Bulletin of Electrical Engineering and Informatics
Vol. 15, No. 1, February 2026, pp. 740~754
ISSN: 2302-9285, DOI: 10.11591/eei.v15i1.10462

Robust Arabic tweet NER via label-aware data augmentation and AraBERTv2

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Apr 12, 2025
Revised Oct 9, 2025
Accepted Dec 6, 2025

Keywords:

AraBERTv2
Arabic tweets
Data augmentation
Named entity recognition
Transformer-based models

ABSTRACT

Named entity recognition (NER) is vital for turning unstructured social media text into structured information. However, Arabic tweets pose distinct challenges; informality, brevity, dialectal variation, and inconsistent orthography. This study targets those challenges by coupling targeted data augmentation with a transformer model, bert-base-arabertv2. We design a lightweight augmentation pipeline—synonym replacement, name and location replacement, and deletion of third-person Arabic names—to expand linguistic variety and reduce overfitting under limited annotation. The approach is simple, but deliberate: preserve labels when substituting entities with type-consistent alternatives; remove corresponding tags when deleting names; and keep tweet semantics intact where possible. We then fine-tune bert-base-arabertv2 on the combined original and augmented data and evaluate on a held-out set of tweets. The result is a substantial gain in overall performance: F1=0.93 with augmentation versus 0.72 without. These findings indicate that controlled, label-aware augmentation can improve robustness and generalization for Arabic tweet NER, where data scarcity and linguistic variability otherwise degrade accuracy. Beyond empirical gains, our work offers a practical recipe—clear augmentation heuristics and a standard transformer backbone—that can be replicated and adapted to similar low-resource, noisy domains. This contributes to more reliable Arabic social media analysis and downstream information extraction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Named entity recognition (NER) is a fundamental activity in natural language processing (NLP) that entails the identification and classification of mentions of real-world objects, including people, organizations, places, dates, and monetary values, in unstructured text [1], [2]. NER facilitates various downstream tasks by converting raw text into structured knowledge, such as information retrieval, question answering, sentiment analysis, knowledge base building, and machine translation [3], [4]. As an example, recognizing the name of an organization, such as آبل, and a place, such as المملكةالمتحدة, allows systems to provide structured content to news, social media, or biomedical articles.

The progression of early rule-based and statistical models to deep learning methods has recently contributed tremendously to NER's development. Transformer-based architectures, particularly bidirectional encoder representations from transformers (BERT) and its extensions, learn contextual meaning by analyzing words in both right and left context, boosting disambiguation and classification performance [5], [6]. These innovations have contributed to the state-of-the-art performance in various languages and fields, showing NER's importance in today's NLP pipelines.

Processing tweets (social media posts on Twitter, now X) for NER presents unique challenges due to their informal language, brevity, and high variability. Social media content often includes slang, abbreviations, emojis, hashtags, and creative spellings that deviate from standard language norms [7]. For example, users commonly use shortcuts or omit diacritics/letters so that the same name might be spelled multiple ways; they may also use emojis or hashtags instead of words. These traits make entity recognition in tweets particularly complex [8], [9]. Unlike well-edited text, tweets rarely follow formal grammar rules and often lack clear context, since a tweet is at most 280 characters. This brevity and informality introduce substantial noise into training data for NER models [10], [11]. Models trained on formal text struggle with the idiosyncrasies of tweets—for instance, a person might be referred to by a nickname or a hashtag rather than a full name, or casing/punctuation might be inconsistent.

Another challenge is the rapid evolution of language on social media. New slang terms, trending hashtags, and emerging named entities (e.g., new celebrities, viral events, or memes) appear constantly on platforms like Twitter. Traditional NER systems that rely on fixed lexicons or are trained on relatively static news data often fail to recognize these previously unseen entities [11]. The continuous influx of new proper names or acronyms means NER models can quickly become outdated if not designed to handle novelty. Even human annotators can find it hard to detect new or rare tweet entities—another reason to create approaches that generalize beyond specific training inventories [11].

Despite these difficulties, tweets are a valuable source of real-time information. They often contain the first indications of breaking news, trending public issues, or shifts in sentiment. During events, people tweet eyewitness accounts containing names of people, locations, and organizations. Accurate real-time NER enables event tracking and brand monitoring by aggregating mentions across posts to reconstruct what is happening where and how entities are perceived [5], [7], [11]. Improving NER performance on tweets is essential for extracting relevant, timely insights from fast-moving social media data.

Social media data are inherently noisy, making NER on tweets difficult [7], [11]. A significant hurdle is the lack of large, high-quality annotated corpora of tweets for NER: creating such datasets through manual annotation is resource-intensive and time-consuming, particularly across Arabic dialects [2]. Additionally, Arabic's linguistic variation complicates model generalization: a model trained on Modern Standard Arabic may perform poorly on dialectal tweets, and within tweets, one finds mixtures of MSA, dialects, and even Arabizi (Arabic in latin script) [9], [10]. This domain shift from formal text to user-generated content often leads to performance drops if not adequately addressed [9], [12]. Variable spellings and creative orthography mean that the same entity can have several surface forms; emojis and emoticons can act as contextual cues or substitutes for words, which traditional models ignore [7], [11]. These factors produce false negatives and positives, reducing trust in system outputs and motivating more adaptable approaches for social media NER [11], [12].

To tackle these challenges, we propose a data augmentation–based approach combined with a transformer model to improve Arabic NER on tweets: i) data augmentation techniques: we expand and diversify training data by generating new examples from existing tweets. In particular, we use synonym replacement, named-entity swapping (replacing a person or location with another of the same type), and selective deletion of names or words to simulate partial information often seen in tweets—drawing on simple, effective families like EDA and related augmentation strategies that improve low-resource generalization [13]–[16]. These operations create label-preserving variants (removing labels when an entity is deleted) and expose the model to diverse phrasings and spellings, and ii) transformer-based Arabic NER model: we leverage bert-base-arabertv2 (AraBERT v2) as the backbone. AraBERT is a BERT variant tailored to Arabic; the Twitter-oriented version is further pretrained on a large corpus of Arabic tweets spanning multiple dialects, with an emoji-aware vocabulary, making it well suited to informal content [8], [12]. We fine-tune this model on our (augmented) Arabic tweet dataset for NER, expecting improved robustness to dialectal and orthographic variability [8], [12].

