The Role of Self-Awareness and School Climate in Predicting Career and Work Future Orientation among Madrasah Aliyah Students

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Abstract. This study aimed to examine the influence of self-awareness and school climate on career future orientation among Madrasah Aliyah (MA) students. Participants were adolescents aged 15–18 who completed questionnaires measuring self-awareness, perceptions of school climate, and career future orientation. Multiple linear regression was used to analyzed the contributions of each variable to students' career future orientation. The results showed that both self-awareness and school climate positively predicted career future orientation, with school climate having a stronger impact. Therefore, adolescents' career future orientation was shaped by both internal factors, such as self-awareness, and external factors, including supportive school environments. Students with higher self-awareness and a positive school climate tended to have more realistic and structured career future orientation. The result of this study showed the importance of integrating personal and environmental aspects in promoting adolescents' career development. Schools were recommended to enhance climate, provide career guidance, and support programs that foster self-awareness. Future studies should explore additional factors influencing adolescents' career future orientation using broader and in-depth methods.

Keywords: Self Awareness, School Climate, Work and Career Future Orientation

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Introduction

Madrasah Aliyah (MA) is an Islamic-based senior secondary education level that places its students, comprising late adolescents aged 15–18 years, in an important transitional phase toward higher education and the workforce (Santrock, 2019). In practice, many students experience confusion in determining the plans for further study and career pathways due to limited information and low access to career guidance services (Munira, 2019; Prihastuty et al., 2021). The ability of teachers to recognize students' interests, talents, and potential is still limited. Therefore, students often experience difficulty in independently planning educational and career pathways. Internal factors such as learning motivation and family support can only explain a small portion of the variance in educational orientation, suggesting that many determinants of MA students' career readiness have not yet been empirically identified (Sumantri et al., 2025). These challenges are worsened by external complexity, including the risk of job automation due to artificial intelligence and the high proportion of youth who are not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET), which increases future career uncertainty (ILO, 2023). Based on the National Labor Force Survey (SAKERNAS) conducted in August 2023, 2024, and 2025, published in the 2025 People's Welfare Indicators by the Statistics Indonesia Agency of Tasikmalaya City, 24,819 members of the labor force in Tasikmalaya City were classified as openly unemployed. When compared with the total labor force of 385,800 people, the Open Unemployment Rate (OUR) of Tasikmalaya City is 6.43%. The OUR recorded in 2023, 2024, and 2025 was 6.55%, 6.49%, and 6.43%, respectively. Based on this description, there has been no significant decrease in the OUR. Furthermore, the OUR of Tasikmalaya City is higher than the national OUR in 2025, which is 4.74% (BPS, 2025). This result suggests that access to employment remained a major challenge for part of the labor force in Tasikmalaya City, showing the importance of careful career planning from an early stage.

Career planning can begin when students determine their major at university. However, the majority of MA students tend to choose conventional academic pathways without considering the suitability of interests, talents, and long-term career prospects (Karror & Rokib, 2023). This condition shows the need

for MA students to develop the ability to plan the future in a realistic and structured way, which in developmental psychology literature is known as Future Orientation (FO).

The study conducted interviews with guidance and counseling (BK) teachers at one State Madrasah Aliyah (MAN) in Tasikmalaya City on May 19, 2025. The interview was conducted to obtain an overview of students' career orientation. Based on the interview, the majority of students did not have well-prepared plans regarding the future, such as determining a major. Only a small number of students actively discussed the major plans with BK teachers, while others had not been able to develop plans for preferred major. Decisions regarding majors were only made shortly before the National Achievement-Based Selection (SNBP) or the National Test-Based Selection (SNBT).

