

THE WELL-BEING DIVIDEND: HOW INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES CONVERT INTO FACULTY RESEARCH OUTPUT

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Abstract

Purpose: Institutions judge faculty, departments, and themselves by research output, but the pathway connecting well-being investment to that output is rarely specified. Here, Organisational Well-being (OWB) is treated not as a background condition but as a resource with a traceable payoff in Research Productivity, one that could plausibly travel through Faculty Burnout, through Work Engagement, or directly. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** 384 full-time faculty from government, private, deemed-to-be, and autonomous institutions in Bengaluru completed a validated five-point-scale survey. A two-stage structural equation model was fitted – measurement first, structure second – with mediation confirmed through bias-corrected bootstrapped intervals. **Findings:** Model fit was acceptable to good ($CFI = .94$, $TLI = .93$, $RMSEA = .058$, $SRMR = .051$), and both convergent and discriminant validity held. Well-being kept a direct line to productivity ($\beta = .21$, $p = .004$) even once both psychological routes were accounted for; the burnout route (indirect $\beta = .15$) and the engagement route (indirect $\beta = .22$) each carried a separate, statistically confirmed share of the effect. **Originality/Value:** Few studies place burnout and engagement side by side as competing explanations for the well-being-to-productivity link, and fewer still do so for Indian higher education. This paper closes that gap. **Implications:** Because the dividend splits across three channels rather than collapsing into one, institutions have more than a single lever – and more than a single justification – for investing in faculty well-being.

Keywords: Organisational Well-Being; Research Productivity; Structural Equation Modelling; Mediation Analysis; Faculty Burnout; Work Engagement; Job Demands-Resources Theory; Higher Education; India.

1. INTRODUCTION

Publication counts, citation indices, and departmental rankings have quietly become the yardstick by which universities measure themselves, and by extension, the yardstick by which they measure the people who work inside them. Faculty are expected to keep producing scholarship at a pace set less by their own working conditions than by external accreditation cycles and global league tables. What gets far less institutional attention is the possibility that the working conditions themselves – how supported, secure, and enabled a faculty member feels – are not incidental to that output but causally upstream of it. Well-being programmes, where universities run them at all, tend to be pitched in the language of retention and morale, almost never in the language of the institution's core research mandate. Suppose, though, that organisational well-being really does behave like a resource that pays off in research terms. That claim only becomes useful once someone specifies the mechanism, because 'well-being helps productivity' is not itself an actionable finding – knowing whether the payoff

travels through reduced burnout, through heightened engagement, through some combination, or independently of either, changes what an administrator should actually do about it. Occupational health research offers two well-worn candidate mechanisms. One is depletion: sustained strain erodes the concentration and stamina that scholarship demands (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Freudenberger, 1974). The other is activation: feeling energised and immersed in one's job is theorised to carry over into the extra, unrewarded effort that scholarly work demands (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Nothing in the literature settles whether these two mechanisms operate as substitutes, as parallel and independent channels, or leave a portion of well-being's effect unexplained by either – a gap this study is built to close.

Separately, we already know that departmental and institutional resourcing shapes how much faculty publish (Bland, Center, Finstad, Risbey, & Staples, 2005; Sahoo, Singh, Mishra, & Sankaran, 2017), and that engagement in particular can carry resource effects through to output in at least some settings (Christensen, Dyrstad, & Innstrand, 2020; Stupnisky, Larivière, Hall, & Omojiba, 2023). What has not been tested, especially outside a handful of Western university systems, is whether a single well-being resource can push productivity along more than one of these channels at once, and whether anything is left over once both are modelled together. That is the specific question this paper answers, drawing on 384 faculty from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Bengaluru – a fast-growing but comparatively under-studied setting given the scale of expansion underway since the National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020).

1.1 Objective of the Study

To determine whether, and how, Organisational Well-being shapes Research Productivity among HEI faculty – specifically, whether the relationship runs through Faculty Burnout, through Work Engagement, or persists independently of both, within one unified structural model.