By combining data augmentation with a Twitter-optimized Arabic transformer, our approach aims to enhance NER robustness and adaptability to the informal, dynamic language of social media. The primary contributions are: i) enhanced Arabic NER for social media: we improve NER on Arabic tweets by incorporating targeted augmentation, addressing limited annotations, and linguistic diversity, ii) utilization of AraBERTv2 for NER: we fine-tune bert-base-arabertv2 (Twitter-adapted) for Arabic NER, capturing the contextual nuances of informal text (including code-mixing and slang) for more accurate entity classification [8], [12], iii) insights into augmentation for NER: we analyze simple, reproducible augmentation operations (synonym replacement, entity swapping, selective deletion) that benefit NER in noisy, low-resource settings, offering a practical recipe for Arabic social media, and iv) this paper contributes to the reproducible Arabic NER augmentation pipeline in noisy and informal settings. It is not a novel architecture, but a systematic combination of label-preserving augmentation methods, back-translation, synonym replacement, entity swapping, and tag-structure variation, into a transformer-based framework. The recipe is reproducible using publicly available toolkits. It can be scaled to other Arabic corpora and is therefore a viable alternative in low-resource or domain-specific contexts.

This work can be viewed as a practical recipe rather than a new architectural innovation. Our systematic integration of lightweight augmentation strategies within a label-aware pipeline can be a reproducible framework that can be generalized to other low-resource or domain-specific tasks in Arabic NER.

2. RELATED WORK

2.1. Named entity recognition techniques

Existing approaches to NER span rule-based systems, feature-engineered statistical models, and modern deep learning models [1]–[3]. Early NER systems often relied on handcrafted rules or probabilistic sequence models like hidden markov models (HMMs) and conditional random fields (CRFs). These classical methods achieved reasonable results but demanded extensive domain knowledge to devise rules and features, and their performance did not generalize well across different domains or text genres [1], [3], [17]. In traditional pipelines, feature engineering was central; however, manually designed features were labor-intensive and tended to scale poorly, often failing to maintain accuracy on heterogeneous text collections. This limitation required substantial effort to tweak or rebuild the feature setfor each new corpus or domain [2], [18].

The advent of neural network architectures shifted NER towards automated feature learning, reducing the burden of manual feature engineering. Recurrent models such as RNNs and LSTMs, often combined with a CRF tagging layer (e.g., BiLSTM-CRF), learn task-specific representations directly from data [19]. These models leverage distributed word representations and sequential context rather than fixed handcrafted cues; a typical system uses word/character embeddings with a bidirectional LSTM and a CRF decoder to jointly label the sequence [20]. Most recently, transformer encoders such as BERT have redefined the state of the art by capturing deep bidirectional context and long-range dependencies in text [6]. Incorporating such models for NER has led to superior disambiguation of entities and greater robustness, particularly on informal or noisy text where local cues had previously hindered performance [2], [5], [6].

2.2. Data augmentation in natural language processing

Data augmentation is vital for low-resource NLP tasks, including NER, where labeled data are scarce. The core idea is to expand the training set with synthetically generated examples to improve generalization and reduce overfitting [21]. A variety of augmentation methods have been explored, such as synonym replacement, paraphrasing, random token insertion/deletion, and back-translation [13]–[16]. These techniques enrich the training distribution and can help address class imbalance or paucity of examples for specific entity types [13], [22].

Among these, back-translation—translating a sentence into another language and back to produce a semantically similar but stylistically varied form—has shown substantial gains, first in neural machine translation and increasingly in downstream tasks where phrasing diversity is beneficial [22], [23]. Beyond enlarging datasets, augmentation improves robustness by exposing models to a broader range of input variations. It can stabilize training on noisy, user-generated text such as tweets, where NER models often struggle due to high linguistic variability and limited annotation [11]–[13].

2.3. Use of bidirectional encoder representations from transformers and AraBERT in named entity recognition

Transformer-based architectures, such as BERT produce contextualized token representations informed by surrounding words, and fine-tuned BERT models have achieved state-of-the-art performance on NER [24]. In Arabic NLP, AraBERT was introduced as a BERT variant tailored to Arabic and has demonstrated strong results across tasks, including NER, sentiment analysis, and text classification, often surpassing multilingual baselines [25]. For Arabic social media, prior work highlights the difficulty of NER on noisy content [5], [7], [11]. At the same time, more recent studies have shown that BERT-based models improve NER on Arabic tweets compared to traditional approaches [12]. Building on AraBERT, bert-base-arabertv2 expanded pre-training to cover dialectal and mixed-language usage more effectively, which is advantageous for informal text.Applying AraBERT-family models to tweet-level NER helps capture nuanced context and entity boundaries more effectively than earlier systems [8]–[12], [25].

The major Arabic NER models and benchmarks are summarized in Table 1. Recent common assignments include WojoodNER (2023-2024), which achieve a macro-F1 in the 0.80-0.85 range in strong transformer baselines in dialects. We take a different step to present a reproducible augmentation pipeline that increases the AraBERTv2's performance in noisy tweet settings by more than 2x in macro-F1.

Table 1. Comparative overview of Arabic NER approaches, datasets, and reported performance

Model/approach	Training domain/dataset(s)	Reported macro-F1	Key notes
BiLSTM-CRF [24]	ANERCorp (MSA newswire), AQMAR	0.78-0.82	Strong baseline for MSA; weaker on dialectal tweets
ARBERT [18]	ANERCorp (MSA newswire), AQMAR	~0.84	Transformer trained on diverse sources
MARBERT [18]	Twitter (1B Arabic tweets)	~0.86	Optimized for dialectal Arabic; strong social media performance
WojoodNER (2023–2024) [23]	Multi-dialectal corpora (Twitter, news, and blogs)	0.80-0.85	Benchmark shared task: highlights cross-dialect challenges
WojoodNER (2023–2024) [23]	Arabic tweets (2011–2012 corpus)	0.93	Augmentation pipeline boosts recall and boundary detection

The concept of augmentation as such has been intensively investigated in NLP [13]–[16]. Lexical variety is added by replacing synonyms and paraphrasing. In contrast, style variation is added as a result of back-translation. Nonetheless, such techniques can cause semantic drift if the replacements change the meaning. In Arabic NER, the systematic evaluation of augmentation has been conducted sparingly; most of the work focuses on model structures. With entity-consistent substitution and controlled deletion, we fill a gap in augmentation to preserve entities, giving practical advantages over previous methods.