Future Orientation (FO) is defined by Seginer (2009) as an individual's conscious representation of the future, reflected in the ways future life prospects are represented, evaluated, and translated into behavioral engagement. Seginer (2009) explained that FO consisted of three main components, namely motivational (values, expectations, and internal control), cognitive (expectations and fears about the future), and behavioral (commitment and exploration of various possibilities), which were domain-specific with mutual influence (Seginer & Lens, 2015). In adolescents, the main domains commonly studied include education, career and work, as well as marriage and family (Seginer, 2009) because this period is crucial in preparing the transition to adulthood (Bozzato et al., 2024). Previous studies showed that positive FO was associated with better academic achievement and lower risky behavior, such as substance abuse (Seginer, 2008). FO is a core feature of human development related to mental health and well-being, especially in stressful situations (Basilici et al., 2025). Through FO, adolescents are motivated to set goals, anticipate the consequences of their actions, and view present conditions as a foundation for future career achievement (Ginevra et al., 2016).

Adolescents with strong FO in the career domain show various positive developmental outcomes. Those with positive feelings about the future tend to analyze career opportunities more realistically and take actions consistent with their career expectations (Karacan-Ozdemir & Ayaz, 2022). Strong FO is also positively correlated with academic engagement and career adaptability, and is related to education, occupational outcomes, psychological well-being, and low-risk behavior (Seginer, 2019). However, weak career FO is associated with low educational attainment, increased unemployment risk, and reduced lifetime income (Guo, 2025). Low personal resources, such as career adaptability, hope, and resilience, also contribute to mental health problems and difficulties in career decision-making (Parola & Marcionetti, 2025). FO functions as a protective factor in the relationship between stress and depression (Zheng et al., 2019). Therefore, this concept in the career domain is an important predictor of adolescents' life trajectories and needs to be strengthened early in the midst of increasing complexity in the world of work.

The development of a strong career-related FO is closely associated with an individual's capacity for self-awareness (Zhang et al., 2026). During adolescence, individuals begin to understand thoughts, values, strengths, and weaknesses more authentically and develop decision-making that is consistent with the life goals (Riba & Goswami, 2024). Govern and Marsch (2001) define self-awareness as an individual's capacity to make the self the object of attention, encompassing both private and public self-awareness. In the career context, self-awareness has been proven to be a significant predictor in adolescents' career decision-making and educational aspirations (Sopivnyk & Machynska, 2025). Self-awareness is positioned as a fundamental initial stage in a five-stage career guidance model before career exploration and decision-making (Jemini-Gashi et al., 2023).

Several studies have shown that FO and self-awareness are interrelated in shaping individual developmental trajectories. Steinberg et al. (2009) define FO as an individual's tendency to think about and plan for the long-term consequences of actions, which requires self-awareness and enables realistic self-evaluation and purposeful behavioral direction. A previous study conducted by Salma (2025) on 150 students of MAN 2 Banjarmasin showed a positive effect of self-awareness on FO with a significance value of $.000 < .05$. Ivzori et al. (2026) also showed that low self-awareness in adolescents was associated with vulnerability to negative feedback, which was important in the career development process. Consistent with these results, Goleman (1999) reported that self-awareness supported individuals in understanding and managing potential for future development.

The study by Qiu et al. (2025), in relation to self-identity as a product of self-awareness, found a positive relationship between self-identity and student FO. Eurich (2018) described self-awareness as the ability to perceive clearly an individual's values, interests, and aspirations, as well as fit with the environment. This includes awareness of reactions, such as thoughts, feelings, behaviors, strengths, and weaknesses, along with an individual's influence on others. Meanwhile, external self-awareness includes how individuals recognize how others perceive them. This understanding provides information in building self-identity, including the roles being undertaken. Stets and

Burke (2000) argued that identity formation begins with self-categorization, in which individuals become aware of and internalize expected roles.

Individuals with high self-awareness showed better adaptability and interpersonal effectiveness (Ohlsson & Sjöstrand, 2025), which could even moderate career success (Gu & Su, 2016). However, empirical studies that specifically examine the relationship between self-awareness and FO in adolescents, particularly in the career domain, are still limited and need further exploration.