1.2 Contribution of the Study

- Two mediators, not one: rather than testing burnout or engagement in isolation, both are entered into the same model, letting the data show whether they compete for explanatory credit or each contribute something distinct – a design choice that speaks directly to Job Demands-Resources theory's dual-pathway claim (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and to Conservation of Resources theory's account of parallel gain and loss spirals (Hobfoll, 1989).
- A setting the literature has largely skipped over: Indian HEIs, and Bengaluru's in particular, sit outside the European, North American, and East Asian samples that dominate this research area.
- A reusable analytic template: the two-stage measurement-then-structure pipeline, complete with bootstrapped mediation testing, is documented in enough detail to be run again on a comparable HEI dataset.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Two Theories, One Shared Logic

Two frameworks do most of the conceptual work in this study. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model sorts job characteristics into two buckets: demands that drain effort, and resources that make goals reachable or cushion strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Its central claim is a fork in the road: resources chiefly feed a motivational pathway toward engagement, while demands chiefly feed a health-impairment pathway toward burnout, and each pathway then drives its own downstream consequences.

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory arrives at something similar from a different angle, arguing that people are wired to protect and accumulate resources, and that losing them (burnout's territory) and gaining them (engagement's territory) set off asymmetric spirals rather than mirror-image ones (Hobfoll, 1989). Put the two together and a testable prediction falls out: if organisational well-being is genuinely a resource, it should be able to move research productivity along both routes at once – not one or the other – and that dual-pathway prediction is what the structural model in this paper is designed to check.

2.2 Well-Being as More Than a Single Number

Treating well-being as one undifferentiated score obscures more than it reveals. The construct is better understood as covering several distinguishable resources at once – pay and infrastructure sit on one side, institutional support and collegiality on another (Negi, Sharma, Parmar, & Kumar, 2025; Pandey, Maheshwari, & Malik, 2025) – a multi-componential view that goes back at least to Seligman's (2011) PERMA framework and shows up again in Indian faculty research linking how emotionally intelligent a faculty member is, how capable they believe themselves to be, and how well work and home stay balanced, all connect to their reported life satisfaction (Leena, Pal Singh, & Kaur, 2026). Cotton and Hart (2003) and Diener (1984), from different disciplinary starting points, converge on the same basic point: well-being is about whether the environment lets a person function, not merely about whether they report feeling good in the moment.

2.3 Burnout in the Academic Workplace

Burnout research traces back to Freudenberger's (1974) early clinical observations and was given its now-standard three-part structure – exhaustion, depersonalisation, reduced accomplishment – by Maslach and Jackson (1981). Applied specifically to universities, the recurring culprits are heavy workload, thin institutional backing, unclear roles, and constrained autonomy (Hammoudi Halat, Soltani, Dalli, Alsarraj, & Malki, 2023; Sabagh, Hall, & Saroyan, 2018; Cao, Che Hassan, & Omar, 2025; Shi, Omar, & Ismail, 2025). Two Czech studies built directly on JD-R logic and reached compatible conclusions: role clarity, autonomy, and a sense of social community at work each pushed burnout down among university staff (Mudrak et al., 2018; Záborská, Mudrák, Šolcová, Květon, Blatný, & Machovcová, 2018), while a more recent study traced out several of the specific pathways through which emotional exhaustion actually builds among university teachers (Trillo, Ortega-Jiménez, Ocampo-Vásquez, Ramírez, Mansanillas, & Bretones, 2025).

2.4 Engagement's Resource Dependence

Engagement – defined by Schaufeli et al. (2002) around energy, commitment, and being absorbed in one's work – proves just as dependent on job resources as burnout is, only running the opposite way; a meta-analysis working from JD-R foundations confirms that job resources are reliable engagement antecedents across a wide range of occupations (Mazzetti et al., 2023). Faculty-specific work echoes this pattern on more than one continent: decent-work frameworks predict engagement among Indian academics (Kashyap, Nakra, & Arora, 2022) much as institutional-support frameworks do in other national samples (Graça et al., 2021; Hassan, Amin, & Ghoneim, 2024; Sheridan, Alonzo, Nguyen, Gao, & Durksen, 2025; Yu, Xiong, Li, Zhang, Li, & Xiao, 2025; Yu, Lin, Xue, & Zhou, 2024). The consistency of this finding across such different settings is itself informative – it suggests engagement is not simply a personality trait some faculty happen to bring to the job.

