662.03	78.33±8.05	34	18	17	Main outcome:	N/A
		HFpEF population											
		300(Female: 66.3%), HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50% based on ESC HF guidelines											
Agrawal (2021)	India												
		BMI											
		N/A											
		HFpEF population											
Mfeku-Kuete (2021)	Cameroon												
		Overweight/obesity											
		80											
		HFpEF population											
Mfeku-Kuete (2021)	Cameroon												
		30, HFpEF definition: HF patients with EF ≥50%											

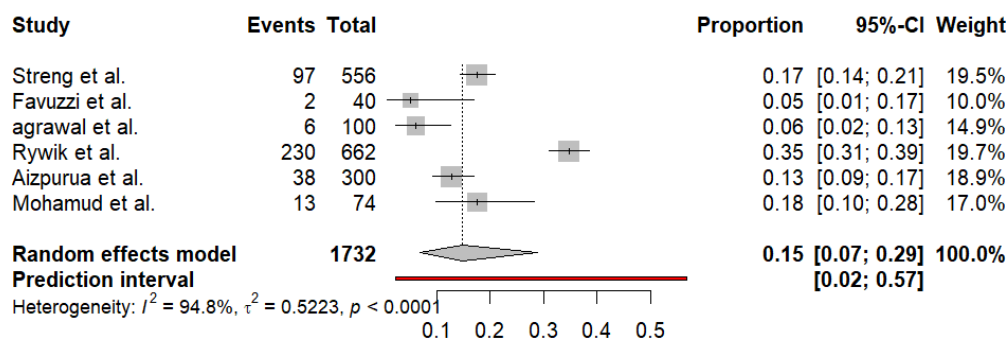
Table 1. Baseline characteristics of the included studies.

First author (year)	Region	HFpEF population	Reported outcomes								Results	
			BMI	CKD	COPD	Anemia	NT-proBNP(ng/ml)	Age	HTN	DM	AF	
			N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Table 2.** Quality assessment of the included studies using JBI tool.

First author	Critical appraisal tool	Raw Score	Standardized score
Agrawal	JBI check list for critical appraisal of prevalence studies	6/9	66%
azipurua	JBI check list for critical appraisal of prevalence studies	7/9	77%
favvuzi	JBI check list for critical appraisal of prevalence studies	8/9	88%
Hassan	JBI check list for critical appraisal of cohort studies	5/11	45%
Meng	JBI check list for critical appraisal of cross sectional studies	7/8	87%
Mfeukeu	JBI check list for critical appraisal of cross sectional studies	6/8	75%
Yusuf Mohamud	JBI check list for critical appraisal of prevalence studies	4/9	44%
Abdullahi mohamud	JBI check list for critical appraisal of cross sectional studies	6/9	66%
Rywik	JBI check list for critical appraisal of prevalence studies	7/9	77%
Saad	JBI check list for critical appraisal of cohort studies	8/11	72%
salzano	JBI check list for critical appraisal of cross sectional studies	6/8	75%
sato	JBI check list for critical appraisal of prevalence studies	9/9	100%
selvaraj	JBI check list for critical appraisal of prevalence studies	8/9	88%
streng	JBI check list for critical appraisal of prevalence studies	7/9	77%

Raw score is calculated as the sum of scores attributed to the answer of each study. Yes = +1, unclear = 0, No = -1  
 Standardized Score (%): Raw score / maximum score in the particular checklist \* 100

**Figure 3.** Forest plot of pooled prevalence of overt thyroid dysfunction

no significant publication bias (Egger's test p-value = 0.32) ([Supplementary File 2](#)).

#### Prevalence of Low T3 syndrome

As shown in [Figure 5](#), four studies investigating 678 patients were included in the fixed-effects model analysis, indicating the pooled prevalence of low T3 syndrome as  $p = 0.22$  [0.20–0.25]. Egger's test for publication bias indicated no considerable bias; however, Duval and Tweedie's

Trim and Fill test indicated that one study was missing to the left of the mean, decreasing the pooled prevalence to  $p = 0.213$  [0.191–0.236] ([Supplementary File 3](#)).