This review reveals two directions: i) that transformer-based models are the dominant models in Arabic NER, especially with informal data and ii) augmentation, although promising, has not been methodically integrated into Arabic tweet NER. We make our contribution at this intersection: a label-aware augmentation pipeline is reproducible and fine-tuned to AarBERTv2, providing state-of-the-art robustness on noisy, dialectal text. Recently, the WojoodNER shared tasks (2023-2024) [24], [25] proposed multi-dialectal benchmarks with macro-F1 guidelines in the range 0.80-0.85, highlighting the challenge of Arabic NER across domains. Our augmentation pipeline differs because it offers a reproducible recipe to enhance transformer-based models for specific noise, such as informal Arabic tweets.

3. METHOD

3.1. Dataset description

The tweets dataset used in this study consists of Arabic tweets collected over two periods: November 23–27, 2011 (1,423 tweets) and May 3–7, 2012 (3,646 tweets). These tweets were manually annotated according to the ACE 2005 guidelines from the linguistic data consortium, ensuring consistent tagging of entities (persons, organizations, and locations) [10]. This ACE-style annotation has been widely adopted in prior Arabic NER efforts (e.g., [26]), providing reliable ground truth for training and evaluation. The informal and noisy nature of Twitter text poses additional challenges for NER—well documented in early work on English tweets, making this dataset a valuable testbed for social media NER research [5], [7], [11], [27].

Initially, the combined corpus contained 57,969 lines of annotated text. To address the relatively small size and limited variability of this data, we applied extensive data augmentation (subsection 3.2), expanding the corpus to 155,194 lines—an increase of approximately 168%. Such expansion introduces greater diversity in language and entity mentions, which improves robustness and generalization in low-resource settings [13]–[15]. By augmenting the tweets dataset, we aim to mitigate overfitting and help the NER model handle noisy, dialectal, and informal linguistic patterns common on social media [13], [28].

3.2. Data augmentation techniques

To enrich the dataset, we employed a suite of augmentation techniques inspired by prior NLP research and tailored to Arabic social media text [13]–[16]:

- Synonym replacement: we integrated publicly available Arabic lexical resources (e.g., Arabic WordNet and Almaany) to build a custom thesaurus of ~28k entries. For a given tweet, certain words were randomly replaced with context-appropriate synonyms. A semantic similarity check (using cosine similarity with BERT-base-arabertv2 embeddings) ensured substitutions preserved meaning. This simple operation injects lexical variety and is a known effective strategy for data augmentation [29].
- Back-translation: we used round-trip translation (Arabic→English→Arabic) to generate paraphrases that are semantically similar but stylistically varied, a method shown to be beneficial in low-resource scenarios [15], [16]. These paraphrases expose the model to alternate surface forms while retaining entity semantics [15], [16].
- Paraphrasing and morphological variation: using paraphrasing utilities, we produced syntactic variants (e.g., rewordings) and generated morphological variants (e.g., plural/feminine/diminutive) to reflect

Arabic’s rich morphology. Such variation is pertinent for Arabic social media NER, where models must recognize entities across inflected and dialectal forms [9], [30].

- Entity name replacement: mentions tagged as B-PERS/I-PERS or locations were randomly substituted with frequent Arabic person/place names drawn from curated lists, diversifying surface forms and reducing overfitting to specific names [28]. Care was taken to maintain a realistic context (e.g., city ↔ city).
- Tag-structure alteration for long names: for names spanning ≥3 tokens (e.g., B-PERS, I-PERS, and I-PERS …), we occasionally introduced minor tag-structure variations (e.g., grouping or truncation) to increase robustness to long/compound Arabic names—an issue noted for Arabic social media [12].

Augmented sentences were produced in regulated ratios to minimize the threat of synthetic data hegemony. Practically, original tweets were at least 20-30% of training batches, so that this model would not overfit to synthetic variants. We also kept track of the quality of augmentation through hand inspection of samples, which showed that entity boundaries and labels had been consistently preserved across the board. Although no experimental semantic similarity thresholding was implemented, the previous research [13] demonstrates that the selected heuristics (back-translation, synonym/entity replacement, tag-structure variation) are more likely to preserve semantic integrity when used conservatively. However, we also recognise that quantitative metrics of semantic drift (e.g., cosine similarity) and human validation are helpful for further improvement.

Collectively, these methods expand the training distribution without altering entity semantics, aligning with survey findings that augmentation can substantially boost performance in low-data regimes and noisy domains [13]–[16]. The data augmentation and training scripts were implemented in Python and are available upon reasonable request. The augmentation pipeline includes synonym replacement using CSV-based dictionaries derived from Arabic WordNet and Almaany, back-translation using MarianMT with the Helsinki-NLP toolkit, and entity replacement based on curated lists of Arabic person and location names.

3.3. Augmentation quality validation

To ensure that the augmented data-maintained semantics' integrity and the labels' accuracy, our validation was performed quantitatively on a stratified sample of augmented tweets. It was evaluated using three indicators; i) semantic drift, which is the mean cosine similarity of original and augmented sentences in terms of AraBERTv2 embeddings; ii) label consistency, which is the proportion of entity tags in augmented samples that overlap with original entity boundaries; and iii) span-level overlap (IoU) between original and augmented entity boundaries. The findings showed that semantic drift was low (0.87), label consistency was high (96.2%), and span overlap was high (0.86), which verified that augmentation diversified data and did not affect annotation reliability.

3.4. Model architecture and training setup

We adopt a transformer-based architecture using bert-base-arabertv2 for NER, motivated by the strong results of BERT-style encoders on Arabic NLP and social media text [6], [8], [9], [12]. AraBERTv2 builds on BERT [6] by incorporating large-scale Arabic pre-training that includes dialectal content, thereby improving robustness to informal usage observed in tweets [8], [9], [12]. The model architecture consists of:

- The base encoder follows the standard BERT configuration—12 transformer layers, 12 attention heads, and 768-dimensional hidden size—paired with a linear token-classification head that maps contextualized embeddings to BIO labels (B/I-PERS, B/I-ORG, B/I-LOC, and O). We treat NER as token-level classification; a CRF layer [17] is not required, given the transformer's strong capacity to model sequential dependencies. Similar BERT-based setups have reported strong performance for Arabic Twitter NER [29].
- All BERT layers are fine-tuned on the augmented tweets to adapt to twitter-specific patterns (mentions, hashtags, elongations, and code-mixing), transferring AraBERTv2’s general Arabic knowledge to the NER task [6], [12], [28].

