

Historical rescue of Dr. Salatiel square: the garden of the *Cachaça's Largo* São João del-Rei, Minas Gerais State, Brazil⁽¹⁾

AMANDA BURGARELLI TEIXEIRA^{(2)*}, NAYHARA CAMILA ANDRADE⁽³⁾,
SCHIRLEY FÁTIMA NOGUEIRA DA SILVA CAVALCANTE ALVES⁽²⁾

ABSTRACT

The Dr. Salatiel Square, located at Marechal Bittencourt Street in the historical center of the São João del-Rei city, Minas Gerais State, Brazil, appeared in the twentieth century during the period of hygienism. It was inserted in a place that over the years suffered several modifications on its morphology. The work aims to study the landscape aspects and socio-cultural evolution of this square. This work execution consisted of the two steps: field research for the identification of the historical square significance, and a research that was carried out in the historical collections of the city. During the field research, it was collected the current state of Dr. Salatiel Square as well as its uses and potentials, and its botanical composition. Analyzing the square and its surroundings, and also the information collected in São João del-Rei, Minas Gerais State, Brazil, it was possible to verify that the site, which nowadays the Dr. Salatiel Square is placed, was occupied before by European influenced houses that were overthrown later in the period of hygienism. Among all the nomenclatures already attributed to the street that shelter the square, the best known by population is *Cachaça's Street* due to the commerce of the time which favored the nightlife and bohemia. The square in study is part of the historical center of the city, and all its surroundings are overturned. However, the square has faced significant constructive and botanical modifications on its structure constituting a space characterized by the abandonment due to factors such as accumulation of garbage and great flow of vehicles. From the carried out study, it was verified that the number of information about the place is scarce, so that the continuation of its historical rescue is of great importance for means of preserving the history of the city and the population.

Keywords: historic garden, landscaping, Royal Road.

RESUMO

Resgate Histórico da Praça Dr. Salatiel: o Jardim do Largo da Cachaça, São João del-Rei, Minas Gerais, Brasil

A Praça Dr. Salatiel, localizada na Rua Marechal Bittencourt, no centro histórico da cidade de São João del-Rei (MG), surgiu no século XX durante o período de higienização, sendo inserida em um local que sofreu diversas modificações em sua morfologia ao longo dos anos. O trabalho visa estudar os aspectos paisagísticos e a evolução sociocultural dessa praça. A execução deste trabalho consistiu em duas etapas: pesquisa de campo para a identificação do significado histórico da praça; e em pesquisa realizada nos acervos históricos da cidade. Durante a pesquisa de campo, foi levantado o estado atual da Praça Dr. Salatiel, bem como sua utilização e potencialidades, assim como sua composição botânica. Analisando a praça e seu entorno, assim como as informações coletadas em São João del-Rei, pode-se verificar que onde hoje existe a Praça Dr. Salatiel antes era ocupado por casarios de influência europeia, posteriormente derrubados no período de higienização. Dentre todas as nomenclaturas já atribuídas à rua que abriga a praça, a mais conhecida pela população é a de Rua da Cachaça, devido ao comércio da época, que favorecia a vida noturna e a boemia. A Praça em questão faz parte do centro histórico da cidade e todo o seu entorno é tombado. Entretanto, a mesma sofreu modificações significativas em sua estrutura, tanto construtivas como botânica, constituindo um espaço caracterizado pelo abandono decorrente de fatores como: o acúmulo de lixo e o grande fluxo de veículos. A partir do estudo realizado constatou-se que o número de informações sobre o local é escasso, fazendo com que a continuação do seu resgate histórico seja de grande importância, pois é um meio de preservar a história da cidade e da população.

Palavras-chaves: Jardins históricos, Paisagismo, Estrada Real.

1. INTRODUCTION

The squares and their gardens are part of the daily life of the inhabitants of the cities and their importance grows up as the urban centers become denser and transform their spaces. Public environments, such as squares, ensure the

quality of life and preserve local history, serving as natural heritage and cultural partner.

The cities of Royal Road, in Minas Gerais State, have several squares, but there is no record of most of them, making their study necessary to ensure the preservation of the history of the place and consequently its valorization.