#### Prevalence of subclinical hypothyroidism

Random-effects model analysis indicated the pooled prevalence of SCH as  $p = 0.15$  [0.01–0.68] ([Figure 6](#)). Moreover, tests for publication bias indicated no considerable publication bias.

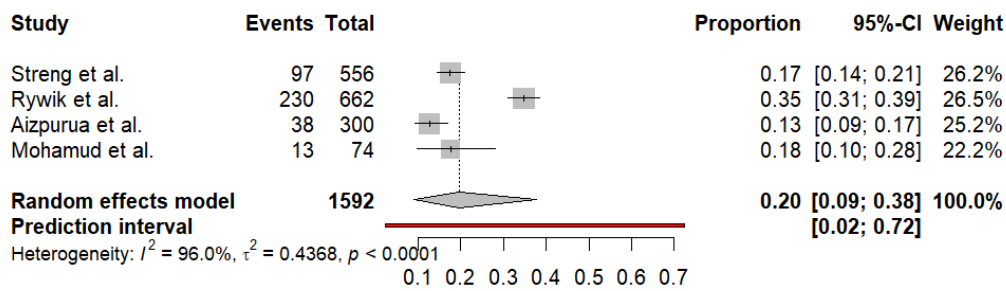


Figure 4. Forest plot of pooled prevalence of overt thyroid dysfunction after excluding studies with non-adequate population.

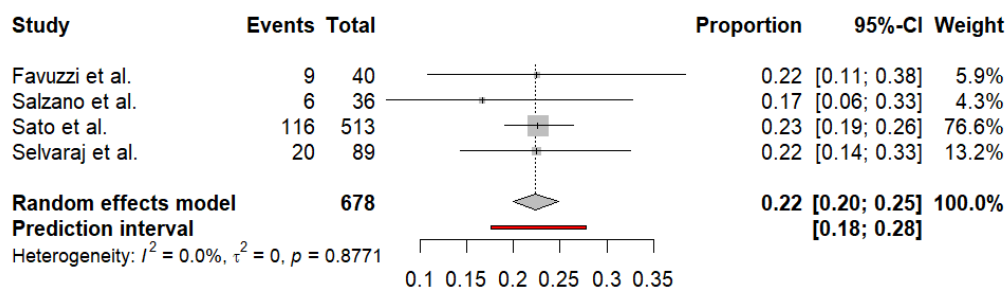


Figure 5. Forest plot of pooled prevalence of low  $T_3$  syndrome.

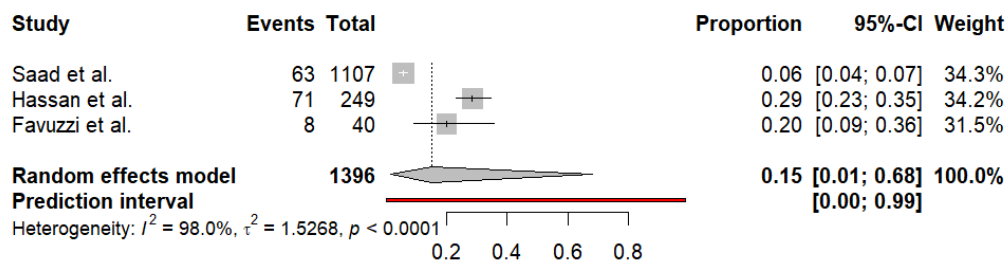


Figure 6. Forest plot of pooled prevalence of subclinical hypothyroidism.

#### Association between thyroid dysfunction and intermediate outcomes in HFpEF

Streng et al. evaluated the association between thyroid dysfunction and quality of life in patients with HFpEF. The overall Kansas City Cardiomyopathy Questionnaire (KCCQ) score was significantly lower in patients with thyroid dysfunction than in those without thyroid dysfunction: 34 [21–48] vs. 39 [24–55],  $P = 0.017$ ,  $P$ -value  $< 0.05$ . Similarly, the EQ-5D VAS score was significantly lower in HFpEF patients with thyroid dysfunction compared to individuals without thyroid dysfunction: 55 [45–70] vs. 50 [41–60],  $P$ -value  $< 0.05$ <sup>12</sup>. Selvaraj et

al. indicated that HFpEF patients with  $T_3$  lower than 108 ng/dl had higher NYHA functional classification, serum BNP, E velocity, and lower E deceleration time<sup>11</sup>. In line, the study by Meng et al. demonstrated a significantly higher level of serum BNP, lower E/A, and higher E/E' ratio<sup>34</sup>.