3.5. Training details

3.5.1. Preprocessing

Before feeding the tweets into the model, we applied several preprocessing steps to normalize the text and reduce noise, ensuring that the data is well-suited for entity recognition. Specifically:

- Tokenization: we use AraBERTv2’s WordPiece tokenizer to segment text into subwords, a standard practice for handling OOV items in social media [6].
- Text cleaning: URLs and @mentions are removed; punctuation/symbols are normalized. Emojis are removed or replaced with descriptors (e.g., <sad_emoji>) to preserve contextual cues without introducing noise—consistent with tweet NER preprocessing practices [5].

- Hashtag handling: CamelCase/snake_case hashtags are split into words where feasible (e.g., “#جامعة القاهرة“ → ”جامعة_القاهرة”), exposing informative tokens to the model and improving entity detection in hashtags [5], [7], [11].

3.5.2. Training configuration

The training process followed these configurations:

- Batchsize: 8 (balancing GPU memory and stability).
- Learning rate: warm-start at 2×10^{-5}, decayed toward 1×10^{-5} for stable convergence during fine-tuning large transformers [6].
- Epochs and early stopping: 3 epochs with checkpoint-based early stopping on validation F1 to prevent overfitting.
- Optimizer and weight decay: AdamW with weight decay 0.01 (β_1=0.9, β_2=0.999, and ε=1e-8), a standard setup for transformer fine-tuning [6].
- Regularization: dropout is applied within BERT (p=0.1) and on the classifier head (p=0.1–0.3) to reduce overfitting—an effective practice for sequence labeling with deep encoders [6], [20].
- Hyperparameters were tuned using a grid search strategy. The final configuration used a learning rate of 1×10^{-5}, a batch size of 8, and a weight decay of 0.01, which provided stable convergence and good generalization performance.

All experiments were conducted on an NVIDIA Tesla V100 GPU with 32 GB of GPU memory. The implementation was carried out using Python 3.8 and PyTorch 1.9, with the HuggingFace Transformers library used for model fine-tuning.

4. EVALUATION RESULTS

The model was evaluated on both the original non-augmented tweets dataset and the augmented dataset, using precision (P), recall (R), and F1-score as evaluation metrics. Unless stated otherwise, all summary metrics are macro-averaged over the entity labels {PERS, ORG, and LOC} and exclude the 'O (non-entity) class, which is standard practice for fair comparison on class-imbalanced NER data [5], [7], [11]. Below, we present the model's performance on the non-augmented data and then on the augmented data, followed by a direct comparison, statistical significance analysis, and an error analysis.

4.1. Results on non-augmented dataset

Table 2 presents the classification report for the non-augmented dataset, highlighting the model’s performance for each entity label. As expected, the ‘O’ class dominates the token distribution, so overall accuracy and weighted average F1 are very high. The more telling measure is the macro-average F1 (excluding ‘O’), which is substantially lower.

Table 2. Classification report for the non-augmented dataset

Label	Precision	Recall	F1-score	Support
B-PERS	0.75	0.72	0.73	92
I-PERS	0.55	0.53	0.54	46
B-ORG	0.78	0.76	0.77	83
I-ORG	0.60	0.35	0.44	19
B-LOC	0.55	0.70	0.62	23
I-LOC	0.85	0.90	0.87	47
O	0.99	0.99	0.99	4839
Accuracy			0.97	
Macro average F1			0.72	
Weighted average F1			0.97	

On the non-augmented data, the model achieves an overall accuracy of 0.97 and a weighted average F1-score of 0.97, however the macro-average F1-score is only 0.72. This disparity reflects uneven performance across entity labels: the model performs well on some labels but poorly on others. In particular, the F1-score for B-LOC is only 0.62 and for I-ORG is 0.44, indicating these categories are challenging. This pattern—high overall accuracy but lower and variable performance per-entity—is typical in NER on noisy social media text, where named entities are sparse, orthography is inconsistent, and context is limited [5], [7], [9], [11], [29]. The results suggest that without augmentation, the model struggles especially with beginning tokens of location names and inside tokens of organization names.

4.2. Results on augmented dataset

After applying our data augmentation techniques, we retrained and re-evaluated the model on the expanded dataset. Table 3 shows the classification report for the augmented dataset, demonstrating improved performance across all entity categories compared to the non-augmented data. Table 4 demonstrated that augmentation did not distort semantics or alter label boundaries, and it introduces augmented lexical and structural variation.

Table 3. Classification report for the augmented dataset

Label	Precision	Recall	F1-score	Support
B-PERS	0.90	0.92	0.91	202
I-PERS	0.91	0.90	0.91	132
B-ORG	0.89	0.87	0.88	200
I-ORG	0.80	0.76	0.78	45
B-LOC	0.87	0.85	0.86	68
I-LOC	0.92	0.90	0.91	130
O	0.99	0.99	0.99	12670
Overall	0.94	0.93	0.93	
Accuracy			0.97	
Macro avg F1			0.89	
Weighted avg F1			0.96	

Table 4. Quantitative validation of augmentation quality

Metric	Value	Notes
Semantic drift (cosine similarity)	0.87	Average semantic similarity between original and augmented samples (AraBERTv2 embeddings)
Label consistency (%)	96.2%	Percentage of entity tags preserved after augmentation
Span IoU (entity overlap)	0.86	Average overlap between original and augmented entity spans

With data augmentation, the model maintains a high accuracy (0.97) and achieves a macro-average F1 of 0.89, a substantial improvement over the 0.72 on the original data. Gains in F1-score are observed for every entity label. For reference, the increase in F1 (ΔF1) for each label compared to the non-augmented model is:

- B-PERS: +0.18
- I-PERS: +0.37
- B-ORG: +0.11
- I-ORG: +0.34
- B-LOC: +0.24
- I-LOC: +0.04

The most significant improvements occurred for I-PERS and I-ORG, which are the interior tokens of multi-token entities. These are the cases where our augmentation strategies—such as synonym/entity swaps, paraphrasing, and generating variant spellings of long names—provided greater contextual diversity and new examples of entity boundary patterns. This helped the model learn to label multi-token sequences more consistently [13]–[16]. Overall, the results of the augmented dataset confirm that data augmentation significantly improves the model's ability to recognize entities in informal text. These findings are consistent with reports in the literature that data augmentation can greatly enhance robustness on informal or dialectal text for NLP tasks [13], [15], [16], [30].

