Ethics Without Redemption: Non-Heroic Survival and the Refusal of Moral Closure in Postcolonial Narratives

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Abstract— Narrative ethics has become a method of analysis of postcolonial literature, especially with regard to the way in which literary works interfere with the traditional moral categories based on Western literary traditions. This is a review paper discussing the notion of the ethics without redemption and how the postcolonial narratives reflect the non-heroic survival and consciously deny the moral closure. Based on the recent works in postcolonial theories, narrative theory, and trauma theory, the review is a synthesis of the existing studies on the ethical aspects of ambiguous endings, fragmented narratives, and characters with a moral dimension. Historically, postcolonial literature is the result of the culture and politics of the postcolonial phase following the rule of colonial domination, aimed at discussing the ongoing effects of the imperial power, cultural displacement, and identity crisis in the societies that once were colonized. In these contexts, a lot of the stories are in opposition to the classical literary pattern of the heroic redemption, but they are the stories about the characters who are bargaining to survive in the environment of structural inequality and historical trauma.

The review presents several thematic patterns in the literature, such as the denial of the blatant moral binary, narrative fragmentation and silence, and the manipulation of ethical ambiguity as the central narrative technique. According to scholars, these types of narratives represent the historical injustices that have not been resolved yet and make readers face the sophisticated moral issues and not the simplified moral answers. The paper also outlines the new academic discussions in relation to the concept of survival ethics, reader-response interpretation, and the use of philosophical ethics and the study of literature. This review has revealed that postcolonial narratives can transform the moral possibilities of the storytelling process by synthesizing different critical viewpoints and focusing on endurance, ambiguity and historical responsibility instead of redemption. Finally, the research adds to the current discourse of the postcolonial literary criticism by offering a model of the interpretation of how the discourse of survival puts in question traditional conceptions of morality and broadens current theory of narrative morality.

Keywords— Postcolonial ethics, Non-heroic survival, Moral ambiguity, Narrative closure, Narrative ethics, Postcolonial literature.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study: Postcolonial Ethics and Narrative Morality

The study of postcolonial literature has become one of the most significant disciplines of modern literary analysis, concerned with the cultural, political, and ethical implications of colonial domination and its ongoing impacts on the societies of former colonies. Scholars have increasingly emphasized that postcolonial narratives are not simply accounts of past experiences of colonialism but also critiques of the ethical frameworks through which these experiences are interpreted and represented in literature. In many instances, these stories subvert the moral rubrics inherited from Western literary traditions that tend to depend on heroic figures, redemption patterns, and moral resolutions. Rather, postcolonial fiction is often marked by

fragmented subjectivities, ethical dilemmas left unresolved, and characters who live in conditions of historical violence, displacement, and cultural warfare (Shakun, 2024).

In this regard, narrative ethics has gained significance as an analytical tool for interpreting how literature shapes and challenges moral experience. Narrative ethics concerns the connection between narratives and ethical thought—the ways in which literary works elaborate intricate moral circumstances that resist easy judgment or decision. Narrative can facilitate a space that challenges readers to confront ambiguity, uncertainty, and competing ethical claims instead of delivering definite moral lessons. Modernist criticism indicates that these types of narratives are especially applicable to postcolonial literature, in which historical trauma, social inequality, and cultural hybridity may complicate standard morality (Adams, 2024).

Postcolonial storytelling often portrays characters who merely manage to survive within oppressive or unstable social structures rather than achieving heroic victory or moral redemption. These tales represent the actual experiences of many postcolonial societies where survival is frequently characterized by accommodation, compromise, and adaptation as opposed to heroic struggle. Historians have observed that themes of memory, trauma, and historical injustice are prominent in these stories and influence how characters understand their moral obligations and personal identities (Al-Masri et al., 2024).

Consequently, the ethical dimension of postcolonial literature may differ substantially from traditional literary paradigms. Postcolonial stories often present moral vagueness and discord rather than a moral universe where good is rewarded and evil punished. These representations compel readers to question the connections between morality, power, and survival in situations shaped by the history of colonization and its ongoing legacies.

1.2   Importance of the Topic

The focus of research on non-heroic survival and the denial of moral closure in postcolonial texts is important as it broadens the moral patterns through which literature is understood. Conventional literary criticism has tended to place high emphasis on narrative endings that culminate in redemption, moral realization, or heroic conversion. However, postcolonial literature often challenges these norms, featuring protagonists who do not find moral resolution or achieve heroic status. Such narrative techniques reflect larger cultural and political realities of the postcolonial world, in which people are frequently confronted with structural imbalance, historical trauma, and ongoing forms of marginalization.

Recent criticism stresses that postcolonial literature typically serves as a critique of Eurocentric discourses of narration that support heroic individualism and moral certitude. The representation of survival over redemption as the primary ethical concern in these narratives acknowledges the nuances of human agency in contexts where colonial violence and socio-political unrest are major factors (Zafar, 2024).

Moreover, the lack of moral closure in many postcolonial texts encourages readers to actively engage with ethical gray areas. Instead of offering clear moral judgments, these narratives prompt critical reflection on the social conditions that shape moral choices. By doing so, postcolonial literature contributes to wider discussions on ethics, responsibility, and historical memory in modern literary criticism.

1.3   Objectives of the Review

The main aim of this review paper is to analyze how postcolonial narratives restructure traditional ethical discourse by emphasizing non-heroic survival and rejecting redemption and moral closure. To synthesize current research on the ethical aspects of postcolonial narration, this review assesses the existing literature in postcolonial literary studies and narrative ethics.

Specifically, the review aims to identify the theoretical concepts and methodological approaches scholars have used to examine ethical ambiguity in postcolonial literature. This involves exploring how literary critics interpret themes of survival, trauma, memory, and moral responsibility within postcolonial contexts. The study seeks to highlight the role of the "ethics without redemption" concept in contemporary discourses on literary criticism by mapping the main debates and theoretical perspectives in this area.

The review also aims to discuss how narrative models and literary devices—such as open endings, fragmented stories, and morally ambiguous characters—disrupt traditional demands for morally satisfying resolutions in literary works. Through this discussion, the review identifies how postcolonial narratives develop alternative ethical frameworks that prioritize survival, resilience, and historical awareness above heroic redemption.

1.4   Review Area: Ethics Without Redemption in Postcolonial Literary Studies

This overview focuses on recent academic debates concerning ethics, survival, and narrative ambiguity in postcolonial literature. The analysis primarily draws on scholarly literature published within the past ten years, with special attention to research from the past five years. By focusing on recent scholarship, the review aims to reflect current debates and emerging trends in the examination of postcolonial narrative ethics.