#### Association between thyroid dysfunction and main outcomes in HFpEF

Streng et al. indicated that HFpEF patients with thyroid dysfunction had 1.52 [1.06–2.18] and 1.42 [1.01–2.00] fold higher risks for hospitalization and mortality, respectively, compared to HFpEF patients without thyroid

**Table 3.** Studies comparing prevalence of common predictive factors for the outcomes between those with and without thyroid dysfunction.

First author	HFpEF population		AF	Age	HTN	Pulmonary HTN	E/E'	BMI	DM	COPD	CKD
Selvaraj (2012)	89	T <sub>3</sub> ≥ 108 ng/dl (n=46)	10 (22%)	63 ± 14	36 (78%)	N/A	15.5 ± 6.2	34.0 ± 9.0	9 (20%)	10 (22%)	14 (30%)
		T <sub>3</sub> < 108 ng/dl (n=43)	13 (30%)	70 ± 13	37 (86%)	N/A	18.2 ± 10.4	32.0 ± 7.5	19 (44%)	11 (26%)	21 (49%)
Meng (2020)	146	Euthyroidism	N/A	66.85 ± 7.59	42	N/A	8.97 ± 1.61	22.74 ± 2.99	12	N/A	N/A
		Subclinical hypothyroidism	N/A	68.99 ± 8.24	38	N/A	10.93 ± 1.97	23.08 ± 2.41	14	N/A	N/A

dysfunction<sup>12</sup>. Hassan et al., in a retrospective cohort study with a mean follow-up period of 8.75 years on 249 HFpEF patients, indicated a significantly higher mortality rate in patients with SCH (29.6% vs. 14.9%, P-value < 0.05)<sup>33</sup>. On the contrary, the study by Saad et al. on 1,107 HFpEF patients reported no significantly higher risk of hospitalization at 1, 3, and 6 months, and no significantly higher one-year mortality in HFpEF patients with SCH compared to patients without SCH<sup>23</sup>.

#### *Association between thyroid dysfunction and predictive factors in HFpEF*

Only two studies have compared the prevalence or severity of common predictive factors for outcomes between HFpEF patients with and without thyroid dysfunction (Table 3)<sup>11,34</sup>. Selvaraj et al., in a study on HFpEF patients, compared the prevalence of HTN, CKD, COPD, DM, and AF between 43 patients with T<sub>3</sub> < 108 ng/dl and 46 patients with T<sub>3</sub> ≥ 108 ng/dl. The results indicated that DM was the only comorbidity associated with T<sub>3</sub> < 108, whereas the prevalence of other factors, as well as the mean ± SD of age, BMI, and E/E' ratio, did not differ significantly between the two study groups. The other study by Meng et al. compared the prevalence of HTN and DM between HFpEF patients with and without SCH; the authors further compared the mean ± SD of age, BMI, and E/E' ratio between the study

groups. The results of their study indicated that HFpEF patients with SCH had a higher E/E' ratio than those without SCH.

#### **Discussion**

In this systematic review and meta-analysis, we gathered data from 14 studies on a total population of 3,931 patients with HFpEF. According to the meta-analysis results, the pooled prevalence of overt thyroid dysfunction was p = 0.15 [0.07–0.29]. Furthermore, our findings indicated that the prevalence of SCH and low T<sub>3</sub> were p = 0.15 [0.01–0.68] and p = 0.22 [0.20–0.25], respectively. Nevertheless, these results should be interpreted cautiously, as the total number of included studies in the meta-analysis was relatively small. Also, there was significant heterogeneity. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first systematic review in which thyroid dysfunction and its subtypes were assessed in the context of prevalence, association with comorbidities, and effects on the outcomes of HFpEF. Furthermore, as previous studies have indicated that the H2FPEF score, which includes hypertension, obesity, AF, older age, pulmonary hypertension, and increased ventricular filling pressure (E/E' > 9), is a good prognostic and diagnostic tool for patients with HFpEF, we attempted to investigate the association between thyroid dysfunction and the predictive factors included in the H2FPEF score<sup>40–42</sup>. We observed that patients with SCH