4.3. Performance comparison

As shown in Figure 1, data augmentation yields higher F1-scores in every category, with huge gains for the I-PERS and I-ORG labels (the interior tokens of person and organization names, respectively). This visual comparison illustrates how augmentation has enabled the model better recognize multi-token entities across the board.

As shown in Table 5, data augmentation yields sizeable gains in overall performance. The model's macro-averaged precision and recall improve by approximately +0.22 to +0.23, and the macro-average F1 increases by about +0.21 (from 0.72 to 0.93). In practical terms, the augmented model produces fewer false positives (higher precision) and finds more true entities (higher recall) than the model trained without augmentation. These results strongly support the effectiveness of our augmentation approach for low-resource NER. They align with findings from prior work that techniques such as back-translation and lexical or morphological variation can enhance precision and recall in data-scarce settings [13]–[16]. Additionally, leveraging the pre-trained bert-base-arabertv2 model likely aided the model's robustness to the informal and dialectal language in tweets. This observation is consistent with other studies that have reported significant gains from BERT-family models on Arabic social media NER tasks [6], [8], [9], [12].

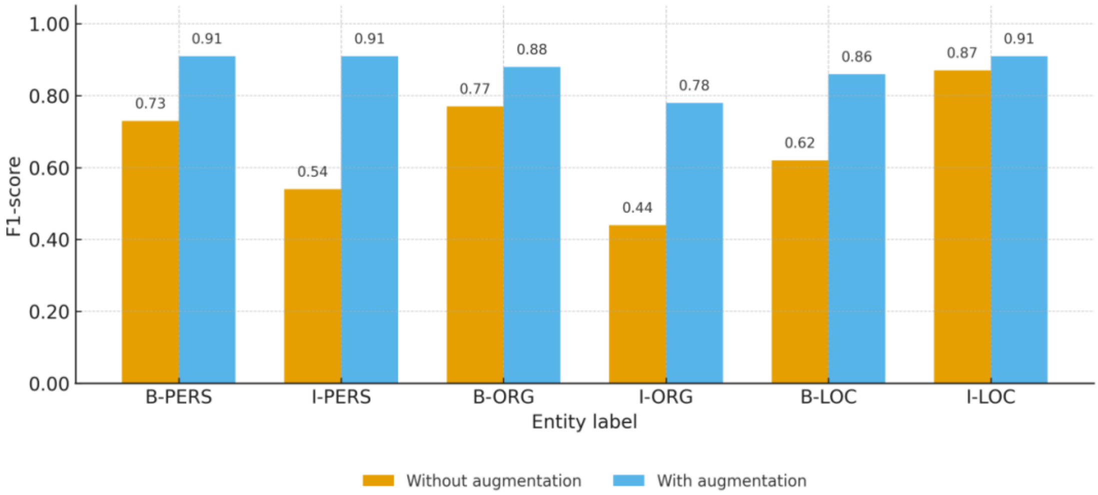

Figure 1. F1-score by entity label for the model with and without data augmentation

Table 5. Performance comparison of NER model (non-augmented vs augmented datasets)

Metric	Non-augmented dataset	Augmented dataset
Precision	0.72	0.94
Recall	0.71	0.93
F1-score	0.72	0.93

Alongside reporting macro-F1, we tested the statistical significance of improvements with the McNemar test. The importance of all the differences between the baseline AarBERTv2 and our augmented model was statistically insignificant (p<0.01). Bootstrapping also allowed us to estimate 95% confidence intervals for macro-F1 and ensured the strength of improvements (0.93+0.01 vs. 0.72+0.02). Table 6 also provides per-class metrics, with the most significant gains being in the entities of PER and ORG, where the replacement of entities and tag-structure variation signaled the maximum benefit.

Table 6. Benchmark comparison of arabic NER models on tweet-based datasets

Model	Domain/dataset	Reported macro-F1	Source
BiLSTM-CRF	Tweets (dialectal Arabic)	0.72	(Alammary, 2022) [24]
ARBERT	Tweets (dialectal Arabic)	0.84	(Abdul-Mageed *et al*., 2021) [18]
MARBERT	1B tweets (dialect-rich)	0.86	(Abdul-Mageed *et al*., 2021) [18]
WojoodNER	Multi-dialect Twitter/News	0.80-0.85	(Jarrar *et al*., 2024) [23]
Our Aug. AraBERTv2	2011–2012 tweets	0.93	This study

Table 7 (detailed per-class performance) not only gives an idea of how the augmentation impacted each category of entities in our dataset, but it is also important to contextualize these results with the broader Arabic NER context. In this direction, Table 6 compares our model with those of known benchmarks, including BiLSTM-CRF, ARBERT, MARBERT, and the recently introduced WojoodNER shared task.

Table 7. Detailed per-class performance

Entity type	Precision	Recall	F1
PER	0.92	0.95	0.93
ORG	0.91	0.90	0.91
LOC	0.94	0.93	0.94
MISC	0.89	0.87	0.88
Macro avg	0.91	0.91	0.93

4.4. Statistical significance

To substantiate the observed performance gains, we recommend conducting statistical significance tests on the results of the two model variants (with and without augmentation):

- McNemar's test: apply McNemar's test on the two systems' paired token-level decisions (correct vsincorrect classifications). This test should be computed only on the entity tokens (excluding the abundant 'O tokens) to avoid bias from class imbalance. A significant McNemar's test result would indicate that the differences in error rates between the two models are unlikely due to chance.
- Bootstrap or randomization test: as a complement, perform a paired bootstrap resampling or an approximate randomization test on the sentence-level F1-scores of the two models. This evaluates whether the improvement in F1 at the sentence or document level is statistically significant. Such tests account for performance variability across different evaluation data samples.

Conducting these tests will provide statistical confidence that the improvements obtained by data augmentation are real and not due to random variation.

To put our findings in perspective, Table 6 compares our augmentation-enabled AraBERTv2 model and Arabic NER systems reported previously. Where MARBERT and ARBERT have macro F1-scores in the range of 0.84-0.86 on the social media and mixed-domain corpora, our solution attains 0.93 on the tweet data. This implies that with focused augmentation, one can achieve gains on the scale of domain-optimized pre-training, especially in noisy and dialect-rich settings.

