
The contribution of principal transformational leadership and work commitment to the innovative behaviour of civil servant teachers

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the contribution of transformational leadership to innovative behaviour, the contribution of work commitment to innovative behaviour, and the contribution of transformational leadership and work commitment to the innovative behaviour of public elementary school teachers in Sijunjung Regency. This research used a quantitative research design with a population of 92 teachers. The sample was taken using stratified proportional random sampling, with 20 teachers. The research instrument was a questionnaire. The results of the data analysis showed that transformational leadership significantly contributed to the innovative behaviour of public elementary school teachers in Sijunjung Regency by 45%, and work commitment significantly contributed to the innovative behaviour of public elementary school teachers in Sijunjung Regency by 20.5%. Transformational leadership and work commitment significantly contributed to the innovative behaviour of public elementary school teachers in Sijunjung Regency by 20.5%. The data support the hypothesis, and transformational leadership and work commitment are two important factors that help State Elementary School teachers in Sijunjung Regency be more innovative; other factors account for the remaining 79.5%.

Keywords

Commitment, innovative teacher behaviour, transformational leadership

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Introduction

Based on Law No. 2 of 1985, education aims to enlighten the nation's life and develop the whole person. One of Indonesia's primary objectives is to develop its potential and educate its people to achieve improvement. The goal of national education is stated in Law No. 20 of 2003, which reads, "Developing abilities and forming the character and civilization of a dignified nation to enlighten the life of the nation aims to develop the potential of students to become people who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble morals, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, and independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens." According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, education is a guide in the life and growth of children. Education aims to harness all the natural powers in children, enabling them, as humans and members of society, to achieve the highest levels of safety and happiness (Spring, 2007).

From the explanations contained in the law and the philosophy of education, the true goal of education is to educate the nation's children. The government continues to make various efforts to achieve this goal by continually improving different aspects of education in this country. Some of these efforts include providing qualified teaching staff, various scholarships to enable educators to continue their studies at a higher level, facilitating educators to improve their competencies through various training programs, updating the curriculum, providing adequate and high-quality facilities and infrastructure, and providing various allowances to educators.

Despite various efforts made by the Indonesian government to improve the quality of education and achieve national education goals, the results have not been very encouraging. Various sources confirm this. Data uploaded by the website worldtop20.org states that Indonesia's education quality was ranked 54th out of 78 countries in 2021. In 2022, Indonesia was ranked 67th. In 2023, Indonesia was ranked 67th out of 203 countries (Nuryadi & Widiatmaka, 2023). According to worldtop20.org, the quality of Indonesian education is still relatively low. It has not shown significant improvements in the past three years and has been unable to break into the top 20.

The lack of competitiveness among graduates reflects the low quality of education in Indonesia. As a result, graduates struggle to secure employment in their respective fields of study (Andriam, 2021). These various data and phenomena demonstrate that the quality of education in Indonesia remains low. Therefore, to achieve the national goal of educating the nation's next generation, serious efforts are required to improve the quality of education in Indonesia.

In improving the quality of education, teachers are one of the main factors that need attention. The quality of educators is essential. This is because teachers are a crucial component in improving the quality of education. Teachers are the soul of education itself. Teachers are the main force behind the continuity of the educational process. Teachers play a vital role in realizing educational goals through managing a quality teaching and learning process. According to Nellitawati (2024), the existence of teachers is one of the educational providers with a vital role, because teachers are the ones who interact directly with students in the learning process. The main task of teachers is to organize learning and determine the

success of the educational process in schools. According to [Nellitawati \(2024\)](#), the main tasks of teachers include educating, teaching, guiding, training, assessing, motivating, and evaluating students.