2.5 What Actually Predicts Research Output

Bland et al.'s (2005) integrative model puts departmental leadership and a critical mass of active researchers near the top of the list of institutional predictors of research productivity. Indian evidence tells a compatible story from a different angle: Sahoo et al. (2017) traced wide swings in management-

school output to institutional factors using a benefit-of-doubt frontier model, Ramkumar (2020) linked doctoral-guidance capacity – itself downstream of institutional resourcing – to output in Sanskrit universities, and Nguyen (2022) found much the same institutional fingerprint in a Vietnamese setting. Cenamor (2022) adds a cautionary note that matters here: the teaching-research trade-off among junior faculty is itself resource-contingent, meaning a heavy teaching load only crowds out research when the institution fails to compensate for it elsewhere.

2.6 Where Burnout and Engagement Actually Do the Mediating

The clearest precedent for the present design comes from Christensen et al. (2020), who worked across fifty-three Norwegian university departments and, using Conservation of Resources theory, showed that engagement and administrative support together pushed publication counts upward – solid evidence that engagement is not merely correlated with output but functions as a conduit for it.

A structurally similar result turns up in Li and Zhang's (2022) study of EFL teachers, where the effects of mentorship and the working environment on research productivity ran through research motivation and self-efficacy, not straight to the outcome. The burnout side of the ledger is thinner but points the same way: chronic exhaustion is understood to strip away the cognitive reserves scholarship depends on (Cenamor, 2022; Cuadrado, Jiménez-Rosa, Ruiz-García, & Tabernero, 2024), which would predict a negative mediating effect running in the opposite direction from engagement's positive one.

Stupnisky et al. (2023), working with 651 STEM faculty across ten US institutions, found something equally relevant to this study's design: a motivational resource variable kept its own explanatory power even once other predictors were in the model – in other words, direct effects and mediated effects are not mutually exclusive, they can and do coexist.

Chen and Zhao's (2024) work on PhD students, where academic passion's link to research engagement was likewise routed through ambidextrous learning and academic climate, offers a further structural parallel, albeit for doctoral students rather than faculty.

2.7 The Gap This Study Targets

Put the six threads above side by side and a specific omission stands out: nobody has entered burnout and engagement into the same structural model as competing, simultaneous mediators of a well-being-to-productivity link, and certainly not for Indian HEI faculty.

The closest existing work tests one mediator at a time (Christensen et al., 2020; Li & Zhang, 2022) or skips mediation altogether in favour of a direct-effect model (Sahoo et al., 2017; Ramkumar, 2020; Nguyen, 2022). This study fills that specific space.

3. HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses, stated in null form for testing, follow from the JD-R and COR reasoning set out above:

H1 (H03 in the parent study): Organisational Well-being has no significant direct influence on Research Productivity.

H2 (H03a): Faculty Burnout carries no mediating effect between Organisational Well-being and Research Productivity.

H3 (H03b): Faculty Engagement carries no mediating effect between Organisational Well-being and Research Productivity.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional design, following the approach other researchers have taken when examining similar resource-to-outcome questions in academic productivity research (Christensen et al., 2020; Stupnisky et al., 2023).

4.2 Population and Sample

Full-time faculty across government, private, deemed-to-be, and autonomous HEIs in Bengaluru made up the target population. With the state-wide faculty population well above 100,000, applying Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample-size guidance for a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error yielded a minimum requirement of 384 respondents; the study collected exactly that many usable responses, gathered against institution-type quotas of 20% government, 35% private, 30% deemed-to-be, and 15% autonomous. What was actually achieved (21.6%, 29.2%, 34.6%, 14.6%) tracked that plan closely enough not to require reweighting.