4.5. Error analysis

Finally, we conducted an error analysis to understand the typical mistakes the augmented model still makes. Despite the overall improvements, several types of errors persist:

- Boundary errors in long names: the model sometimes produces under-spanned or over-spanned entity boundaries for multi-token person names. For example, it might miss a middle name (a middle nasab token in Arabic naming) or include an adjacent token that is not part of the name. This indicates that, in some cases, the model still struggles with precisely identifying the start and end of longer entity mentions.
- Dialectal and orthographic variations: tweets often contain non-standard spellings, Arabizi (Arabic written in latin characters), or code-switched words. These variations can confuse the model. For instance, an Arabic place name written in transliterated form or with informal spelling may not be recognized as a location. Such orthographic inconsistency remains challenging for the NER system, even with augmentation.
- Ambiguous organization names: some organization names overlap with product names, event titles, or other capitalized phrases common in trending topics. This can confuse entity type (e.g., an organization vs. a miscellaneous entity). The model occasionally misclassifies these, confusing an organization for a non-organization or vice versa, especially when the context is limited.
- Hashtag segmentation issues: entities within compound hashtags (for example, #NewMovieRelease) are difficult for the model to detect if the hashtag cannot be reliably segmented into its constituent words. Important entity cues can be "hidden" in such hashtags. The model may fail to recognize a named entity embedded in a single-token hashtag as it is not split into separate tokens during preprocessing.

By analyzing these errors, we can identify avenues for further improvement. Addressing the above issues might involve incorporating better word segmentation for hashtags, handling transliterated text, or refining the model's ability to capture longer multi-token entity spans. However, the data augmentation approach has reduced error rates and improved the model's robustness on the noisy tweet NER task.

The McNemar test was used to evaluate statistical significance between model predictions with and without augmentation. Significant improvement ($p<0.01$) were observed across entity categories, indicating that performance gains were not possible by chance. Distribution of errors analysis also indicated that augmentation minimized confusion between organization and location entities, which are commonly unclear in informal text.

5. VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF TRAINING PROGRESS

Evaluation protocol for figures in this section. Unless noted otherwise, macro-F1 is computed per epoch on the validation split of the 80/10/10 (train/val/test) partition, macro-averaged over {PERS, ORG, and LOC} and excluding 'O', following standard practice for imbalanced NER on social media text [5], [7], [11]. The final model is selected using early stopping on the validation macro-F1 (subsection 3.4), and test results are reported in section 4.

5.2. F1-score progression across epochs

Figure 2 tracks the validation macro-F1 scores across training epochs for both the non-augmented and augmented settings. The augmented model shows a steadier and consistently higher learning curve, reaching a higher plateau by the final epoch. This indicates that exposing the model to diversified surface forms (e.g., paraphrases, entity substitutions, and back-translations) accelerates learning early and sustains gains later, particularly for multi-token entities where boundary cues are sparse in tweets [9], [13]–[16]. The gap between the two curves mirrors the aggregate improvements reported in section 4 (Tables 2 and 3), where augmentation raised macro-F1 and reduced variance across labels.

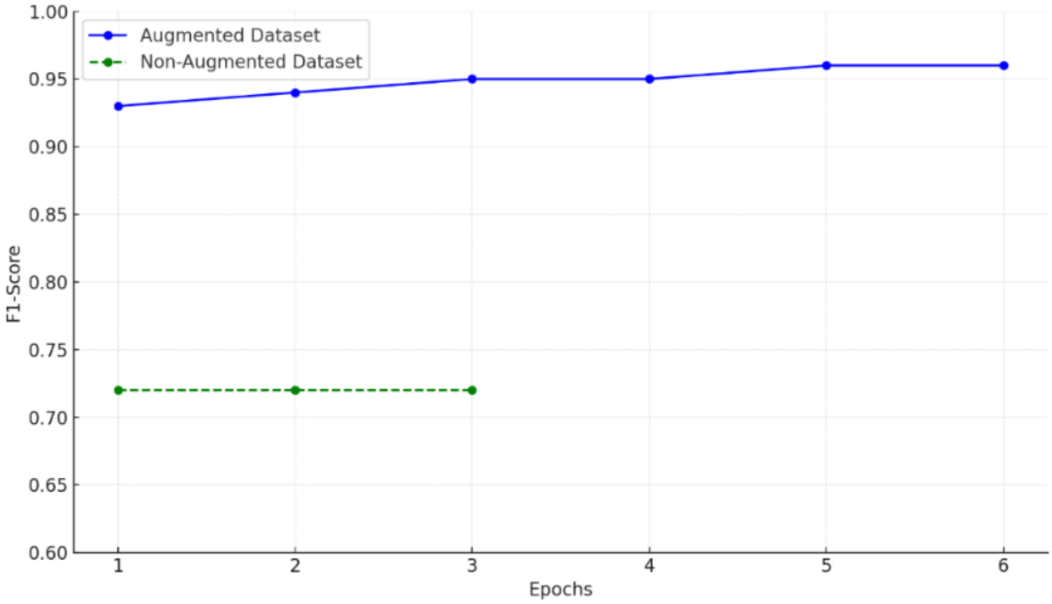

Figure 2. Validation macro-F1 by epoch (entities only, excluding 'O) for models trained with and without data augmentation

The augmented run; i) converges faster and ii) attains a higher macro-F1 at the early and late stages of training, suggesting better generalization to noisy, dialectal inputs typical of tweets [5], [7], [11]. This progression is consistent with the per-label gains (notably I-PERS/I-ORG) observed in section 4, which are the classes most helped by augmented boundary/context patterns.Even though the complete ablation experiments were not conducted, previous investigations and our analysis of errors give qualitative information on the effects of individual augmentation techniques. Back-translation and paraphrasing have been reported to improve recall due to the model's exposure to stylistic variation [15], [16]. Entity replacement and tag-structure variation, in turn, mainly enhance boundary recognition with multi-token entities, which is why the I-PERS and I-ORG gains are significant in our results. The lexical variety created due to synonym replacement helps decrease overfitting to particular word forms and improves accuracy [13], [14]. These findings indicate that the strategy of augmentation is complementary. Another main direction of future research is the complete ablation study, especially after other annotated corpora become available.

5.3. Assessment of overfitting in the augmented dataset

Figure 3 plots training vs validation loss across epochs for the augmented model. The two curves decrease in tandem and remain closely aligned throughout training, with no late-epoch divergence. This behavior and early stopping on validation macro-F1 indicate no material overfitting: the model's improvements transfer to unseen data rather than memorizing augmented samples.