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⁽²⁾ Centro Universitário de Lavras (Unilavras), Lavras-MG, Brazil. *Corresponding author: a_burgarelli@yahoo.com.br

⁽³⁾ Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA), Departamento de Engenharia, Lavras-MG, Brazil.

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Dr. Salatiel Square, located on the Royal Road, emerged in the early twentieth century, in the middle of the urban fabric of São João del-Rei, which, like many places in Brazil, was influenced by Hygienism in its urbanization process in the first half of the century XX. The Hygienism movement of urban spaces had its origin in Europe, and Haussmann's great work in Paris between 1853 and 1877 was the most classic example, and in Brazil that of Pereira Passos in Rio de Janeiro between 1902 and 1906.

Hygienism influenced a large part of the world, including Brazil, and aimed at the restructuring of urban spaces through the opening of new roads, creation of green spaces, reorganization of the housing blocks, among other interventions (ALONSO, 2010).

The evolution of the history of this Square reveals that it has undergone modifications over the years, both in its morphology and in its integration with the population. In order to better understand the development of this theme in Brazilian cities, especially in São João del-Rei/Minas Gerais State, the historical rescue of the Dr. Salatiel Square was carried out, located at Marechal Bittencourt Street, in the historical center of the city.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The methodology used to carry out the historical rescue of the Dr. Salatiel Square is based on the theories of Delphin (2005), which contributes with technical guidelines on the conservation and preservation of historical gardens and their particularities; of Lassus (1994) that allows the identification and analysis of practices and processes of physical evolution of the place; and Luginbuhl (2006) that elucidates aesthetic, phenomenological or symbolic values attributed by the population, artists and writers. The first phase of execution of this project consisted in the identification of the historical significance of the place in question through documentary surveys, bibliographical, archival and iconographical researches.

These surveys were carried out in the Historical and Geographical Institute of the city, in the Municipal Library, in the Department of Culture and Works, in the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute and in the Regional Museum of São João del Rei. In addition to the research carried out in the historical collections of the city, the site was studied by means of surveys of data *in loco*, in order to recognize the current state of the Dr. Salatiel Square, its physical and botanical structure, as well as its use and potentialities. After the data were collected, they were analyzed and compared in order to understand the timeline of the facts. These data were objects of comparison, existing information about the square, photographs, primary and secondary documents and information collected on visits *in loco*.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical synthesis

The city of São João del-Rei, Minas Gerais state underwent important urban changes in the first half of

the 20th century, such as the creation of squares and gardens, changes in the pavement of the streets, extension of some streets and opening of avenues. From the 1920s, interventions in the urban fabric took place, guided by the ideals of progress, modernization, asepsis, embellishment and rationalization of the urban space in São João. In the later decades, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, such practices of "enhancement" of the city were intensified by the need for its commercial and industrial expansion (TAVARES, 2011).

The municipal government took a leading role in the urbanization of the city in the first half of the twentieth century, encouraging street extensions, alignment of public roads and houses, followed in many cases of expropriation and demolition, as well as the construction of gardens and squares. Public works sought to create a new image of the city, according to modern aesthetic models. Due to the impacts due to the constant renovation of the city center, São João del-Rei developed an urban profile marked by the contrast between colonial aesthetics and diverse styles such as the eclectic, art deco and neocolonial (TAVARES, 2011).

As well as understanding the physical changes of urban spaces, understanding the evolution of squares in Brazil is necessary to understand the changes that have taken place in São João del-Rei, more specifically *Rua da Cachaça*, which houses the Dr. Salatiel Square. Analyzing the history one can see that initially the free urban spaces were composed by plazas, due to European influence. These spaces were configured from the buildings of the residences, resulting in narrow streets in their surroundings, as mentioned by Robba and Macedo (2010). The public spaces could carry diverse activities of the population, among them civil, religious, military and even profane. Over time, the colonial square gave way to the garden squares. Activities of commerce, leisure and social life, in turn, gave way to those of contemplation and walking (ROBBA and MACEDO, 2010).