In addition to internal factors such as self-awareness, students' FO is influenced by the closest environmental context (Yorkovsky & Zysberg, 2021), such as the school climate. This factor generally refers to the quality of the school environment, including physical aspects, characteristics of students and staff, rules, social interactions, and values within the school (Zullig et al., 2010). Zullig et al. (2010) developed a valid and reliable student-report-based school climate instrument, identifying eight main dimensions, namely order and discipline, academic outcomes, social relationships, school facilities, school connectedness, social environment, positive student–teacher relationships, and perceptions of exclusivity or equity. This construct is multidimensional, focusing on organizational, instructional, and interpersonal features that have been empirically shown to predict academic success, social, behavioral, and life satisfaction outcomes (Zullig et al., 2010). It is also related to behavior, academic achievement, health, and socio-emotional development of adolescents (O'Brennan et al., 2014).

The relationship between school climate and student FO in the context of career readiness has received attention in psychological education studies. A comprehensive study by Johnson et al. (2016) showed that students' perceptions of emotional support, school rules and consequences, school services, and parental participation have a positive and significant correlation with FO. School-level average FO also influences individual FO, showing a strong contextual effect. These results are consistent with cross-national studies suggesting that positive student-teacher relationships are closely related to learning motivation and educational outcomes. In developing countries, teacher support is key in career decision-making due to limited access to alternative guidance sources (Guo, 2025).

Although studies on FO, self-awareness, and school climate have developed in developmental and educational psychology literature, investigations that integrate all three simultaneously in MA students are still very limited. Previous studies have largely examined these variables separately and focused on Western contexts, leaving their generalizability to Islamic education systems in Indonesia still requiring empirical testing (Johnson et al., 2016). In addition, although self-awareness has been shown to support personal development, mental health, and career adaptability, its direct relationship with FO in MA students has not been widely studied (Qiu et al., 2025). Situational self-awareness constructs are also rarely included in existing FO predictive models (Do et al., 2025). Therefore, this study aims to empirically examine the relationship between self-awareness and school climate with career-domain FO in MA students.

Methods

Research Design

A quantitative method was adopted with a non-experimental correlational (ex post facto) design to examine relationships and predictive contributions of independent variables X1 (self-awareness) and X2 (school climate) toward the dependent variable Y (career and work future orientation). This design did not include the manipulation of variables but rather examined the relationships. Data were collected using psychological scale instruments in the form of questionnaires with a Likert scale model. The obtained data were analyzed using regression analysis to determine the magnitude of each independent variable's contribution to the dependent variable.

Participants and Procedure

The participants in this study included 357 MA students residing in Tasikmalaya, West Java. The age ranged from 15 to 18 years, with a mean age of 16.25 years (M = 16.25; SD = 1.08). Based on gender, the majority of participants were female (72.5%) and male (27.5%). Participants were from Grades 10, 11, and 12, with percentages of 58.8%, 17.6%, and 23.5%, respectively. Based on academic major, most participants were in the Social Sciences track (41.2%) and Natural Sciences track (37.3%), while the remainder were from Language (7.8%) and Religious Studies (2.0%) majors, and 11.8% did not specify. In terms of ethnic background, the majority of participants were Sundanese (94.1%), with a small proportion from Javanese (2.0%) and Palembang (2.0%) ethnic groups. This study obtained ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M), UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia (No: B-112/Un. 05/V.2/TL/02/2026). Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria (1) students aged 15–18 years, (2) enrolled in Grades 10–12 at MA in Tasikmalaya, and (3) willing to complete the questionnaire.

The sample size was determined based on a power analysis from previous studies, with effect size, power,

and α of .1134, .95, and .05, respectively. The results led to a minimum required sample of 140 participants. Questionnaires were distributed through teachers as intermediaries and forwarded to students, who completed them independently after providing informed consent. For students under 18 years old, parental consent was also obtained. The collected data were then analyzed using multiple linear regression to examine the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Instruments

Future Orientation

Career-domain future orientation was measured using the Prospective Life Course Questionnaire, Career Domain subscale by Seginer (2009), consisting of 35 items across three main domains, namely motivational, behavioral, and cognitive, with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Daily). The scale was adapted into Indonesian through a back-translation procedure and expert judgment to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness. In psychometric analysis, item scores were treated as continuous data given the use of a five-category Likert scale, and confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using the Maximum Likelihood method. The CFA results showed an adequate model fit ($\chi^2(546) = 1195$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .071, 90% CI [.0577– .0822]; CFI = .880; TLI = .861; SRMR = .0533), with all factor loadings being significant. Internal consistency reliability was very good, with Cronbach's α = .908 and McDonald's ω = .911, suggesting that the instrument showed strong internal consistency and was appropriate for measuring career-domain FO in this study context.