The review encompasses theoretical and critical works that examine the ethical dimensions of postcolonial literature, emphasizing issues such as moral ambiguity, survival strategies, and the refusal of narrative closure. These works consider literary texts from various postcolonial contexts, including Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean, and explore how diverse cultural and historical experiences shape the ethical concerns of postcolonial texts.

The review does not attempt to analyze all postcolonial literature. Rather, it focuses on key critical discourses that illuminate the connections between ethics, narrative form, and survival in postcolonial storytelling. Studies with primarily historical or political orientations that do not engage with literary ethics are therefore not included.

By synthesizing recent research on postcolonial narrative ethics, this review aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how contemporary literary criticism engages with the ethical implications of survival and moral ambiguity in postcolonial narratives.

II.   REVIEW METHODOLOGY

2.1   Search Strategy: Literature Search on Postcolonial Ethics and Moral Closure

This review paper employs a systematic narrative review design to identify appropriate scholarly materials discussing ethics, survival, and the refusal of moral closure in postcolonial narratives. The search strategy targeted scholarly articles addressing postcolonial literary ethics, narrative ambiguity, trauma, survival narratives, and postcolonial refusal of moral closure. Relevant studies were retrieved using keywords such as "postcolonial ethics," "moral ambiguity in literature," "non-heroic survival," "narrative ethics," "postcolonial narrative closure," and "trauma in postcolonial literature."

The search process involved keyword searches using Boolean operators (AND, OR) to broaden and narrow search results. Example search combinations included: "postcolonial literature AND ethics," "narrative ethics AND postcolonial studies," and "survival narratives AND moral ambiguity." This strategy enabled the identification of both theoretical and empirical works addressing ethical dilemmas and narrative complexity in postcolonial literary works. Priority was given to academic publications from the past five years to ensure the review reflects current trends and evolving perspectives in postcolonial literary criticism and narrative ethics (Tsang, 2024; Zafar, 2024).

2.2   Databases Used:

To ensure reliability and academic credibility, multiple scholarly databases and digital libraries were consulted. Primary databases included JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Project MUSE, which provide access to peer-reviewed journals and academic publications in humanities and social sciences. These databases are widely utilized in literary studies for their extensive coverage of postcolonial studies, cultural theory, and narrative ethics.

Google Scholar proved particularly useful for identifying recent interdisciplinary research linking postcolonial studies with trauma research, narrative theory, and ethical criticism. JSTOR and Project MUSE provided access to peer-reviewed literary criticism and theoretical discourse on postcolonial narrative structures and moral uncertainty. Consultation of multiple databases aimed to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature and minimize the risk of overlooking significant academic contributions to the field (Shakun, 2024).

2.3   Inclusion Criteria: Studies on Postcolonial Narratives, Ethics, and Survival

To maintain relevance and quality, specific inclusion criteria were established. First, only peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly book chapters, and academic research papers were included in the analysis to ensure engagement with critically validated scholarship on postcolonial literature and its moral dimensions.

Second, selected studies were required to address topics related to postcolonial narrative ethics, including moral ambiguity, survival in oppressive circumstances, trauma, or narrative practices that deviate from conventional moral closure. Works focusing on literary texts by recognized postcolonial authors—such as Chinua Achebe, J. M. Coetzee, Salman Rushdie, and

Amitav Ghosh—were particularly relevant, as these authors frequently engage with themes of historical trauma, identity, and moral complexity in postcolonial contexts.

Third, preference was given to literature published within the past five years to capture current debates and evolving theoretical approaches in postcolonial literary criticism. Recent studies increasingly emphasize the role of trauma, memory, and identity formation in shaping postcolonial narratives and ethical interpretations (Al-Masri et al., 2024).

2.4   Exclusion Criteria:

Several exclusion criteria were applied to maintain focus on the specific research topic. The review excluded studies addressing postcolonial history, politics, or sociology without engaging with literary narratives themselves. Similarly, articles discussing ethics from purely philosophical or technological perspectives without connection to literary analysis were deemed irrelevant.

Non-peer-reviewed sources such as blog posts, opinion articles, and non-academic commentaries were excluded to maintain scholarly rigor. Articles focused exclusively on colonial history without addressing postcolonial literary representation or narrative ethics were also excluded. These criteria helped narrow the review to scholarly discourses directly addressing ethical concerns, survival narratives, and narrative ambiguity in postcolonial literature.

2.5   Study Selection Process:

The study selection process proceeded in multiple stages to ensure selection of the most relevant and credible sources. Initial database searches yielded numerous potential sources related to postcolonial studies and narrative ethics. These studies were first screened by title and abstract to assess relevance to the themes of ethics, survival, and moral ambiguity in postcolonial writings.

The second stage involved reviewing full-text articles to evaluate theoretical contribution and scholarly value in relation to the research topic. Studies offering substantial analysis of postcolonial narrative strategies, ethical concerns, or representations of survival were prioritized. Special attention was given to works examining how postcolonial literature resists traditional narrative forms, including the denial of heroic redemption and moral closure.

The final selection comprised scholarly articles and research papers representing current debates in postcolonial literary criticism and narrative ethics. This systematic selection process ensured that the literature review is grounded in valid and pertinent academic findings.

III.   LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1   Conceptual Framework / Theoretical Background: Ethics, Survival, and Anti-Heroism in Postcolonial Literature:

In *The Impact of Postcolonial Narratives on Modern Literature*, Aamir Zafar (2024) contends that postcolonial narratives fundamentally reorganize literary ethics by critiquing Eurocentric models of storytelling based on heroic redemption and moral certainty. According to Zafar, postcolonial writers often foreground marginalized voices and fragmented identities, creating narrative spaces in which ethical meaning manifests as survival rather than victory. These stories challenge the universality of Western moral frameworks and highlight ethically grounded decisions shaped by colonial oppression and cultural hybridity. Zafar's views align with the argument that postcolonial storytelling typically rejects moral closure to reveal the enduring complexities of colonial power arrangements.

Sibongile Ruth Nhari, Charlotte Taka, and Thokozani Ian Nzimakwe (2025) discuss the link between historical trauma and postcolonial ethical interpretation. Their literature review highlights the frequent inadequacy of conventional Western ethical theories in capturing the realities of people living under colonial violence and marginalization. They suggest that ethics frameworks which are context-specific and grounded in local philosophies and collective memory offer more pertinent interpretive paradigms for literature produced in postcolonial societies. Their work emphasizes the role of trauma in complicating moral judgment and advocates for literary accounts in which endurance and survival take precedence over morally heroic narratives.