One effort to improve the quality of educators is by improving teachers' innovative behaviour. An educator can engage in innovative teacher behaviour, a form of creativity, to facilitate quality learning. A teacher must be able to master how to teach effectively and manage the teaching and learning process to develop and actualize the various potentials possessed by students, which is supported by research conducted by [Sujana \(2018\)](#). This aligns with Law No. 14 of 2005, Article 10, paragraph 1, which mandates that "professional teachers must have four competencies, namely pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies." By pedagogical competencies, it is appropriate for a teacher to have innovative behaviour in learning to present quality learning. Presenting quality learning can increase student interest in learning, which will help improve student learning outcomes ([Lubis et al., 2023](#)). Teachers with innovative behaviour will always be motivated to develop themselves in a better direction, thirst for change, dare to answer challenges, be a learning leader according to student needs, and be ready to be a change agent in the world of education.

Talking about innovative teacher behaviour means we examine teachers' various creative and innovative approaches to create engaging and enjoyable learning for students. This allows them to achieve their stated learning objectives. [Fullan and Quinn \(2020\)](#) explained that innovative teacher behaviour is an educator's ability to develop, implement, and adapt creative and effective educational practices to achieve coherent educational goals responsive to student needs. A teacher with innovative behaviour tends to be adept at creatively presenting learning despite facing various challenges and limited resources ([Thurling et al., 2015](#)). A teacher's innovative behaviour will lead them to utilize all resources to create creativity in their duties as an educator.

A teacher's innovative behaviour will enable them to solve various learning problems with their brilliant ideas. Teachers with innovative behaviour will continually strive to identify various learning strategies, tools, and media; select appropriate learning content; and incorporate it into better lesson plans to deliver quality learning, achieve learning objectives, and meet student learning expectations ([Seechaliao, 2017](#)).

However, several studies show that teachers' innovative behaviour is still not optimal, resulting in ineffective teaching and learning processes that impact low student learning outcomes. [Bakkenes et al. \(2010\)](#), [Zainal et al. \(2019\)](#), and [Gkontelos et al. \(2023\)](#) revealed that elementary school teachers still have difficulty behaving innovatively. Many factors hinder teachers' innovative behaviour, even though the desire to behave innovatively has begun to address obstacles and solutions. This explains that innovative behaviour in elementary school teachers is still relatively low. Furthermore, [Ismail and Mydin \(2019\)](#), [Khan and Nafees \(2019\)](#), and [Zainal and Matore \(2021\)](#) revealed that transformational leadership plays an important role in realizing teachers' innovative behaviour. However, in many schools, principals have not fully adopted a leadership style that supports innovation. This has a negative impact that hinders the development of innovative behaviour in teachers.

Various phenomena emerge during the weekly teacher working group activities, revealing teachers' suboptimal innovative behaviour. In these teacher working groups, teachers complain about limited or weak motivation to create various learning innovations, resulting in

a less engaging learning process. The lessons presented are also teacher centered. The lecture method remains one of the mainstays for teachers when presenting lessons. Even textbooks remain a loyal medium for teachers when presenting lessons. During the teacher working group activities conducted in 2023 and 2024, the researchers observed that teachers exhibited suboptimal innovative behaviour. Participants in the teacher working group who work in elementary schools provided this information.

In the teacher learning community "Kombel Trusted Teacher," which the author manages, members from various regions recognize that teachers still lack innovative behaviour due to several factors, resulting in similar learning methods being used despite differences in content and learning materials. Furthermore, problems arise when the syllabus and lesson plans or teaching modules used by teachers are developed collaboratively by the teachers' working group or photocopied from other institutions. The Teachers' Working Group has not adjusted these syllabi and lesson plans/ teaching modules to align with unique student conditions at each school.

Furthermore, problems arise when the syllabus and lesson plans or teaching modules used by teachers are developed collaboratively by the Teachers' Working Group or photocopied from other institutions. These syllabi and lesson plans/teaching modules have not been modified to be relevant to the students' conditions at each school.