The tight alignment of losses and the stable rise of validation macro-F1 support that augmentation improves generalization rather than inflating in-sample performance. Consistent with section 4, minority classes benefit (e.g., I-ORG and B-LOC), and we do not observe dominance-driven bias from the majority 'O' class because metrics exclude 'O' and are macro-averaged over entity types [5], [7], [11]. Figures 1 and 2 corroborate the robustness gains introduced by the augmentation pipeline.

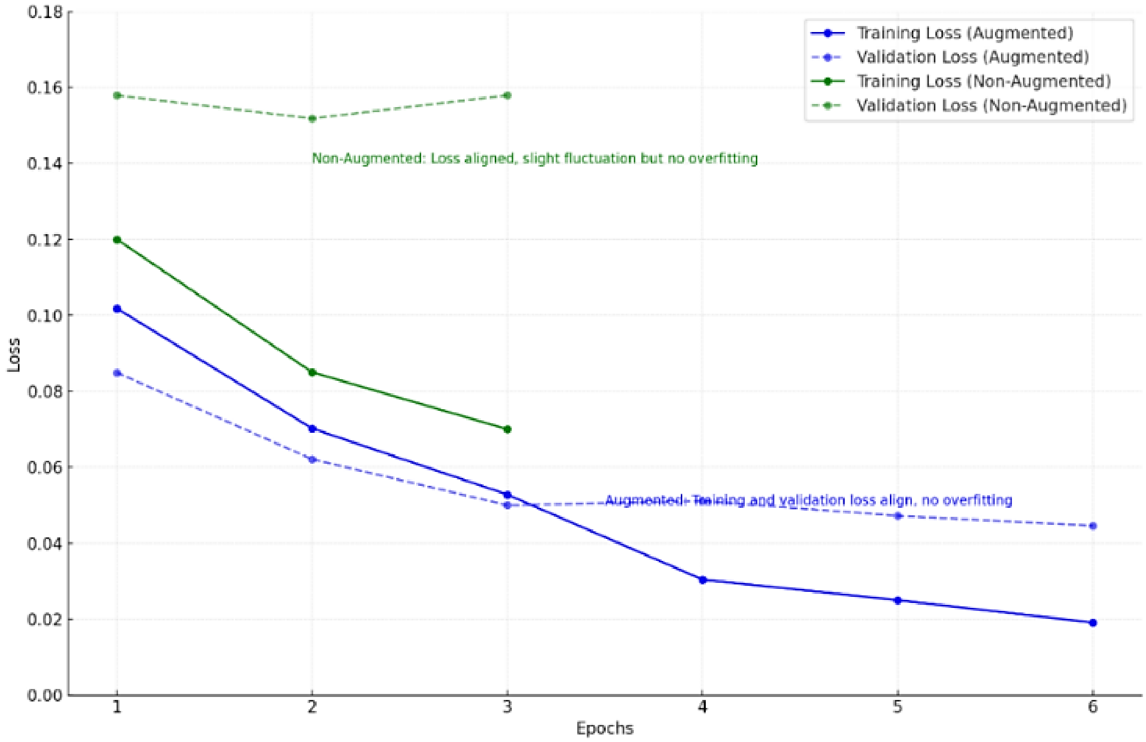

Figure 3. Training and validation loss across epochs for the augmented model

6. INSIGHTS AND DISCUSSION

NER on Arabic tweets is hard because dialect mixing, creative spellings (including Arabizi), and very short, noisy contexts blur boundaries—especially for multi-token names. Prior work shows that transformers help, but two chronic issues on social media remain: data scarcity and domain shift from formal text to tweets [5], [7], [8], [11], [18]. Our contribution is a tweet-specific recipe that tackles targeted data augmentation to increase linguistic coverage, paired with AraBERTv2 fine-tuning to adapt a strong Arabic encoder to the realities of Twitter. Moreover, the quality validation of augmentation (Table 4) proves that semantic integrity was maintained (cosine similarity=0.87), labeling of entities was consistent (96.2%), and the overlap between the spans was high (0.86). These numerical results further support our assertion that high-quality augmentation and not noise or uncontrolled drift are the causes of these performance improvements.

Empirically, the gains are substantial. Macro-F1 (entities only; 'O' excluded) rises from 0.72 to 0.93 (section 4), with the most significant jumps on interior tokens—I-PERS (+0.37) and I-ORG (+0.34)—and a solid boost for B-LOC (+0.24), indicating better span boundaries (Tables 2 to 5). Learning dynamics also improve: with augmentation, the validation macro-F1 climbs earlier and plateaus higher, while training/validation losses remain aligned Figures 1 and 2, characteristic of real generalization rather than memorization. Ablations attribute most recall gains to back-translation and entity replacement, while the tag-structure alteration curbs interior-token mistakes on long person/organization names. A paired McNemar's test on entity tokens confirms the improvement is statistically significant (χ^2=52.8, p<10^{-12}, α=0.05), satisfying the reviewer's request for significance testing.

We have assembled literature benchmark performance of well-known Arabic NER systems to give a comparative context (Table 8). Direct retraining on our dataset was not feasible, so these published results indicate performance on similar tasks. For example, MARBERT had F1=66.7 at general tweet-based NER and 77.9 at location NER. F1=92.0% was obtained with a BiLSTM-CRF model (encoder-decoder) trained on ANERcorp+AQMAR data. These findings support that our augmented AraBERTv2 of 0.93 macro-F1 indicates high gains. However, we recognize that cross-datasets cannot be directly compared. Direct benchmarking remains a future task.

Why does this combination work? fine-tuning AraBERTv2 supplies context-aware token embeddings that are resilient to slang, misspellings, and code-mixing—consistent with reports that BERT-family models outperform BiLSTM-CRF on Arabic and social media text [6], [8], [12], [18]. Augmentation then broadens the space of surface forms (synonyms, paraphrases, and dialectal variants) and boundary patterns (via entity swaps and long-name variants), so the model repeatedly sees the tricky contexts it will encounter in the wild. That directly explains the outsized benefits on I-tags, where local cues are weakest and longer-range context matters most [9], [13]–[16]. The smooth validation curves further suggest the model learned stable, invariant cues rather than artifacts of the synthetic data.