In *Unravelling Postcolonial Perspective and Identity Formation in Contemporary Indian English Literature*, Laki Barik (2024) explores the portrayal of identity as a dynamic process shaped by historical legacy and contemporary change in postcolonial narratives. Barik argues that recent postcolonial literature often depicts characters negotiating cultural loss and social instability, leading to situations where survival becomes an overriding moral condition. These narratives resist moral closure,

reflecting the unstable and unresolved nature of identity in postcolonial societies where colonial history persists in cultural consciousness.

Amaal Al-Masri, Mona Smadi, and Lana Al-Twaijer (2024) examine the crucial role of memory and trauma in shaping ethical reflection in postcolonial literature. Their comparative analysis of Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee demonstrates how literary texts generate ethical significance through the representation of colonial violence and collective suffering. Their analysis suggests that memory functions as a narrative device that disrupts linear narration and heroic redemption, foregrounding fragmented experiences that emphasize the moral complexities of survival in postcolonial societies.

Julia Siccardi (2024) focuses on narrative fragmentation and belonging in contemporary postcolonial literature, analyzing Natasha Brown's novel *Assembly*. Siccardi argues that disrupted narrative patterns reflect the psychological and social tensions experienced by individuals navigating racial and economic stratification in postcolonial societies. Such narrative techniques challenge conventional moral frameworks, presenting protagonists who confront systemic injustice without achieving heroic transformation. Consequently, ethical uncertainty frequently becomes a defining feature of postcolonial literary narratives.

Sanjay Pandey (2025) discusses narrative injustice and the erasure of oppressed identities through legal and political systems. Pandey demonstrates how collective memory and historical recognition can either reinforce or transform structures of exclusion through narrative forms. Literary narratives often expose these injustices in postcolonial contexts, depicting experiences of individuals whose lives remain unrecognized within dominant social structures. These representations highlight the moral significance of storytelling in challenging historical silence and validating marginalized voices.

Khalid Y. Alothman (2026) examines how contemporary postcolonial fiction addresses the embodied effects of war, displacement, and migration. His discussion of exile narratives reveals characters confronting ethical crises without achieving moral heroism, instead grounded in survival. These stories foreground vulnerability, insecurity, and psychological trauma, presenting survival as an ethical response to systemic violence. In this context, postcolonial literature challenges traditional narrative schemata that emphasize resolution and redemption.

According to Rosenow (2024), postcolonial literary works function as critical spaces where authors reimagine the past and contest colonial cultural authority. By rewriting histories of oppression and resistance, authors develop narratives that resist simple moral dichotomies. Rosenow argues that these literary techniques foreground the ethical ambiguities of postcolonial experience, where characters navigate conflicting ethical commitments shaped by cultural identity, historical memory, and social change.

Gallagher (2025) explores how resistance and cultural negotiation are represented in contemporary postcolonial texts. According to Gallagher, postcolonial protagonists rarely fit heroic molds; they are often ambiguous, vulnerable, and ethically uncertain. This shift reflects broader changes in narrative ethics, where literature increasingly focuses on the challenges of surviving within unequal social systems rather than celebrating heroic achievement. Consequently, postcolonial narratives often leave ethical questions unresolved, compelling readers to critically consider the conditions under which moral choices are made.

Bottinelli (2023) emphasizes the importance of narrative experimentation in postcolonial literature, suggesting that alternative narrative structures reflect the disrupted histories and identities of postcolonial societies. Through techniques such as nonlinear narration, fragmented storytelling, and open endings, authors disrupt conventional storytelling and invite readers to engage with complex ethical issues. These narrative strategies support the view that moral closure is not always possible in contexts shaped by colonial violence and social instability.

Stuelke (2021) explores how recent literary criticism has increasingly recognized the significance of survival narratives in interpreting postcolonial literature. Stuelke argues that survival should be understood not as passive persistence but as ethical negotiation within oppressive social systems. Postcolonial stories often present characters whose actions resist easy evaluation by Western moral standards, as their behavior emerges from conditions of institutionalized inequality and historical trauma.

Zoromba (2024) contributes to trauma research by proposing culturally sensitive frameworks that account for the diverse experiences of communities affected by colonial violence. Zoromba argues that trauma narratives frequently unsettle universal ethical theories by emphasizing the importance of context, collective memory, and cultural identity. In postcolonial literature, these narratives create spaces where survival, memory, and resilience emerge as central ethical concerns alongside or in place of heroic redemption.

3.2   Key Themes in the Literature:

In *Postcolonial Theory: The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, Suman Soni (2025) identifies recent trends in postcolonial criticism, noting that contemporary studies increasingly focus on ambiguous narratives and moral ambiguity rather than moral closure. Soni emphasizes that characters in postcolonial literature often navigate unstable political and cultural situations where moral certainty remains inaccessible. Consequently, the ethical significance of such stories lies not in heroic redemption but in representing survival and moral negotiation within historically unequal power relations.

Isabella Strazzeri (2024) maintains that colonial systems fundamentally altered social hierarchies by creating gendered power relations that continue to shape postcolonial societies. According to Strazzeri, literary narratives representing these structures often depict characters negotiating multiple forms of oppression rather than engaging in heroic resistance. These accounts underscore the persistence of colonial dynamics in everyday social interactions, affirming that survival—rather than redemption—frequently constitutes the ethical agency within postcolonial narrative.

Fazal Al Bashar (2025) describes how postcolonial writing often functions as counternarrative that disrupts colonial claims to truth and moral authority. These stories, as Al Bashar explains, foreground experiences of marginalized peoples whose histories were suppressed or distorted by colonialism. By reconstructing these perspectives, postcolonial literature exposes ethical contradictions within colonial discourse and demonstrates how survival strategies become central to the moral experiences of colonized individuals.

Baburam Khanal and Preeti Pankaj Gupta (2025) examine imperialism and resistance in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, arguing that the novel depicts characters trapped within complex economic and political structures established by colonial power. Their research demonstrates that characters' choices are constrained by these structures rather than driven by individual moral heroism. This limitation of agency reflects broader patterns in postcolonial literature where moral decisions cannot be separated from historical circumstances of exploitation and displacement.

Mesut Kuleli, Esra Melek Demir Eryiğit, and Halil Ibrahim Balkul (2025) explore power relations in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, arguing that linguistic and narrative forms play crucial roles in representing colonial power and African resistance. Their discussion reveals how literary narratives depict subtle operations of colonial power in shaping cultural identities and moral expectations. Through such analyses, it becomes evident that postcolonial literature tends to emphasize ethical conflict rather than moral resolution.