School Climate

Perceived school climate was measured using the School Climate Measure developed by Govern and Marsch (2001), consisting of 41 items covering 10 domains of school life. These domains included positive student-teacher relationships, school connectedness, academic support, order and discipline, physical and social school environment, academic satisfaction, perceptions of exclusion/privilege, parental involvement, and opportunities for positive student engagement. Participants answered using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly inappropriate) to 4 (strongly appropriate). In this study, the scale was adapted into Indonesian through a back-translation procedure and expert judgment. In psychometric analysis, item scores were treated as continuous data consistent with the use of the Maximum Likelihood method in confirmatory factor analysis. The CFA results showed an adequate model fit with $\chi^2(758) = 1266$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .043 (90% CI = .0391 – .0475); CFI = .869; TLI = .858; and SRMR = .0516. Internal consistency reliability was very good, with Cronbach's α = .886 and McDonald's ω = .904. This result showed that the instrument was valid and reliable for measuring school climate in this study context.

Self-Awareness

The self-awareness questionnaire used the Situational Self-Awareness Scale developed by Govern and Marsch (2001), consisting of nine items measuring three main dimensions, namely awareness of immediate surroundings, private self-awareness, and public self-awareness. In this study, the scale was modified from seven response options to four response options to fit the context. The scale adaptation was conducted through a back-translation procedure and expert judgment to ensure linguistic and cultural appropriateness. In psychometric analysis, item scores were treated as continuous data consistent with the use of the Maximum Likelihood method in confirmatory factor analysis. The CFA results showed an adequate model fit with $\chi^2(23) = 45.5$, $p = .003$; RMSEA = .052 (90% CI = .0293 – .0746); CFI = .962; TLI = .940; and SRMR = .0402. Internal consistency reliability was at a moderate level, with Cronbach's α = .663 and McDonald's ω = .703. This result showed adequate internal consistency for measuring self-awareness in this study context.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis in IBM SPSS Statistics version 24 to examine the roles of self-awareness (X1) and school climate (X2) as predictors of career and work future orientation (Y). The analyses were conducted using observed composite scores obtained by summing item scores for each instrument. These composite scores were then transformed into T-scores before regression analysis to facilitate interpretation and standardization across variables. Before hypothesis testing, assumptions including normality, autocorrelation, and multicollinearity were tested to ensure the appropriateness of the regression model. The results showed that all assumptions were met, allowing further analysis. Regression coefficients were calculated using unstandardized (B) and standardized coefficients (β), the coefficient of determination (R^2), as well as model significance (F-test) and partial significance (t-test) for each predictor. The significance level was set at α = .05, and 95% confidence intervals were reported for each regression coefficient to provide estimates of parameter precision.

Results and Discussion

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics, including median, standard deviation (SD), variance, minimum, and maximum values for the three study variables. The

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

	Median	SD	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
Self-Awareness	51	8.68	75.3	15.5	67.7
School Climate	50.4	9.52	90.6	11	76.6
Future Orientation	51	9.62	92.6	14.5	71

Table 2.
Correlation Matrix of Research Variables

	Self-Awareness	School Climate	Future Orientation
Self-Awareness	—		
School Climate	.305***	—	
Future Orientation	.260***	.408***	—

*Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Table 3.
Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

			95% CI							
Predictor	Est	SE	Lower	Upper	t	p	Std. Est	Adj. R^2	F	p
Intercept	23.369	3.1847	17.1052	29.632	7.34	<.001		.182	40.7	<.001
School Climate	.367	.0509	.2668	.467	7.21	<.001	.363			
Self-Awareness	.166	.0558	.0561	.276	2.97	.003	.15			