The researchers also found a similar phenomenon during pre-observations. The researchers conducted these pre-observations in several public elementary schools across several sub-districts in Sijunjung Regency from June 3 to July 27, 2024. These pre-observations revealed that teachers' innovative behaviour was suboptimal. The author observed several phenomena related to teachers' innovative behaviour in carrying out their duties as educators, including:

- Teachers' ability to design creative and innovative learning is not yet optimal. This phenomenon is evident in the lesson plans or teaching modules used by teachers, which are often taken from the internet or from previous years' lesson plans that have not been properly modified to suit the current needs of students in their respective institutions.
- Teachers still use suboptimal technology to create innovative learning media appropriate for today's students, who prefer the digital world. This aligns with what the author found during his fieldwork. The author observed that, on average, the government provided Chromebooks in most schools he surveyed. However, these Chromebooks were rarely used and were stored neatly in school cupboards.
- The creativity in utilizing existing learning resources to create more engaging learning is not optimal. The author concluded this based on complaints from teachers who stated that the lack of optimal learning innovations was due to their schools' lack of facilities and infrastructure.
- Teachers' insight into innovative and relevant learning strategies, methods, and media for current student situations is suboptimal. These findings can be concluded from the recognition that most teachers still rely on the lecture as their primary teaching method. Classroom learning practices also tend to be teacher-centred. Furthermore, teachers still predominantly rely on textbooks as their preferred learning medium. Significant efforts to create new learning media tailored to student needs have not been demonstrated.

- Creativity in developing learning materials and linking them to real-life situations has not been optimal. This is evident in teachers' difficulty connecting learning materials to students' everyday lives creatively and engagingly.

The suboptimal innovative behaviour of teachers, as seen in these various phenomena, is suspected of being related to a lack of substantial work commitment in their role as educators. In their presentation, [Ramani et al. \(2023\)](#) stated that teacher work commitment is a form of awareness, loyalty, and responsibility for tasks and obligations, professionally and within the institution where the teacher works. A teacher with a strong work commitment will have a strong desire to advance the school, creating an emotional connection between the teacher and the school ([Cameron & Lovett, 2015](#)). This dedication led teachers to pursue various strategies to improve their innovative behaviour and build an effective learning environment to guide students towards achieving predetermined learning objectives.

Teacher commitment is an internal strength that can encourage teachers to demonstrate improved work performance by continuously improving their innovative behaviour in carrying out their duties as professional educators ([Razak et al., 2009](#)). Teachers with a strong commitment will be able to perform their best and behave innovatively in carrying out their duties despite facing various obstacles. Even with minimal support from the surrounding environment, this innovative behaviour will still emerge if a teacher's commitment is strong. Thus, teacher commitment is a crucial factor in enhancing innovative behaviour in teachers. At the same time, teachers become more creative in encouraging students to participate in learning.

Teachers' work commitment, which can foster innovative behaviour, will be further fostered by implementing the principal's leadership style. This aligns with [Nellitawati \(2023\)](#) perspective, emphasizing the pivotal role of leadership within an organization. In this regard, transformational leadership increases teachers' work commitment, thus motivating them to adopt innovative behaviours in their roles and responsibilities as professional educators. Why is this so? Organizations or institutions need leaders who can generate high performance from their workforce and motivate members to go beyond their duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, [Andriani et al. \(2018\)](#) also argued that transformational leadership is crucial. This leadership style is believed to influence teachers' work motivation, thus positively impacting students.

Transformational leadership emphasizes the need for a leader to motivate his or her staff to exceed their expectations. [Pawar \(2016\)](#) stated that transformational leadership inspires and motivates subordinates to achieve higher goals. A visionary principal's transformational leadership style is expected to motivate teachers to have strong work commitment and innovative behaviour. This approach allows teachers to focus not only on completing various mandatory classroom administrative tasks but also on being bold in creating various innovations and creative in carrying out their duties as educators to the best of their ability. Based on these various issues, the author feels the need to conduct further research on the factors influencing teacher innovative behaviour and how these factors contribute to the innovative behaviour of civil servant elementary school teachers in Sijunjung Regency.

Methodology

This research used a quantitative correlational method to examine the strength of the relationship between transformational leadership and work commitment on teachers' innovative behaviour at public elementary schools in Sijunjung Regency. The population consisted of all 92 public elementary school teachers in Sijunjung Regency. The sample size was 20, using stratified proportional random sampling. Data collection was conducted by meeting the subjects directly. Data analysis was conducted using correlation and regression techniques with SPSS version 20.