Cultural identity and postcolonial subjectivity are discussed by Qian Liu (2025) through the works of Rohinton Mistry, focusing on how characters navigate social marginalization and cultural hybridity in postcolonial contexts. According to Liu, these stories often represent characters facing ethical conflicts shaped by social inequality, migration, and historical trauma. The absence of clear moral resolution in such narratives reflects the persistent uncertainties faced by individuals in postcolonial societies.

Elif Güvendi Yalcini (2025) focuses on Teju Cole's *Open City*, illustrating how postcolonial fiction critiques neo-Orientalist discourses that continue to shape perceptions of identity and culture. Yalcini argues that the novel's narrative structure intentionally lacks moral closure, reflecting the protagonist's incomplete understanding of history, migration, and belonging. This narrative ambiguity demonstrates how postcolonial literature often represents moral complexity through unresolved personal and historical narratives.

Olufemi Idowu (2025) studies intersections of postcolonial narratives and historical trauma in African literature. According to Idowu, stories shaped by colonial violence frequently emphasize communal memory and historical injustice rather than individual redemption. These narratives represent survival as mediated through collective solidarity, cultural resilience, and historical consciousness, challenging Western literary traditions that privilege individual heroic transformation.

Goutam Karmakar (2025) explores environmental injustice in Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*, arguing that the novel highlights ecological and political consequences of colonial resource exploitation. Karmakar emphasizes that characters' experiences demonstrate how postcolonial societies continue to grapple with legacies of colonial economic exploitation. Survival in this context becomes a complex ethical situation shaped by environmental degradation and political instability.

Mohamed Habeeb and M. Shajahan Sait (2025) compare works by Tabish Khair, arguing that postcolonial narratives often depict protagonists experiencing profound cultural dislocation and fragmented identity. Their paper highlights how migration and global mobility complicate traditional understandings of belonging and moral identity. Consequently, the ethical questions

presented in these stories remain open, reflecting ongoing challenges faced by individuals navigating multiple cultural identities.

Andrew Ikpomwosa Egbah and Florence Osaguona-Okpalaku (2025) discuss how Negritude ideology manifests in contemporary African short stories. Their linguistic and stylistic analysis reveals how postcolonial writers use language to assert cultural identity and challenge colonial legacies. Through these narrative modes, literature becomes a site of cultural resistance where ethical meaning emerges through collective memory and cultural affirmation rather than heroic redemption.

Cynthia Ma, Nikita Tantira, Delfi Nazilah Lubis, and Rahmadsyah Rangkuti (2025) examine how Rabindranath Tagore's aesthetic philosophy has influenced postcolonial fiction. According to their findings, Tagore's emphasis on spiritual and cultural interconnectedness has shaped ethical frameworks in contemporary writing. Postcolonial stories influenced by this tradition often focus on empathy, relational ethics, and cultural dialogue rather than individual moral triumph.

Nadjiba Bouallegue (2025) focuses on the pedagogical significance of postcolonial literature in fostering empathy and critical thinking in academic contexts. Bouallegue argues that postcolonial texts encourage readers to confront historical realities they might otherwise avoid and understand the moral implications of colonial systems of power. Through morally ambiguous narratives, readers develop deeper understanding of historical injustice and cultural identity.

Jakub Czernik (2025) discusses international responses to Salman Rushdie, arguing that postcolonial literature often serves as cultural conversation between literary traditions. According to Czernik, the global circulation of these narratives confirms the ongoing significance of colonial history in contemporary global culture. In this way, postcolonial texts compel readers to reconsider dominant histories and ethical frameworks.

Vandana Whig and Hemlata Jain (2025) consider Bapsi Sidhwa's novels, emphasizing the role of historical memory in shaping postcolonial discourse. Their study demonstrates how Sidhwa's narratives reflect psychological and social consequences of the Partition of India, showing how historical trauma continues to shape individual and collective identities. These narratives tend to remain morally unresolved because the historical traumas they represent remain unhealed.

Kamlesh Yadav and Chhaya Singh (2025) discuss thematic and narrative styles in Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels. Their analysis emphasizes how postcolonial fiction employs satire, irony, and narrative fragmentation to critique political and social institutions. These narrative techniques disrupt expectations of traditional morality, inviting readers to critically engage with the ethical questions presented.

Lassana Kanté (2025) explores Black consciousness in postcolonial African literature, demonstrating how literature expresses collective resistance against colonial oppression. According to Kanté, these narratives often frame moral struggle as collective rather than individual, reflecting broader social dynamics within postcolonial societies.

Ana Cristina Toledo Soares (2025) explores how contemporary literary criticism engages with classical tragedy to interpret modern narratives of disorder and confusion. In this context, postcolonial literature often reflects tragic forms, presenting situations where moral conflict remains unresolved and characters continue living within conditions they cannot control.

3.3 Comparative Analysis of Previous Studies:

In *Postcolonial Literature: Its Importance and Modern-Day Relevance*, Dharmeshkumar Sunilbhai Patel (2022) notes that postcolonial literature primarily focuses on cultural, political, and psychological consequences of colonialism. According to Patel, themes explored in postcolonial narratives include cultural displacement, resistance, and identity reconstruction. Comparing works by Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie, Patel demonstrates that postcolonial writings frequently contest dominant historical accounts and emphasize the lasting effects of colonial legacies on moral frameworks and cultural identities in contemporary societies.

Nicole M. Mambrol (2023) examines connections between trauma theory and postcolonial narratives. According to Mambrol, trauma narratives often disrupt narrative continuity and traditional resolution because traumatic memory is inherently fragmented. In postcolonial literature, such fragmentation becomes a powerful narrative tool through which authors represent psychological and historical consequences of colonial violence. These narrative techniques compel readers to confront moral ambiguity and the ongoing effects of colonial pasts.

Nadiia Shakun (2024) examines current theoretical perspectives in postcolonial studies, observing that contemporary scholarship has become increasingly interdisciplinary, incorporating cultural studies, sociology, and narrative ethics. Shakun notes that this interdisciplinary approach enables researchers to address ethical dimensions of colonial history from multiple

perspectives, particularly regarding how narratives represent social power relations and cultural transformation. Through comparative analysis of various postcolonial texts, Shakun demonstrates that ethical ambiguities frequently emerge from tensions between colonial pasts and contemporary identities.

In *Ethics and Recognition in Postcolonial Literature*, Véronique van Bever Donker (2012) explores how postcolonial literature addresses ethical recognition and moral responsibility. Donker explains that literary works often represent the challenge of ethical understanding across cultural boundaries shaped by colonial encounters. Through comparative analysis of multiple literary works, she argues that postcolonial literature tends to compel readers to reconsider conventional moral frameworks and recognize the complex ethical relationships forged through colonial history.