The direct influence of France and England promoted campaigns of public health, modernization and beautification of the cities, as happened in Paris. In the transition period between colonial and modern city, at the end of the 19th century, landscaped squares appeared in Brazil, destined to the activities of contemplative leisure and to the conviviality of the population. The model of landscaped squares became a standard to be followed in the first decades of the twentieth century and even the oldest public places underwent landscaping and landscaping treatments (ROBBA and MACEDO, 2010). This influence was present in the city of São João del-Rei, Minas Gerais state, which had its urban spaces modified due to this health campaign. Places such as Dr. Salatiel Square have undergone significant changes over the years.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in Brazil, the process of landscaping of the "urban voids" began, including the broad areas, flowerbeds and previously dry squares, becoming a period of great transformation in the urban physiognomies. The urban growth caused the desire to structure the spaces so that they could perform different functions;

however, the square acquired a new composition due to the appreciation of the green, where priority was given to leisure and contemplation functions (SEGAWA, 1996). The Dr. Salatiel Square is an example of this process of transformation of the spaces in São João del-Rei, because it belongs to a place where previously there was a space that, over the years, gave way to a garden square.

The composition of the Brazilian squares originated from two principles: that of organic composition and that of formal composition. These places had great importance in the daily life of the people, since they stimulated the collective, serving as meeting point. Some squares became spatial symbols and historical references in Brazilian cities (MACEDO, 1999). Dourado (2011) reports that the French influence reverberated in Brazil in such a way that the cities sought to afforestation of their roads and began to provide new public gardens by converting old lands and squares into new spaces.

Street nomenclature

It can be observed that in São João del-Rei there were many changes in the nomenclature of the streets. Initially the public thoroughfares were baptized by the people without even knowing the reason why and over time the denominations were endorsed in the context of the official documents as being expressive term of reference. The street that houses the square studied in this work is an example, since formerly it was called *Rua da Alegria* (GUIMARÃES, 1994).

Some names attributed to the streets of the city arose from significant terms or activities carried out, such as the *Cachaça's Street* (another variation of nomenclature of *Rua da Alegria*), which had this name due to having in its extension houses that sold the product.

On January 5, 1883, *Rua da Alegria* or *Cachaça's Street* is renamed *Tiradentes Street*, making *Tiradentes* the 5th Brazilian to have his name on one of the streets of São João del-Rei. The nomenclatures of the streets of São João in the first two centuries of existence of the city had for reasons several factors, among them: causes unknown in their function of being, even if justifiable, and recognitions to the deeds of people of São João (GUIMARÃES, 1994).

In the post-1900 period, there were new changes in the nomenclature of this street, for in 1923 *Tiradentes Street* became João Jacob Sewaybricker Street, honoring a former merchant and councilman of São João del-Rei. The changes took place in a short time, because in 1939 the João Jacó Sewaybricker Street is called Marechal Bittencourt Street, and remains until the present day.

The square studied was named Dr. Salatiel Square in 1925, in honor of Dr. Salatiel de Andrade Braga, by means of law nº 436 of February 12, 1925, and had his name changed with decree nº 22 of 6 of September 1943, by *Barão do Rio Branco Square*, due to the inauguration of the monument of this Chancellor, in Rio de Janeiro. Due to this name change, a new nameplate should have been put in place of the old one. The City Hall was waiting to confirm the baptism of the new name, but the change of plates never occurred.

Cachaça's Street

The street on which the square is located nowadays is named Marechal Bittencourt Street, but it is still known as *Cachaça's Street*. Being a place where commerce was stipulated, the nightlife settled there so that it also became known as *Rua da Zona*, due to the large number of entertainment houses. Many authors cite in their works characteristics of the street and the old fame that it possessed. Burton (1976) was the only foreign traveler who passed through São João del-Rei and mentioned that he had passed by, emphasizing that the old name of the street was *Cachaça's Street*, and that for him this would be a "less honest". Maldos (2011) reports on the street in question, emphasizing that it went into degradation in the early nineteenth century due to its transformation into bohemian and prostitution area. Sobrinho (2011) describes *Rua da Zona* with its cachaça trade and dubious nightlife.

Due to the decay due to the prostitution zones that worked there the street was very devalued, but in the last decade has been revitalized and considered as part of the historical center of São João del-Rei. In Figure 1 it is possible to see Marechal Bittencourt Street or *Cachaça's Street* around 1956 and Figure 2 in the present day, with its colored houses and some restored facades.