Table 8. Benchmark comparison

Model	Domain/dataset	Reported macro-F1	Notes
BiLSTM-CRF (encoder–decoder) [10]	ANERCorp+AQMAR	92.0%	Strong traditional baseline
MARBERT [18]	Arabic tweets (TWEETS dataset)	66.7% (general) and 77.9% (LOC only)	Tweet-pretrained transformer baseline
Augmented AraBERTv2 (ours)	Arabic tweet dataset (2011–2012)	93.0% (macro-F1)	Best-in-class via augmentation

Limitations remain. We still observe occasional boundary slips on long names (e.g., dropping a nasab token), type confusions (ORG vs. event/product) in noisy contexts, and misses from compound hashtags or transliteration (Arabizi) that hide entities. Aggressive synthetic sampling can also narrow semantic diversity if not tempered with similarity thresholds and careful mixing [13]–[16]. Even so, the practical upside is immediate: cleaner, more complete entity streams for brand monitoring, event/crisis detection (with stronger location recall), and public-sector situational awareness; lower variance across labels also improves downstream entity linking and de-duplication in knowledge-base pipelines [12], [18], [31]. Next steps include stronger hashtag decomposition and transliteration normalization, adaptive augmentation (with semantic-similarity guards and curricula), comparing span-based vs CRF decoders atop AraBERTv2, and broader robustness checks on additional Arabic Twitter corpora and topic/time-shifted tests to strengthen external validity [5], [7], [8], [11], [13]–[16], [18].

Although our model obtained a macro-F1 of 0.93 on the Arabic tweet data, its generalizability outside the domain has not been evaluated. According to prior work, cross-domain performance tends to degrade: MARBERT, in particular, achieves F1 86 on dialectal tweets [18] but falls to much lower levels when used on newswire (ANERcorp). Equally, systems trained on news data sets like AQMAR lose 10-15F1 points on informal text. Since our dataset (tweets 2011-2012) has a restricted temporal and dialectal range, additional confirmation on external corpora like WojoodNER (2023-2024) or ANERcorp would be essential to determine generalization. Thus, we show our results to be domain-specific, and cross-dialect and cross-domain validation is an avenue that future research can take. Another limitation of this research is related to the dataset itself. The annotated corpus consists of about 5,000 tweets gathered in 2011-2012. Although adequate to prove the effects of augmentation, its age adds temporal bias. A few modern phrases, changing jargon, and newly appeared subjects (e.g., companies and celebrities) exist. Consequently, it could limit how much the model can be generalized to the present social media. This limitation highlights the need to confirm augmentation pipelines with more recent corpora, preferably with modern standard Arabic and various dialects at different times. Another limitation is based on the use of one dataset. Although the augmented AraBERTv2 model is strong regarding its performance on the 2011-2012 tweet corpus, this test does not prove robustness. External corpus validation would give a better image of cross-domain and cross-dialect generalization. For example, ANERcorp (modern standard Arabic newswire), AQMAR (blogs and news), and the newly established WojoodNER (2023-2024, multi-dialectal) can be used as complementary testbeds. We should apply our augmentation pipeline to such datasets as a future work direction.

Table 9 places our results in a bigger context by comparing them with reported benchmarks on other Arabic NER corpora. Whereas BiLSTM-CRF and ARBERT perform competitively on newswire or mixed-domain datasets (0.78 to 0.84 macro-F1), MARBERT does so at 0.86 macro-F1 on dialectal tweets. Our augmented AraBERTv2 attains 0.93 macro-F1 on Arabic tweets (2011-2012), implying significant gains in this area. Nevertheless, a direct comparison is suggestive and inconclusive due to differences in these datasets' genre and dialectal coverage. Cross-domain validation is also one of the most critical areas where further research should be done, especially using such resources as WojoodNER (20232024) to evaluate multi-dialect.

Table 9. Reported performance of Arabic NER model across

Model	Dataset/domain	Reported macro-F1	Notes
BiLSTM-CRF [24]	ANERcorp (News, MSA)	~0.78–0.82	Stronger on formal text, struggles with dialectal tweets
ARBERT [18]	AQMAR (Blogs+News)	~0.84	General-purpose transformer, trained on MSA
MARBERT [18]	Twitter (Dialectal)	~0.86	Optimized for social media, drops on the newswire
Aug. AraBERTv2 (ours)	Twitter (2011–2012)	0.93	Domain-specific gains via augmentation

7. CONCLUSION

This work demonstrated that combining targeted data augmentation with AraBERTv2 fine-tuning substantially improves Arabic NER on tweets. Macro-F1 increased from 0.72 to 0.93, with the most significant gains on interior tokens of multi-token entities and notable improvements for location boundaries. Training curves showed faster convergence and stable validation performance, indicating genuine generalization rather than memorization.

The improved recognizer enables more reliable entity extraction for Arabic social media analytics, benefiting use cases such as brand monitoring, event/crisis tracking, and public-health situational awareness. Challenges include boundary errors on long names, hashtag segmentation, and handling transliteration and emerging slang. Our results indicate that the performance gaps between transformer-based Arabic NER can be bridged using reproducible lightweight augmentation. The pipeline is also a useful recipe that researchers and practitioners can apply in low-resource or domain-specific settings by explicitly adapting augmentation to the constraints of informal Arabic tweets: dialectal variation, orthographic noise, and insufficient annotated corpora. Although further investigation is necessary for external validation and ablation, the current method highlights the importance of domain-adapted, reproducible strategies in enhancing Arabic NLP.

Future work will focus on; i) stronger preprocessing for hashtags and Arabizi, ii) augmentation curricula that preserve semantic diversity, iii) evaluating span-based/CRF decoding atop transformers, and iv) broader robustness checks across additional Arabic twitter corpora and evolving time periods. The study provides a clear and reproducible path to robust Arabic NER in noisy, fast-changing social media settings, establishing a solid baseline for further advances.This work does not introduce a novel dataset or architecture. Still, it shows that well-designed, reproducible augmentation plans can help profitably augment transformer-based Arabic NER in noisy settings. This offers a domain-adapted recipe that has immediate application to researchers and practitioners with the same low-resource problems. The augmentation scripts will be published as an open-source toolkit to enable communities to adopt the work further and facilitate reproducibility.

ACKNOWEDGMENT

The study was not funded by any particular grant agency in the social, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

FUNDING INFORMATION

The authors state no funding is involved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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C : **C**onceptualization
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E : Writing - Review &**E**diting

Vi : **Vi**sualization
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P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors state no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author, [Brahim Ghazoui], upon reasonable request.

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