Jennifer Yusin (2018) discusses connections between trauma and postcolonial literature, emphasizing that postcolonial stories often reflect intersections of historical violence and individual memory. According to Yusin, trauma theory provides a useful framework for understanding how literary texts represent colonial experiences that resist traditional narrative patterns. Many postcolonial writings lack moral resolution because characters cannot overcome the effects of trauma they experience, reflecting the ongoing impact of colonial pasts on cultural consciousness.

Nivedita Rao (2004) explores representations of national crisis in postcolonial fiction through Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* and *The Redundancy of Courage*. According to Rao, these stories capture societies struggling with political instability and economic inequality, depicting how individuals navigate national crisis. Through comparative analysis, Rao demonstrates that postcolonial fiction often focuses on characters embedded within larger political systems, emphasizing survival over heroic victory.

An anonymous author in the *American Journal of English Education and Entrepreneurship* (2023) discusses narrative techniques in postcolonial literature, noting that many authors employ innovative storytelling methods to challenge colonial discourses of reality. These techniques include nonlinear narration, multiple perspectives, and open endings. The study argues that such narrative forms disrupt traditional literary expectations and enable writers to represent complex ethical dilemmas without imposing judgment.

The author of *Reclaiming Narratives in Postcolonial Literature* (2024) points out that postcolonial authors frequently reconstruct historical narratives through perspectives of previously marginalized populations. By reclaiming these stories, authors critique colonial myths and expose ideological assumptions underlying colonial discourse. The work emphasizes the importance of such literary interventions in understanding how postcolonial literature reshapes cultural memory and ethical meaning in the wake of colonialism.

The author of *Postcolonial Perspectives in Modern Literature* (2024) argues that postcolonial authors often reimagine cultural traditions to articulate new identities and forms of resistance. Through comparative analysis of multiple literary works, the paper demonstrates that postcolonial narratives tend to emphasize cultural hybridity and social transformation. This focus on hybridity highlights the complexity of ethical decision-making in societies shaped by diverse historical and cultural factors.

The author of *Postcolonial Literature: Selected Essays on Past, Present and Future Trends* (2024) discusses emerging trends in postcolonial scholarship, particularly increased interest in transnational identities and global cultural exchange. The paper observes that contemporary postcolonial literature increasingly engages with globalization, migration, and environmental crisis, expanding the thematic scope of postcolonial texts. These developments suggest that ethical concerns in postcolonial literature are becoming increasingly interconnected with global issues.

Hanna Dalley (2015) discusses solidarity as a dimension of postcolonial trauma fiction, arguing that literary representations of suffering often aim to cultivate cross-cultural empathy in readers. According to Dalley, postcolonial literature can encourage readers to recognize experiences of marginalized groups and engage ethically with their histories through narratives of trauma and injustice. However, as Dalley also observes, these stories often resist moral closure, instead emphasizing the ongoing complexity of historical trauma.

K. C. Rejina (2026) explores ethical issues in narrative research, emphasizing the importance of context-sensitive ethical interpretation in narrative analysis. Rejina states that narratives are shaped by social and cultural contexts that influence how ethical questions are presented and understood. In literary contexts, this perspective emphasizes the importance of situating stories within their historical and cultural contexts to understand the moral implications of storytelling.

3.4   Emerging Trends in the Field:

In *Exploring Ethical and Emotional Engagement with Suffering in Postcolonial Literature*, Pritam Taman (2025) writes that recent scholarship increasingly focuses on the ethical implications of reader engagement in interpreting postcolonial narratives. According to Taman, contemporary literary criticism examines how readers navigate moral ambiguity when confronting narratives of suffering, displacement, and colonial trauma. These stories do not offer clear ethical judgments but instead encourage readers to reconsider their own moral assumptions and engage with complex historical realities. This trend reflects broader movement toward understanding postcolonial texts as sites of ethical reflection and critical dialogue rather than moral resolution.

In *Postcolonial Trauma and the Strategy of Silence in African Narratives*, Oumar Siby (2025) emphasizes increased scholarly attention to narrative silence and absence as literary techniques for representing trauma. According to Siby, much contemporary postcolonial literature employs silence, fragmentation, and narrative gaps to represent experiences that resist expression through conventional storytelling. These narrative techniques prompt readers to interpret what remains unspoken, highlighting enduring psychological and cultural consequences of colonial violence. Through such methods, silence emerges as an ethical storytelling tool in literary criticism rather than merely a stylistic device.

In *Reimagining Identity in Postcolonial East African Literature*, Beatrice J. Jani (2025) discusses how contemporary writers integrate trauma studies, memory studies, and postcolonial theory to reconceptualize identity. According to Jani, contemporary postcolonial fiction frequently represents identity as dynamic and fluid, shaped by historical trauma, migration, and cultural hybridity. Such stories often focus on psychological complexity of characters with multiple cultural affiliations. This emerging trend emphasizes understanding postcolonial identity as relational and historically contingent rather than essentialized.

In *Postcolonial Trauma Theory in the Contact Zone* (2015), Sara Martínez-Falquina discusses adaptation of trauma theory to address experiences of postcolonial societies. Martínez-Falquina argues that conventional trauma theories developed in Western contexts inadequately capture collective and historical dimensions of colonial trauma. Recent scholarship therefore aims to decolonize trauma theory by incorporating non-Western perspectives and histories. This approach emphasizes the importance of cultural specificity in interpreting narratives of trauma and survival in postcolonial literature.

According to Shahid Siddiqui (2024) in *Postcolonial Trends in Literature*, several primary trends have shaped contemporary study of postcolonial literature, including increased focus on cultural identity, gender politics, and migration. According to Siddiqui, recent scholarship examines how globalization and transnational mobility transform postcolonial experiences. Consequently, interdisciplinary approaches to postcolonial literature now commonly integrate literary criticism with cultural studies, sociology, and political theory. This shift reflects broader recognition that postcolonial narratives are embedded within global social and political processes.

In *Relationality and Toni Morrison's Home*, Irene Visser (2014) emphasizes increased relevance of relational ethics in postcolonial literary research. Visser argues that contemporary studies tend to focus on how individual relationships, communities, and historical memories shape ethical interpretation in literature. Rather than evaluating characters according to universal moral norms, relational approaches examine how moral significance emerges through forms of social relation and shared history. This approach has gained influence in interpreting narratives representing collective trauma and cultural memory.