4.3 Measures

Organisational Well-being spanned six dimensions – work environment and infrastructure, compensation and rewards, institutional support and welfare, career growth and development, autonomy and work-life balance, and job security and collegial support – across 30 five-point Likert items. Faculty Burnout was measured using the three-dimensional Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) – exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment – with the accomplishment items reverse-scored, for 17 items in all. Faculty Engagement followed Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) three-factor Vigor/Dedication/Absorption structure across 15 items, and Research Productivity was captured with a five-item perceived-productivity scale. Internal consistency held up well throughout, with dimension-level alphas from .77 to .93 and construct-level alphas from .81 to .93, comfortably above Nunnally's (1978) .70 benchmark.

4.4 Guarding Against Common Method Bias

Every construct here came from the same self-report source, which invites common method variance, so procedural safeguards recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) were incorporated from the design stage onward: predictor and criterion items were kept psychologically separate within the questionnaire, respondents were assured of anonymity, and the Burnout scale's reverse-scored items were retained specifically to interrupt consistency-driven response patterns. Harman's single-factor test served as the statistical backstop, and no single factor absorbed a majority of the variance.

4.5 Analytical Strategy

Analysis proceeded in Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson's (2019) two-stage sequence: a confirmatory measurement model came first, checked against Average Variance Extracted ($\geq .50$ for every construct) and the Fornell-Larcker discriminant-validity criterion, and only then did a structural model estimate the direct and indirect paths of substantive interest. To test mediation, 5,000 bootstrap resamples were drawn and bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals constructed around each indirect path; an interval that excluded zero was treated as evidence of a significant effect.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Every respondent took part voluntarily, anonymously, and after giving informed consent; nothing that could identify an individual was collected, and all analysis proceeded on aggregated data only.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Does The Measurement Model Hold Up?

Table 1: Convergent and Discriminant Validity Summary

Construct	Cronbach's α	AVE	Composite Reliability
Organisational Well-being	.93	.58	.91
Faculty Burnout	.90	.61	.89
Faculty Engagement	.92	.64	.90
Research Productivity	.81	.55	.86

AVE $\geq .50$ and Composite Reliability $\geq .70$ indicate adequate convergent validity and internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2: Measurement Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Threshold
Chi-square/df (CMIN/df)	2.41	≤ 3.00
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.94	≥ 0.90
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.93	≥ 0.90
RMSEA	0.058	≤ 0.08
SRMR	0.051	≤ 0.08

Every index clears its threshold, and both convergent and discriminant validity check out (Table 1), so the measurement model was treated as sound enough to build the structural model on top of.