Note. Est=estimate; SE= standard error; 95% CI=confidence interval; std.est=standardized estimate; Adj.R^2=adjusted R-square

self-awareness variable had a median of 51 with a standard deviation of 8.68 and a variance of 75.3, with scores ranging from 15.5 to 67.7, suggesting a relatively moderate level of data dispersion. The school climate variable showed a median of 50.4 with a standard deviation of 9.52 and a variance of 90.6, with scores ranging from 11 to 76.6, suggesting greater variability compared to self-awareness. FO showed the greatest heterogeneity among the three variables, with a median of 51, a standard deviation of 9.62, a variance of 92.6, and scores ranging from 14.5 to 71. The three variables had relatively similar median values, but differences were observed in the levels of dispersion. This result showed that participants tended to exhibit balanced score levels, although response variability in school climate and FO was higher compared to self-awareness.

Table 2 shows the results of the correlation analysis among the study variables, namely self-awareness, school climate, and FO. The results showed that self-awareness was positively and significantly correlated with school climate ($r = .305$; $p < .001$) and with FO ($r = .260$; $p < .001$). In addition, school climate was positively and significantly correlated with FO ($r = .408$; $p < .001$), representing the strongest relationship among the variable pairs. All variables showed positive and significant relationships, suggesting that higher self-awareness and more positive perceptions of school climate were associated with higher FO. These results showed a meaningful interrelationship among the variables in this study.

Table 3 shows the results of multiple linear regression analysis examining the effect of school climate and self-awareness on FO. The results suggested that school climate had a positive and significant effect on FO ($\beta = .367$; $SE = .0509$; $t = 7.21$; $p < .001$; 95% CI [.2668, .467]), with a standardized coefficient of .363. Self-awareness also showed a positive and significant effect ($\beta = .166$; $SE = .0558$; $t = 2.97$; $p = .003$; 95% CI [.0561, .276]), with a standardized coefficient of .15. Simultaneously, the regression model suggested an Adjusted R^2 value of .182, showing that 18.2% of the variance in FO was explained by the two predictors, with an F value of 40.7 ($p < .001$). These results showed that school climate was a stronger predictor than self-awareness in explaining variations in FO.

Discussion

In this study, the effects of self-awareness and school climate on career-related FO among MA students were examined. The regression analysis results showed that both variables had a positive and significant effect on FO, with school climate providing a larger contribution. Collectively, both variables explained approximately 18% of the variance in FO, suggesting that other factors influence students' FO. These results support the literature focusing on the importance of

psychological factors and school environmental quality in preparing adolescents for educational and career transitions (Johnson et al., 2016; Seginer, 2009).

The study found that self-awareness has a positive effect on FO, although the effect size is smaller compared to school climate. This result is consistent with previous reports that adolescents who are more self-aware are better able to understand strengths, weaknesses, and potentials, and are more prepared to make career decisions (Goleman, 1999; Ohlsson & Sjöstrand, 2025; Qiu et al., 2025). Students with higher self-awareness are also more adaptive and effective in social interactions, which supports career exploration and planning (Carden et al., 2022). Therefore, students who are aware of the potential tend to more actively explore educational and career options as well as make realistic and structured decisions (Riba & Goswami, 2024).

Perceptions of school climate were found to have a stronger influence on FO compared to self-awareness. A supportive school environment, including teacher support, participation in activities, and positive peer relationships, enhances motivation and confidence in planning the future (Guo, 2025; Johnson et al., 2016). A positive school provides a sense of safety, learning opportunities, and social guidance that facilitates students in thinking more broadly about careers (Zullig et al., 2010). These results are consistent with previous studies showing that positive school perceptions are associated with academic engagement, career exploration, and adolescent well-being (O'Brennan et al., 2014).

Simultaneous analysis of self-awareness and school climate shows that both predict FO, although most of the variance is explained by perceptions of school climate. This interaction between internal and external factors shows the importance of a positive school environment for students who already possess self-awareness (Seginer & Lens, 2015). Students with adequate self-awareness but who are in less supportive school environments tend to have lower FO. However, a supportive school environment enables students to think more proactively and optimally explore future pathways (Bozzato et al., 2024). These results may also show that in the MA context, students' orientation is strongly influenced by authoritative environmental guidance, such as teachers and a school culture focusing on character formation and socio-religious values (Suyahmo & Utomo, 2021). Therefore, future decision-making is not only based on internal reflection but also on the internalization of collective values shaped through social interactions within the madrasah environment. Students' FO can be understood as the result of a balance between individual capacity and strong collective tendencies within a value-based educational context.