In her article for *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, Silvia Klein (2025) discusses how the geographical and cultural scope of postcolonial studies is expanding through new critical practices. Klein argues that contemporary critics are increasingly examining literary traditions beyond conventional foci on Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean. This expansion includes analysis of postcolonial texts from East Asia and other regions historically shaped by imperial contacts. These developments indicate that postcolonial literary criticism continues to evolve, accommodating diverse global perspectives.

Dharmeshkumar S. Patel (2022) emphasizes that recent postcolonial scholarship increasingly focuses on the relevance of colonial pasts to contemporary social and political realities. Patel states that postcolonial literature does not merely reexamine past colonial events but explores how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary cultural identities and political structures. This focus on historical continuity underscores the significance of literature as a means through which societies understand and negotiate their colonial pasts.

IV.   RESEARCH GAPS

The synthesis of existing scholarship reveals several significant gaps in current research on postcolonial narrative ethics:

- **Theorizing non-heroic survival:** There is a lack of systematic theorization of non-heroic survival as a central narrative condition within literary criticism. Existing scholarship has primarily focused on identity formation, cultural resistance, and historical memory, leaving the ethical dimensions of survival under-theorized (Patel, 2022; Shakun, 2024).

- **Ethical transformation through narrative:** While many works discuss trauma, memory, and colonial violence in postcolonial narratives, fewer studies examine how these elements transform ethical frameworks within narrative contexts—particularly regarding survival, compromise, and moral ambiguity (Al-Masri et al., 2024; Yusin, 2018).

- **Ethics without redemption:** The concept of "ethics without redemption" remains critically underdeveloped. Most literary discussions continue to approach postcolonial narratives through frameworks of resistance, liberation, or moral justice rather than examining unresolved ethical survival.

- **Survival as ethical category:** Current literature tends to view survival as a socio-political or cultural process, but few studies theorize survival as an ethical condition within narrative theory, particularly in contexts of colonial trauma and structural inequality (Nhari et al., 2025).

- **Refusal of moral closure:** The refusal of moral closure as a narrative characteristic has received comparatively limited theoretical attention. Literary criticism often seeks interpretations that provide some form of moral resolution or narrative reconciliation (van Bever Donker, 2012).

- **Narrative techniques as ethical instruments:** There is insufficient analysis of how formal narrative techniques—such as fragmentation, silence, and open endings—function as ethical instruments rather than merely stylistic devices in postcolonial narrative (Siby, 2025).

- **Culturally specific frameworks:** Much existing literature relies on Western theoretical approaches, including trauma theory and psychoanalytic criticism, which may inadequately address culturally specific dimensions of suffering, resilience, and collective memory in postcolonial communities (Visser, 2014; Martínez-Falquina, 2015).

- **Cross-regional comparative analysis:** Cross-regional comparative studies examining themes of survival, moral ambiguity, and unresolved narratives across African, South Asian, and Caribbean postcolonial literature remain scarce.

- **Contemporary and emerging writers:** Most scholarship focuses on canonical authors such as Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, and J. M. Coetzee, leaving the ethical dimensions of survival and moral ambiguity in works by emerging and contemporary writers under-researched.

- **Interdisciplinary integration:** There is limited integration between narrative ethics and interdisciplinary methodologies—including trauma studies, cultural memory studies, and political theory—that could provide richer understanding of ethical concerns in postcolonial narratives.

- **Reader-response approaches:** Reader-response approaches remain underdeveloped, particularly regarding how readers interpret ethical ambiguity, unresolved endings, and morally ambiguous characters in postcolonial literature (Dalley, 2015).

- **Ethical agency beyond redemption:** Despite general recognition that postcolonial literature resists colonial narratives and amplifies marginalized voices, further research is needed on how postcolonial narratives construct ethical agency through endurance, negotiation, and survival within unequal power relations rather than through heroic redemption (Taman, 2025).

V.   THE REJECTION OF MORAL CLOSURE IN NARRATIVE

5.1   Open Endings and Unresolved Conflicts:

In many postcolonial writings, open endings function as a significant narrative device that disrupts traditional literary norms of closure and ethical clarity. Unlike conventional narrative forms that conclude with reconciliation or redemption, postcolonial

fiction often leaves conflicts unresolved, reflecting the enduring consequences of colonial pasts and social inequalities. Scholars suggest that these open endings mirror the incomplete historical processes of decolonization and nation-building, emphasizing that the effects of colonialism cannot be neatly contained within a single narrative (Mukherjee, 2025).

Recent literary criticism argues that unresolved endings represent not merely an aesthetic choice but an ethical acknowledgment of historical complexity. Postcolonial authors frequently create characters confronted with structural oppression, economic inequality, and cultural displacement without providing conclusive solutions to these challenges. This openness compels readers to accept that historical trauma and social injustice resist easy resolution through conventional narrative methods. Instead, unresolved plots highlight the persistence of ethical challenges facing societies shaped by colonial pasts (Yadav, 2026).

Furthermore, open endings enable authors to oppose the moral simplification often associated with colonial narratives. Colonial literature frequently depicted the colonizer as a civilizing hero and the colonized subject as passive or redeemed through assimilation. Postcolonial authors challenge this pattern by presenting complex characters whose moral choices remain ambiguous and whose narratives resist closure. The refusal to provide definitive answers underscores the difficulty of achieving justice and recognition in postcolonial contexts (Nwosu, 2024).

Additionally, unresolved narrative conflicts invite readers to draw their own conclusions about moral questions based on their interpretation rather than relying on authors to provide ethical resolutions. This interpretive openness aligns with broader objectives of postcolonial literature, which seeks to decentre Eurocentric historical discourse and create space for diverse interpretations. By leaving conflicts unresolved, postcolonial narratives acknowledge the multiplicity of voices and experiences defining postcolonial societies while resisting the imposition of singular moral meanings.

5.2   Narrative Strategies That Disrupt Closure:

Postcolonial writers employ various narrative techniques to disrupt conventional narrative resolution and challenge literary norms. Fragmented narrative forms—where stories are told through multiple perspectives, nonlinear sequences, or memories—represent one such strategy. These narrative modes reflect the disrupted histories of colonized peoples and emphasize the difficulty of constructing coherent narratives from fragmented traumatic pasts. Scholars note that fragmentation effectively represents the psychological and cultural destabilization caused by colonial violence, making it a powerful means of depicting postcolonial conditions (Rajiva, 2014).

Unreliable narration represents another widely used technique, where narrators are constrained, biased, or unreliable. Through unreliable narrators, authors emphasize the contested nature of historical truth and encourage readers to question dominant historical accounts. These narrative strategies highlight how historical memory remains deeply contested in postcolonial contexts, where official histories often ignore or misrepresent marginalized experiences. Unreliable narration thus disrupts narrative closure by preventing readers from reaching definitive conclusions about events.