Figure 1. Houses near Dr. Salatiel Square, at the beginning of Marechal Bittencourt Street, in São João del-Rei, Minas Gerais State, Brazil, in 1956. Source: Archives of the Regional Museum of São João del-Rei.



Figure 2. Marechal Bittencourt Street ending at Dr. Salatiel Square, in São João del-Rei, Minas Gerais State, Brazil, in 2017. Photography: Amanda Burgarelli Teixeira.

Cintra (1988) reports that important cultural and tourist institutions have settled there, such as the José Maria Neves Music Reference Center, the headquarters of the Free Popular Orchestra, the Women's Cultural Center and the Office of the Trail of the Inconfidentes, but still have many houses to renovate and so could have house shops, cafes, bookstores, etc.

As the time of existence of the street where the Square arose is much greater than this one, to know the history of this region of the city is essential to understand and clarify the appropriations and values attributed to Dr. Salatiel Square by the population of São João del-Rei, attesting to the importance of the inventive analysis of Lassus (1994). The place in study (the square and its surroundings) illustrates the great contrast of uses, because it is located very close to the *Nossa Senhora do Carmo* church, welcoming religious events, but at the same time it is marked by the profane,

because in much of its history harbored the bohemian life of this city.

The square opening

The place where today it houses the Dr. Salatiel Square before was composed of residences that gave way to a square one in the period of the sanitation of São João del-Rei. Analyzing the Urban Tithe of *Cachaça's Street* in 1826, a document that shows the relation of residences and their inhabitants, it can be observed that there were twenty-four houses on the right side of the street and twenty-eight houses left side. Figure 3 shows the supposed division of these dwellings. The assumption is due to the fact that no files were found with the exact drawing nor the measurements of each residence. This simulation was carried out from a simple relation of residences, before the opening of the broad.



Figure 3. Division of lots before the opening of the square Dr. Salatiel Square, in 1826.

Looking at Figure 4, the drawing of the lots nowadays, it is assumed that some of them have been uniting with the passage of time and currently the right side counts with only 21 (twenty one) lots. It is also noticed that

13 (thirteen) residences were probably demolished for the opening of *Cachaça's Largo* and later the creation of Dr. Salatiel Square, which occupies the place of the old space.



Figure 4. Batch division currently, with the insertion of the Dr. Salatiel Square (Cachaça's Largo).

Dr. Salatiel Square

In 1920, due to the sanitary concern that took care of the time, 13 (thirteen) residences were demolished in the *Cachaça's Street*, as already mentioned previously. With the demolition of the houses creating a square in the place,

dividing the street in two parts: João Jacob Sewaybricker Street in the direction of *Prainha* and Marechal Bittencourt Street in the direction of the Carmo's Church. In Figure 5 it is possible to visualize the existing width in the place, around 1938.



Figure 5. View of Cachça Square around 1938.
Source: Archives of the Regional Museum of São João del-Rei.

The square created in 1920, was only named on February 12, 1925, honoring the Dr., Dr. Salatiel, important politician of the State and the city. The square had already been landscaped approximately in 1940, where there was a leafy tree in its center, surrounded by pruned bushes, following the aesthetic model in vogue of that time. It is also possible to see the presence of flowers in the borders of their flowerbeds, probably roses, because near the 1950's it was common to plant these flowers in the squares of São João del-Rei.

The configuration of this landscaping shows that the intention of the public power to leverage the conditions not only hygienic, but also aesthetic of that area, and perhaps

even moral, considering the activities that supported the bohemian life, which occurred in its vicinity in that period.

Analyzing old photographs of the Dr. Salatiel Square and comparing with the current situation of the same it is possible to realize that its landscaping has undergone considerable aesthetic modifications. The flowerbeds were significantly lower than the present ones, as well as the vegetation that composed the place. It is noticed that this change of vegetation pattern limited the field of view of the Square, creating a feeling of denseness. In Figure 6 one has the square around 1956, with its low flowerbeds and a vegetation predominantly shrub and ordered.



Figure 6. Dr. Salatiel Square landscaped in the 1950s. Source: IPHAN.

The current image of the square (Figure 7), one perceives a predominantly arboreal vegetation, with the presence of several isolated, anarchically planted shrub species. It is

still noticeable a border of sky flower (*Duranta repens*) in all its flowerbeds.