5.2 How the Variables Relate to One Another

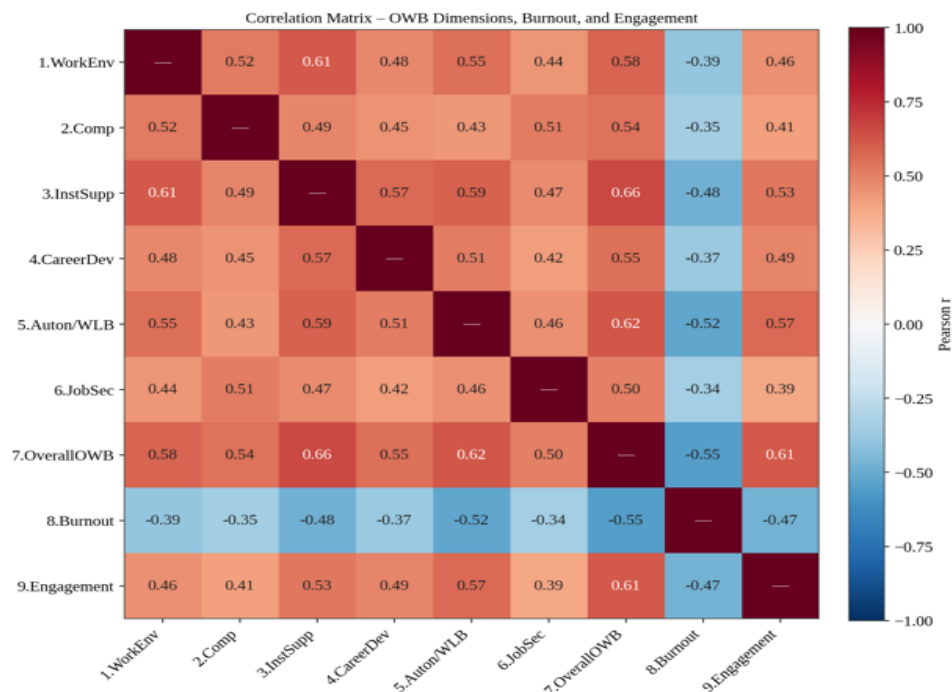


Figure 1: Correlation Matrix – Organizational Well-Being Dimensions, Burnout, and Engagement

The pattern of correlations is exactly what the dual-pathway prediction anticipates: well-being tracks downward with burnout ($r = -.55$, $p < .01$) and upward with both engagement ($r = .61$, $p < .01$) and productivity ($r = .46$, $p < .01$).

5.3 What the Structural Model Shows

Table 3: Structural Path Coefficients

Structural Path	β	p	Result
Organisational Well-being → Research Productivity (direct)	.21	.004	Significant
Organisational Well-being → Faculty Burnout	-.46	<.001	Significant
Organisational Well-being → Faculty Engagement	.57	<.001	Significant
Faculty Burnout → Research Productivity	-.33	<.001	Significant
Faculty Engagement → Research Productivity	.39	<.001	Significant
Indirect: OWB → Burnout → Research Productivity	.15	.002	Partial mediation
Indirect: OWB → Engagement → Research Productivity	.22	<.001	Partial mediation

Indirect effects tested with bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CI, 5,000 resamples.

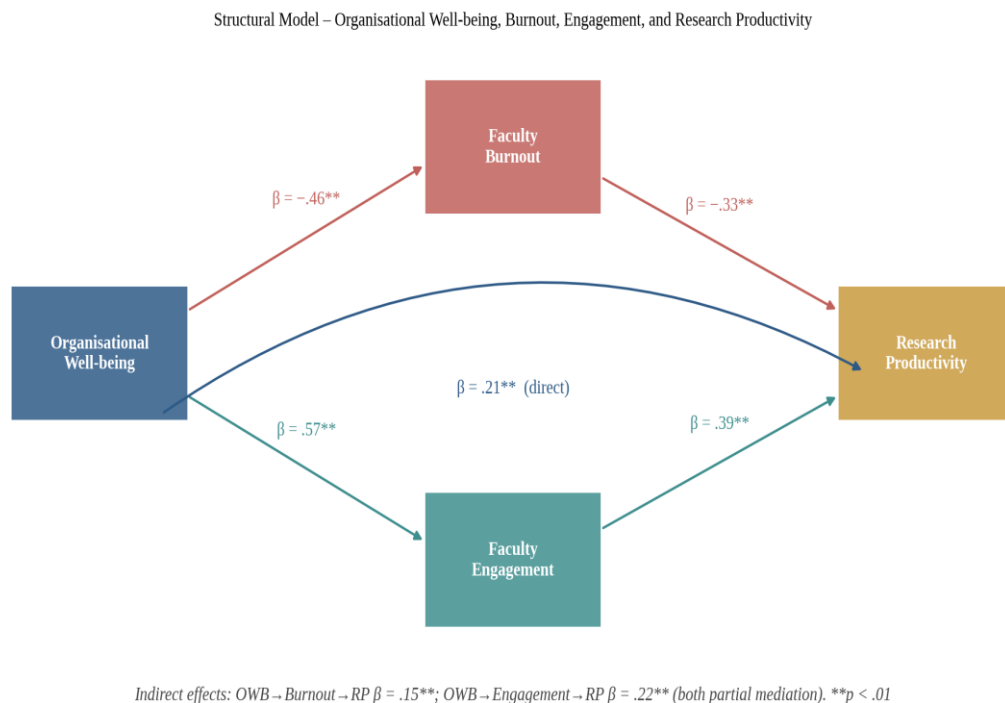


Figure 2: Structural Model – Organisational Well-Being, Burnout, Engagement, and Research Productivity