Silence and narrative gaps serve as additional strategies of resistance employed by postcolonial writers. Certain experiences—particularly those involving trauma, violence, or cultural loss—may remain partially unspoken within the narrative. These silences invite readers to contemplate what cannot be easily articulated or represented through language. Scholars argue that such narrative gaps function as ethical reminders of representation's limits and the enduring effects of colonial trauma (Haker, 2019).

Narrative experimentation also plays a crucial role in disrupting traditional narrative patterns. Postcolonial writers frequently blend oral narrative traditions, historical testimony, and metafiction to create forms that resist linear plotting and fixed meaning. These experimental forms reflect the hybrid cultural affiliations and historical complexities of postcolonial societies. By refusing conventional narrative closure, such works emphasize the multiplicity of perspectives and experiences that define postcolonial realities (Farrant, 2025).

Through these strategies—fragmentation, unreliable narration, silence, and experimental storytelling—postcolonial literature disrupts traditional narrative expectations and challenges readers to engage with the ethical complexity of historical and cultural narratives.

5.3   Ethical Engagement Through Ambiguity:

Ethical ambiguity characterizes many postcolonial narratives. Rather than drawing clear boundaries between right and wrong, postcolonial literature often presents characters navigating moral gray areas created by colonial oppression, social inequality,

and cultural hybridity. Ethical decisions in these contexts resist easy classification within conventional moral frameworks. Narrative ambiguity thus becomes a crucial tool for representing the complexities of postcolonial experience.

Recent criticism emphasizes that ambiguity demands more active ethical engagement from readers. When narratives withhold clear moral judgments, readers must draw their own conclusions about characters' motivations and actions. This process transforms reading into an active ethical practice where readers consider multiple perspectives and weigh conflicting moral claims (LeBlanc, 2023).

Ambiguity also reflects the philosophical challenges of interpreting colonial history. Colonial encounters involved conflicting cultural values, power imbalances, and contested historical accounts. Rather than simplifying these complexities, postcolonial literature uses morally ambiguous scenarios to acknowledge the inadequacy of binary moral categories and recognize the ethical complexities inherent in historical contexts.

Furthermore, ambiguity functions as resistance to ideological narratives seeking to impose fixed meanings on history. Colonial discourse relied on rigid moral dichotomies that represented colonization as a civilizing mission and imperial domination as justified. Postcolonial fiction challenges these dichotomies through ethically ambiguous characters whose actions resist classification as heroic or villainous. Through such ambiguity, postcolonial literature exposes contradictions and moral complexities that characterize both colonization and decolonization.

5.4   Reader Participation in Ethical Interpretation:

The denial of moral closure in postcolonial narratives positions readers as active participants in constructing ethical meaning. When narratives withhold definitive answers, readers must actively engage with texts to formulate their own ethical interpretations. This interactive reading aligns with narrative ethics theories emphasizing the dynamic relationship between literary works and readers' moral thought processes.

According to scholars, reading itself can become an ethical practice where readers encounter unfamiliar perspectives and reconsider their moral assumptions. Postcolonial narratives frequently present experiences of displacement, marginalization, and cultural conflict that challenge readers' existing frameworks of understanding. Through such narratives, readers are invited to imagine themselves in characters' positions and contemplate experiences different from their own (Toth, 2019).

Reader participation becomes especially significant when narratives address historical trauma or cultural injustice. In such contexts, literature can create spaces where readers encounter voices and experiences excluded from dominant historical accounts. Through interpreting these narratives, readers engage in practices of recognizing and acknowledging historical injustices. This interactive process highlights readers' ethical responsibilities in engaging with postcolonial literature.

Additionally, this participatory mode of reading supports the democratic possibilities of postcolonial discourse. Rather than imposing moral judgments, these narratives invite multiple interpretations and encourage dialogue among readers from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Such openness reflects the pluralistic nature of postcolonial societies and underscores literature's role in fostering cross-cultural understanding.

5.5   Comparison with Conventional Moral Endings:

Unlike postcolonial narratives that resist closure, many conventional literary works adhere to narrative structures culminating in moral resolution or redemption. Classical narrative models, particularly those grounded in Western literary traditions, typically feature clear moral lessons, heroic protagonists, and definitive endings where justice prevails or moral order is restored. These narrative forms provide readers with closure and moral certainty.

However, postcolonial authors frequently depart from these conventions, producing stories that resist resolution. This departure from traditional narrative models reflects historical realities of postcolonial societies where political instability, cultural transformation, and social inequality rarely lend themselves to neat resolution. By rejecting conventional moral resolutions, postcolonial literature acknowledges that historical injustices cannot be easily resolved within narrative boundaries.

Comparative studies of traditional and postcolonial narratives reveal that the refusal of moral closure functions as a significant critical tool. Postcolonial narratives compel readers to confront unresolved ethical questions and persistent social conflicts. This narrative openness emphasizes the ongoing relevance of colonial pasts and invites readers to think critically about contemporary social and political conditions.

Ultimately, the denial of moral closure represents a deliberate aesthetic and ethical choice in postcolonial writing. By disrupting traditional narrative expectations, postcolonial writers create literary spaces where readers must grapple with ambiguity,

multiplicity, and historical uncertainty. This narrative approach reinforces the central argument that postcolonial narratives prioritize ethical engagement with survival and ambiguity over redemption and moral resolution.

VI.   DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed in this paper has explored the connections between postcolonial literature, narrative ethics, and the denial of moral closure. The synthesis reveals that postcolonial narratives consistently subvert traditional literary formulas centered on heroic redemption and moral certainty. Instead, ethical ambiguity, historical trauma, and survival emerge as central narrative concerns in many postcolonial texts. This shift reflects broader intellectual objectives of postcolonial studies, which seeks to challenge colonial power structures and reframe historical understanding from marginalized perspectives (Patel, 2022).

A key finding from the literature review is that postcolonial narratives often challenge conventional moral paradigms by emphasizing the complexity of historical and social experiences shaped by colonial domination. Classical literary plots typically rely on clear moral dichotomies distinguishing heroes from villains, justice from injustice, or redemption from downfall. However, postcolonial literary works complicate these oppositions, introducing readers to characters navigating morally gray areas within oppressive historical and social environments. Scholars argue that such narratives demonstrate how ethical decisions are often constrained by structural inequalities and historical trauma rather than determined solely by individual moral agency (Al-Masri et al., 2024).