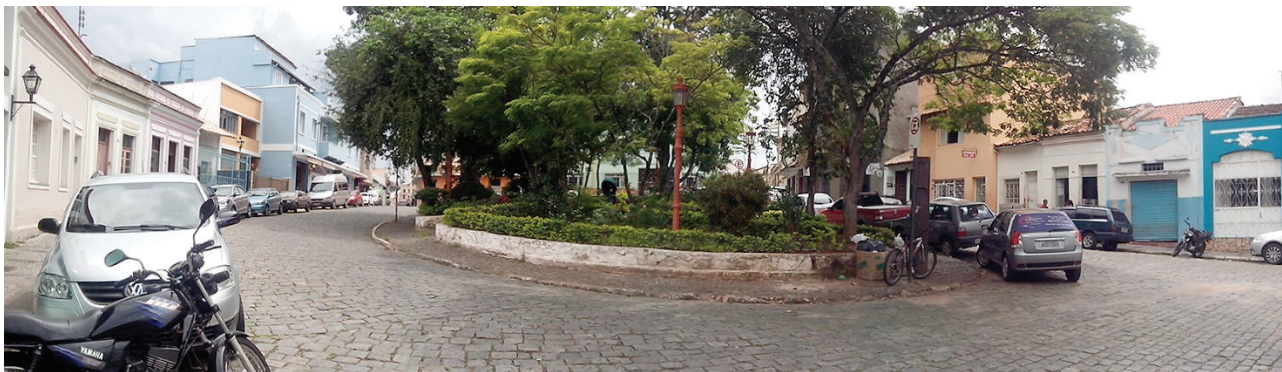


Figure 7. Dr. Salatiel Square in 2015. Image: Amanda Burgarelli Teixeira.

At present, the Square presents an intense visual pollution caused by too many vehicles and garbage accumulation in its surroundings. In addition to this carelessness with garbage, excess of vehicles and alterations to the landscaping of the square, it is also noted that the residences around it were transformed. In the mid-twentieth century there were façades where colonial and eclectic styles prevailed, very different from those found today in the same place.

Analyzing the composition of the equipment of the square, it is noticed that at the moment it has four benches, six lighting poles, four metal dumps, a public telephone and the monument of the Real Road.

Both the paths and the edges of the flowerbeds are made of stone. It is possible to observe the modification in the original height of the beds because there is a perceptible division of material that accentuates the difference in heights (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Flowerbeds of Dr. Salatiel Square, in 2016. Image: Amanda Burgarelli Teixeira.

The botanical composition of Dr. Salatiel Square presents a large number of species planted in a rather disorderly manner. The species with their popular and scientific names, as well as their families and the quantity

of them in the square are represented in Figure 9 shows the floor plan of the Dr. Salatiel Square, where it is possible to observe its physical and botanical composition, according to an on-site survey in 2016.

Table 1. Botanical Memorial of the Doctor Salatiel Square, according to a survey carried out in 2016.

Name	Scientific name	Family	Number of individuals per species
Ipê	<i>Handroanthus</i> sp.	Bignoniaceae	03
Quaresmeira	<i>Tibouchina granulosa</i>	Melastomataceae	01
Sibipiruna	<i>Caesalpinia pluviosa</i>	Fabaceae	05
Cedro	<i>Cedrela fissilis</i>	Meliaceae	02
Pata-de-vaca	<i>Bauhinia forficata</i>	Fabaceae	01
Paineira	<i>Ceiba</i> sp.	Malvaceae	02
Magnólia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Magnoliaceae	01
Alfeneiro-do-Japão	<i>Ligustrum lucidum</i>	Oleaceae	01
Pitangueira	<i>Eugenia uniflora</i>	Myrtaceae	01
Goiabeira	<i>Psidium guajava</i>	Myrtaceae	01
Areca	<i>Dyopsis lutescens</i>	Arecaceae	01
Azaléia	<i>Rhododendron simsii</i>	Ericaceae	03
Pingo-de-ouro	<i>Duranta repens</i>	Verbenaceae	On every edge of the flowerbeds
Cróton	<i>Codiaeum variegatum</i>	Euphorbiaceae	01
Dracena-vermelha	<i>Cordyline terminalis</i>	Laxmanniaceae	01
Iuca	<i>Yucca filamentosa</i>	Agavaceae	01
Ipê-mirim	<i>Tecoma stans</i>	Bignoniaceae	01
Palma	<i>Nopalea</i> sp.	Cactaceae	01
Pau-d'água	<i>Dracaena fragrans</i>	Asparagaceae	01
Falsa-íris	<i>Neomarica caerulea</i>	Iridaceae	01
Trapoeraba-roxa	<i>Tradescantia pallida</i> var. <i>purpurea</i>	Commelinaceae	02