may have a higher E/E' ratio, and individuals with lower T3 were more likely to suffer from DM; however, these findings are limited to the results from only two studies reporting the burden of comorbidities in relatively small sample sizes<sup>11,34</sup>.

Animal studies have indicated that not only thyroid dysfunction may be associated with worse cardiovascular outcomes, but also, even in the presence of normal serum levels of thyroid hormones, cardiac tissue hypothyroidism, which is a result of diminished conversion of T4 to T3, may be a key contributor to the development of myocardial dysfunction<sup>20</sup>. From the molecular point of view, the effects of thyroid hormones on cardiac tissue are mediated through genomic and non-genomic pathways. Thyroid hormone receptors (TRs) are the mediators of the genomic effects of T3. As a result of alternative splicing of TR $\alpha$  and TR $\beta$ , different isoforms of the TRs are expressed in different tissues; accordingly, TR $\alpha$ -1 is the predominant TR in cardiac tissue<sup>43,44</sup>. The thyroid hormone–thyroid receptor complex affects the expression of certain genes, which are mainly involved in the modulation of cardiac bioenergetics and the production of myofilaments in cardiomyocytes<sup>8</sup>. Particularly, thyroid hormones upregulate the expression of sarcoplasmic/endoplasmic reticulum calcium ATPase 2, Na/K ATPase,  $\beta$ 1 adrenergic receptors, matrix metalloproteinases, and voltage-gated potassium channels. These genomic effects are responsible for enhanced intracellular calcium ion kinetics, leading to optimal ventricular contraction and relaxation, an optimal response to the inotropic effects of catecholamine, and diminution in cardiac fibrosis<sup>20</sup>. Thyroid hormones may also affect cardiomyocytes by inhibiting pro-apoptotic pathways<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, thyroid hormones could directly affect mitochondrial function, as TRs are also present in mitochondria<sup>46</sup>.

Decreased bioavailability of thyroid hormones in cardiac tissue may be due to disturbed production of T3 and T4 from the thyroid gland or systemic or cardiac-specific overexpression of type 3 deiodinase (which converts T4

into reverse T3) as a response to systemic inflammation. Nevertheless, the diminished effect of thyroid hormones in cardiac tissue could lead to impaired cardiac bioenergetics, impaired cardiac contraction, and, most importantly, impaired ventricular relaxation, the cornerstone of HFpEF<sup>8,20</sup>. On the other hand, overproduction of thyroid hormones leads to disturbed genomic expression of the proteins mentioned above, which could negatively affect cardiac tissue, causing tachycardia and tachycardia-induced cardiomyopathy, arrhythmias—particularly AF—and further development of high-output cardiac failure<sup>13</sup>.

Apart from the direct effects of thyroid hormones on cardiac tissue, the association between thyroid hormone disturbances and common comorbidities in HFpEF plays an important role in the pathophysiology of HFpEF. Hypothyroidism is known to be associated with obesity, HTN, and accelerated atherosclerosis<sup>8,17,18</sup>. Furthermore, it has also been demonstrated that hyperthyroidism is associated with HTN and AF<sup>8,47</sup>. Moreover, hypo- and hyperthyroid states could be causes of pulmonary hypertension<sup>48</sup>. In line, a study on patients hospitalized for acute decompensated heart failure due to thyrotoxicosis indicated that HFpEF was the most prevalent type of HF among the patients. Furthermore, the authors indicated that patients with thyrotoxic HF were more likely to have pulmonary hypertension and right HF<sup>49</sup>.