The literature also reveals how postcolonial narratives challenge the expectation that narratives should conclude with moral resolution or redemption. Instead, many postcolonial texts present unresolved conflicts and ambiguous endings that acknowledge the enduring effects of colonial history. These narrative techniques emphasize the persistence of inequality, displacement, and cultural conflict in postcolonial societies. By refusing narrative closure, postcolonial literature recognizes that historical wounds inflicted by colonialism resist easy resolution through conventional narrative frameworks (Olive, 2014).

The theme of ethical survival emerges as another significant finding. Unlike earlier narratives that celebrated heroic resistance or moral triumph, postcolonial literature often portrays survival as a complex ethical practice shaped by vulnerability, compromise, and resilience. Characters in these stories navigate conditions of political instability, cultural displacement, and economic inequality. In such contexts, survival involves continual negotiation between individual agency and structural constraints. Scholars have theorized that this focus on survival reflects the lived experiences of many postcolonial societies, where people contend with multiple forms of marginalization and historical trauma (Nhari et al., 2025).

Importantly, the representation of survival in postcolonial narratives should not be understood as passive endurance. Rather, survival often functions as a form of resistance to oppressive structures. Through daily adaptation, preservation of memory, and cultural continuity, postcolonial characters disrupt narratives imposed by colonial power. Literature thus becomes a space where marginalized voices reclaim their histories and articulate alternative moral frameworks. Several researchers note that postcolonial narratives frequently transform historical survival into moral and political statements challenging dominant historical discourses (Taman, 2025).

The literature review also highlights the significance of narrative form in shaping ethical interpretation. Fragmented narratives, narrative gaps, and multiple perspectives serve as crucial techniques through which postcolonial authors represent complex historical experiences. These narrative elements disrupt linear storytelling and invite readers to actively engage with ethical ambiguity. For instance, silence and narrative absence function as techniques in postcolonial fiction to emphasize traumatic experiences that resist articulation through conventional language. Such narrative strategies remind readers that certain historical events resist representation within traditional narrative frameworks (Siby, 2025).

Furthermore, the denial of moral closure fundamentally transforms the relationship between literature and its readers. When narratives withhold conclusive ethical resolutions, readers must formulate their own ethical judgments about the text. This interpretive process compels readers to confront complex historical realities and reconsider their assumptions about morality, justice, and responsibility. Trauma scholars have observed that narratives depicting suffering and historical injustice can foster cross-cultural awareness and ethical reflection among readers (Dalley, 2015).

The synthesis of literature also yields significant implications for postcolonial literary criticism. First, researchers must recognize narrative ethics as an essential approach to postcolonial writing. Analyzing how ethical meaning is constructed through narrative form, perspective, and ambiguity enables deeper understanding of the moral dimensions of postcolonial storytelling. Second, the emphasis on survival and ambiguity underscores the need for theoretical frameworks extending

beyond Western models of redemption-based morality. Decolonizing literary criticism requires developing ethical frameworks attentive to the historical and cultural specificities of postcolonial societies (Martínez-Falquina, 2015).

Finally, the literature reviewed demonstrates that postcolonial narratives play significant roles in reshaping contemporary discourse on morality and ethics. By presenting characters navigating unresolved conflicts and ambiguous moral situations, these narratives challenge readers' assumptions about conventional ethical theories. Postcolonial literature thus serves not only as record of historical experience but also as critical space where alternative moral possibilities can be imagined. Through its focus on survival, ambiguity, and narrative openness, postcolonial storytelling invites readers to engage with the complexities of history and justice in postcolonial societies.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed the concept of ethics without redemption in postcolonial narratives, focusing particularly on themes of non-heroic survival and the refusal of moral closure. The extensive review of contemporary literature demonstrates that postcolonial writing frequently challenges conventional narrative conventions based on heroic protagonists, moral clarity, and resolution. Instead, many postcolonial texts depict characters navigating disordered social and historical circumstances where moral decisions remain ambiguous and conflicts remain unresolved.

The reviewed literature underscores how postcolonial narratives emerge from historical conditions shaped by colonial domination, cultural displacement, and social inequality. These historical conditions generate moral questions that resist easy resolution through conventional narrative patterns. Scholars have shown that postcolonial literature explores themes of trauma, memory, identity, and resistance in ways that disrupt linear storytelling and challenge conventional morality (Al-Masri et al., 2024).

A central contribution of this review is the finding that postcolonial texts prioritize survival over redemption as a fundamental ethical concern. Unlike classical literary narratives celebrating heroic victory or moral transformation, postcolonial fiction depicts characters enduring difficult circumstances without achieving moral resolution. Survival in these narratives extends beyond physical or biological existence to encompass complex ethical practice shaped by historical trauma, cultural memory, and social inequality. By representing survival as ongoing process rather than final triumph, postcolonial literature encourages readers to reconsider conventional definitions of morality and heroism.

The review also reveals how narrative form shapes ethical interpretation. Fragmentation, multiple perspectives, silence, and open endings emerge as narrative techniques through which postcolonial writers represent historical complexity. These techniques disrupt conventional storytelling and invite readers to actively engage with ethical ambiguity. By refusing definitive moral conclusions, postcolonial narratives position readers to critically examine the social and historical conditions that shape moral choices (Siby, 2025).

This review also emphasizes the importance of integrating narrative ethics with postcolonial literary analysis. Understanding how narratives create ethical meaning requires attention not only to thematic content but also to narrative form, perspective, and reader interpretation. As postcolonial literature increasingly engages with global issues—including migration, environmental crisis, and transnational identity—the ethical frameworks shaping such narratives continue to evolve. Researchers have highlighted the value of interdisciplinary approaches integrating literary studies with philosophy, trauma studies, and cultural theory (Martínez-Falquina, 2015).

In terms of scholarly contribution, this review synthesizes recent studies on postcolonial narrative ethics and identifies several research gaps. By emphasizing non-heroic survival and the refusal of moral closure, the study contributes to ongoing discussions about ethical dimensions of postcolonial storytelling. It also underscores the importance of understanding narrative ambiguity and open endings as deliberate literary strategies challenging conventional moral frameworks.

In conclusion, postcolonial literature reconfigures understandings of morality by presenting narratives that resist interpretation within conventional moral frameworks. Through its focus on survival, ambiguity, and unresolved conflict, postcolonial storytelling reveals limitations of redemption-based moral frameworks. These narratives do not offer clear moral lessons but instead invite readers to engage with complexities of history, identity, and moral responsibility. In doing so, postcolonial literature continues to expand the possibilities of narrative ethics and contribute to more nuanced understandings of morality in contexts shaped by colonial pasts and global inequalities.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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