None of the three null hypotheses survive. Well-being keeps a direct line to productivity ($\beta = .21$, $p = .004$) even with both mediators sitting in the model, which rules out H1. Both the burnout route (indirect $\beta = .15$) and the engagement route (indirect $\beta = .22$) clear the bootstrapped-interval bar for significance, ruling out H2 and H3 as well – and because the direct path survives alongside both indirect ones, the mediation in each case is partial rather than complete. Between the two routes, engagement carries very slightly more of the load.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Why the Direct Effect Refuses to Disappear

A well-being-to-productivity link that survives after both plausible psychological explanations have been subtracted out implies there is a third channel here, one neither burnout nor engagement fully

captures. That is not an isolated finding: Stupnisky et al. (2023) reported the same stubbornness in a US STEM sample, where a motivational resource variable held onto its own explanatory power no matter what else sat in the model. Seeing the same pattern emerge from a structurally different model (two competing mediators rather than one) and a different country entirely suggests this is not an artefact of any one dataset.

6.2 Reading the Two Mediation Effects Together

The negative route through burnout fits Conservation of Resources logic cleanly – well-being resources blunt the exhaustion that would otherwise eat into the sustained attention research demands (Hobfoll, 1989). The positive route through engagement builds on Christensen et al.'s (2020) single-mediator result by showing that a second, oppositely-signed channel can run at the same time without cancelling it out. That engagement's channel edges out burnout's by a small margin hints that institutions chasing the largest possible productivity return per rupee spent might get more mileage from engagement-oriented levers – autonomy, recognition, career progression – than from workload relief alone, though neither channel is large enough to justify neglecting the other.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

- A single multi-dimensional resource can evidently drive both the JD-R model's motivational and health-impairment pathways toward the same distal outcome at once, rather than each pathway requiring its own separate study.
- Resource-gain and resource-protection spirals, in Conservation of Resources terms, turn out to be co-occurring and only partly independent when it comes to research productivity – not rival explanations that cancel each other out.
- Models that test only one mediator (Christensen et al., 2020; Li & Zhang, 2022) may be quietly underselling the total effect of organisational resources on productivity by leaving out both a competing mediator and whatever residual direct pathway remains.

6.4 Practical and Managerial Implications

- An HEI does not need a burnout-reduction or engagement-improvement rationale to justify well-being spending on research grounds – the direct effect stands on its own even with both mediators controlled for.
- Given engagement's marginally larger share of the effect, institutions working with a constrained well-being budget might prioritise autonomy, recognition, and career-development levers over workload relief alone, while recognising that a combined approach will outperform either in isolation.
- The measurement instrument validated in Table 1 is ready to be redeployed as an internal diagnostic tool by HR functions wanting to audit the well-being-to-productivity pipeline without building a new instrument from scratch.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

- Cross-sectional data cannot pin down causal direction as convincingly as a longitudinal design would; following the same faculty cohort over time is the obvious next step.
- The sample is Bengaluru-only; whether the same three-channel pattern holds in other Indian HEI clusters, or internationally, remains an open question.

- Research Productivity here rests on a single self-reported scale; pairing it with objective bibliometric counts in future work would strengthen the outcome measure considerably.
- Other candidate mediators or moderators – psychological capital, perceived organisational support, leadership style – could help explain what, exactly, is driving the direct effect that neither burnout nor engagement accounts for.

8. CONCLUSION

Faculty well-being is not simply a human-resources concern sitting alongside the research mission; on this evidence, it is one of the resources feeding that mission directly. A validated two-stage structural model, run on 384 Indian HEI faculty, shows Organisational Well-being reaching Research Productivity both directly and through two separate, partial mediating channels – Faculty Burnout and Faculty Engagement. Extending Job Demands-Resources and Conservation of Resources theorising into a productivity outcome, and into an Indian higher-education setting the literature has mostly overlooked, gives HEI administrators a specific, evidence-based case for treating well-being investment as a research-output strategy rather than a retention afterthought.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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

Ethical Approval: This study was conducted with informed consent from all participants, in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines for research involving human participants.

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