Regarding diastolic dysfunction, a study on 25 hyperthyroid patients indicated that hyperthyroidism might not induce diastolic dysfunction at rest or during exercise echocardiography<sup>50</sup>. In contrast, clinical studies have established the role of subclinical and clinical hypothyroidism in developing diastolic dysfunction<sup>19</sup>. Selvaraj et al., in a study on 89 consecutive HFpEF patients, demonstrated that a T3 hormone level lower than 108 ng/dl was associated with severe diastolic dysfunction and higher BNP levels compared to patients with T3 higher than 108 ng/dl (normal serum T3 range was defined as 178 > T3 > 87 in their study)<sup>11</sup>.

Regarding the prognosis of HFpEF, a study on 249 patients with HFpEF with a mean follow-up time of 8.75 years indicated that SCH was an independent predictor of mortality (29.6% vs. 14.9%, mortality rate in patients with and without SCH, respectively)<sup>33</sup>. In contrast, the study by Saad et al. reported no significant association between SCH and mortality, CCU admission, and rehospitalization in patients with HFpEF; however, the authors mentioned that those findings may be limited, as the data regarding readmission and death were collected retrospectively from a single medical center<sup>23</sup>.

Taken together, despite the limited results in this field, our findings indicated that the prevalence of thyroid dysfunction in patients with HFpEF is considerably higher compared to the general population. Furthermore, regarding the incidence of outcomes, we observed that the HFpEF population with SCH and low T3 syndrome may experience more severe symptoms of HF and may be at higher risk of hospitalization and mortality. Accordingly, a phase two randomized clinical trial evaluated the effect of supplementation of HF patients with a thyroid hormone analog, namely DITPA (3,5-diiodothyropropionic acid). Although supplementation with DITPA was associated with improved hemodynamic and metabolic parameters, no symptomatic benefit and a relatively high burden of adverse effects were observed<sup>51</sup>. Considering the high prevalence of thyroid dysfunction among HFpEF patients and its adverse effect on the prognosis of HFpEF, we suggest that screening of thyroid function tests in patients with HFpEF warrants further studies on larger populations to investigate approaches to overcome the burden of clinical and subclinical thyroid dysfunction in HFpEF patients.

## Conclusion

Thyroid dysfunction is a relatively common comorbidity in patients with HFpEF. Apart from overt thyroid dysfunction, SCH and low T3 syndrome may be associated with a higher burden of comorbidity, more severe symptoms, and worse outcomes in HFpEF patients. Further

studies are warranted to investigate potential approaches for the management of clinical and subclinical thyroid dysfunction in this group of patients. Given that our results are derived from a relatively small number of studies, additional research is needed to clarify the prevalence and role of different subtypes of thyroid dysfunction in HFpEF patients. Taken together, our findings highlight an association between thyroid dysfunction and HFpEF, suggesting that evaluation of thyroid function in these patients may be considered in future studies and clinical practice; however, recommendations regarding screening and treatment should await confirmation from larger prospective investigations.

## Limitations

This systematic review and meta-analysis has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, although the pooled data involved a substantial number of patients with HFpEF (3,931 subjects), the total number of studies included in the meta-analysis was relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of our results. The heterogeneity observed across the included studies in terms of study design, population, and thyroid dysfunction classification could introduce bias and affect the robustness of our findings. Moreover, the data on comorbidities and clinical outcomes were not consistently reported, and several studies had small sample sizes, limiting our ability to draw strong conclusions regarding the prognostic impact of thyroid dysfunction in HFpEF. Taken together, our findings highlight an association between thyroid dysfunction and HFpEF, but given the cross-sectional nature and limited size of the available evidence, recommendations for routine screening or treatment cannot be firmly established at this stage. Future large-scale prospective studies are warranted to confirm these associations, clarify the prognostic significance of different subtypes of thyroid dysfunction, and explore whether thyroid function assessment could have a role in the clinical management of HFpEF patients.



### Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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### Author's Contributions

Study Conception or Design: MH, MF, DS

Data Acquisition: MB, APA, SMT, ZF, PR

Data Analysis or Interpretation: SMT, ZF

Manuscript Drafting: MB, APA, SMT, PR

Critical Manuscript Revision: MH, ZF, MF, DS

All authors have approved the final manuscript and are responsible for all aspects of the work.

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