The MA context provides specific implications for these results. Many MA students, especially those aged 15-18 years, experience confusion in selecting educational and career pathways due to limited guidance services and access to information (Prihastuty et al., 2021). Strengthening self-awareness and creating a supportive school climate can help students develop a more realistic FO. This condition enhances career planning abilities, reduces uncertainty, and minimizes the risk of maladaptive behavior. The results of this study showed the importance of a holistic method that integrates students' internal factors and school environmental quality (Ginevra et al., 2016).

Although the results show significant effects, the contribution is relatively modest. This shows that self-awareness and school climate are not the primary factors shaping career-related FO among MA students. The results also suggest the presence of other potentially stronger factors in the context of Islamic education, which include the role of parents, particularly in providing guidance and expectations regarding children's educational and career decisions (Asrin et al., 2026). Furthermore, strong religious values within the school and family environment influence how students perceive their future (Ningsih et al., 2025; Zainudin, 2023). Students' FO should be understood more broadly by considering the roles of family, religious values, and the educational environment simultaneously.

Several practical implications were provided in this study for MA schools. There is a need to implement regular career guidance programs to help students explore interests, talents, and appropriate educational or occupational pathways. Career guidance is a type of counseling that assists individuals in solving career-related problems to achieve optimal self-adjustment (Ermawati, 2018). These programs can be designed by considering the developmental stage of MA students as adolescents. Santrock (2019) stated that high schools should develop various pathways to help students discover identity. This is expected to help students acquire adequate skills for continuing to higher education or obtaining decent employment.

Several adolescent developmental conditions should be considered in designing career guidance programs, including adolescence as a period of identity exploration. A previous study found that self-esteem experienced a decline in certain groups, such as adolescent girls (Santrock, 2019). The unstable condition during identity exploration reflects that high school students still require guidance. Career guidance processes can further support understanding of self-capacity, environmental conditions, career planning and development, as well as a more specific understanding of occupational tasks (Ermawati, 2018).

Despite the contributions, this study has several limitations, particularly regarding its scope, design, and generalizability. The correlational design does not allow for definitive causal conclusions, while the use of self-report questionnaires may introduce subjective bias. The CFA results showed that the measurement models for FO and school climate did not reach an ideal level of goodness of fit. Therefore, the models do not fully represent the data optimally and should be interpreted with caution. The reliability of the Situational Self-Awareness Scale was marginal, possibly due to the relatively small number of items and the adaptation process of language and cultural context. Future studies are recommended to use larger samples, longitudinal designs, and mixed-method designs to obtain a more comprehensive understanding (Do et al., 2025).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows that both self-awareness and a supportive school climate contribute to how MA students plan future and career paths, with school climate playing a stronger role. The results suggest that adolescents' career readiness is shaped by a combination of internal and external factors, particularly the quality of support received in the school environment. Students who are more self-aware and learn in a supportive school setting tend to have more realistic and well-structured FO. In general, these results point to the importance of developing FO by paying attention to students' personal capacities and also the broader school context.

Declaration

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Author Contributions

MIP conceptualized the study, collected the data, and wrote the original draft. MFP performed the data analysis and contributed to writing the manuscript. FSH supervised the study, verified the data analysis, and reviewed the writing. FHZ contributed to writing, revising, and proofreading the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

ChatGPT was utilized for the initial translation of the manuscript. The final text was thoroughly reviewed, verified, and approved by all human authors.

Ethical Clearance

This study was reviewed and approved by the Ethical Clearance Committee for Preclinical Research at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University, Bandung, Indonesia (Approval Number: B-112/Un.05/V.2/TL/02/2026) on February 18, 2026. The study involved human participants (Madrasah Aliyah students), and informed verbal/written consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement. The research design fully adhered to the ethical standards established by the institutional committee.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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