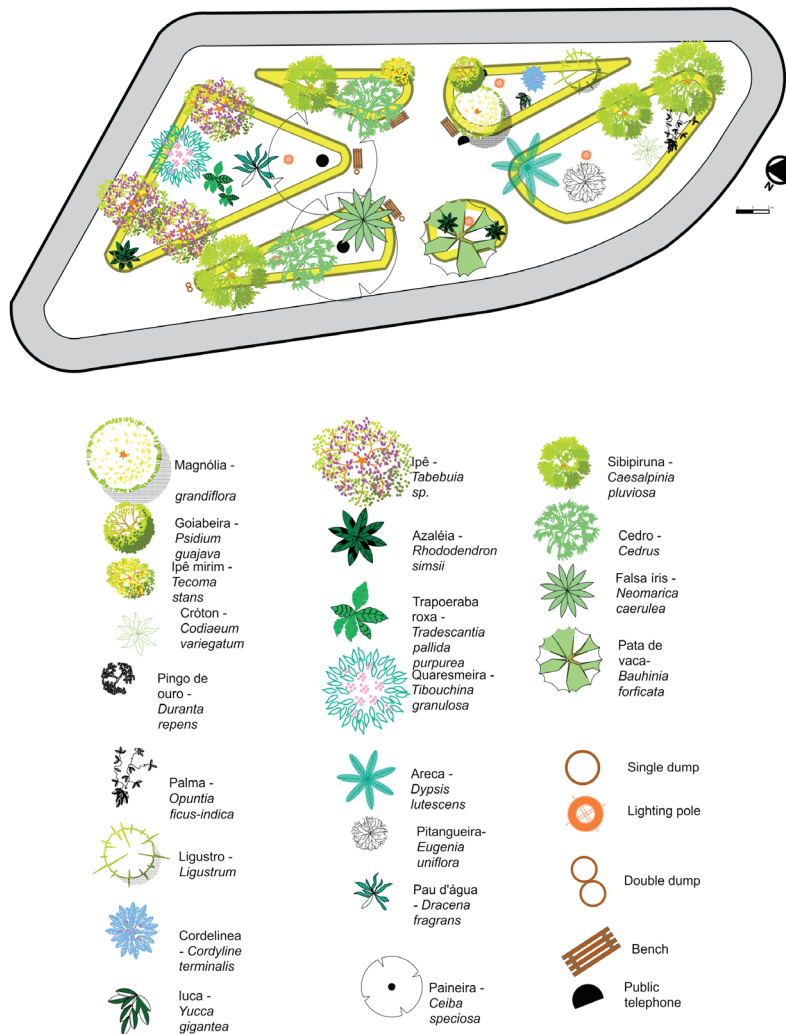


Figure 9. Floor Plan of the Dr. Salatiel Square.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Through the study it was possible to verify that the Dr. Salatiel Square has an important historical and cultural value in the municipality of São João del-Rei, Minas Gerais State. It is a point of reference for the social life of the population of its surroundings, being used by diverse social groups; inhabitants, merchants and passers-by. The Square is in a precarious state of preservation, with inadequate physical and aesthetic structure. It presents several species with botanical and landscape interest, but it is necessary to redefine the flowerbeds, the vegetal species, and the requalification of their spaces, uses and functions.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

A.B.T.: conception and design of the research, obtaining data, analyze and data interpretation, write and critically analyses of manuscript. **N.C.A.:** conception and design of the research, obtaining data, analyze and data interpretation. **S.F.N.S.C.A.:** conception and design of the research, obtaining data, analyze and data interpretation, write and critically analyses of manuscript and obtaining funding.

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