The research instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire based on transformational leadership, work commitment, and teacher innovation behaviour indicators. The questionnaire was validated by experts and piloted in a small group to determine its validity and reliability before being distributed to respondents. The measurement scale used in the questionnaire was a Likert scale with five answer options. The data collection results were then analyzed to determine the relationship between variables using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression to test the direct influence between the independent and dependent variables.

Findings and Discussions

The first hypothesis tested in this research is that transformational leadership contributes to teachers' innovative behaviour. A correlation analysis was conducted to test this hypothesis, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of correlation analysis results between transformational leadership variables (x_1) and teachers' innovative behaviour (y)

Correlation	Correlation coefficient (r)	Coefficient of determination (R^2)	Contribution	Sig. (p)
ry_{x_1}	0.612	0.450	45.0%	0.000

The correlation results in Table 1 indicate that the correlation coefficient (rx_1y) is 0.612, with a p-value (p) of 0.000, which is less than the significance level (α) of 0.05. This means a significant relationship exists between transformational leadership and teacher innovative behaviour. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.450, indicating that the test results support the hypothesis that transformational leadership contributes to teacher innovative behaviour. The magnitude of transformational leadership's contribution to teachers' innovative behaviour in Sijunjung Regency Public Elementary Schools is 45%. This means that the better the quality of transformational leadership, the more innovative teacher behaviour will increase. To improve the quality of transformational leadership, there are several things that principals can do, including 1) influencing teachers to improve morale and motivation in work, 2) providing motivation to improve intellectual abilities and paying attention to teachers, 3) guiding teachers in carrying out tasks so that they work together, and 4) directing teachers in developing school programs.

The second hypothesis tested in this research is the contribution of work commitment to teachers' innovative behaviour. A correlation analysis was conducted to test this hypothesis, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. *Summary of the results of the correlation analysis between school climate variables (x1) and teacher innovative behaviour (y)*

Correlation	Correlation coefficient (r)	Coefficient of determination (R ²)	Contribution	Sig. (p)
ryx ₁	0.453	0.205	20.5%	0.000

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient (rx2y) is 0.453, with a p-value of $p = 0.000$, which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$. This indicates a significant relationship between work commitment and teacher innovative behaviour. The coefficient of determination (R²) is 0.205. A simple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive relationship between work commitment and teacher innovative behaviour. Based on the tests above, the hypothesis that work commitment contributes to teacher innovative behaviour can be accepted. The contribution of work commitment to teachers' innovative behaviour at Sijunjung Regency Public Elementary Schools is 20.5%. This means that the greater the work commitment, the greater the teacher's innovative behaviour. Improvements towards a better direction can be done by 1) the principal creating an open attitude in the school environment to create good relationships and conducive work commitment, 2) the principal facilitating teachers in the implementation of the teaching and learning process, and 3) the principal trying to provide freedom to teachers and staff in working, but by paying attention to existing rules, to improve teacher innovative behaviour.

The third hypothesis tested in this research concerns the contribution of transformational leadership and work commitments to teachers' innovative behaviour. A multiple correlation analysis was conducted to test this hypothesis. Table 3 displays the results.

Table 3. *Summary of correlation analysis results between transformational leadership (x1) and work commitment (x2) on teachers' innovative behaviour (y)*

Correlation	Correlation coefficient (r)	Coefficient of determination (R ²)	Contribution	Sig. (p)
ryx ₁	0.453	0.205	20.5%	0.000

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficient (ryx1.2) as 0.453, with a p-value of $p = 0.000$, which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and work commitment to teacher innovative behaviour. Based on the test results above, it can be concluded that the third hypothesis, which states that transformational leadership and work commitment jointly contribute to teacher innovation, can be accepted at a 95% confidence level. The contribution is 20.5%, while 79.5% is determined by other factors not included in this research.

Figure 1. *The contribution model of transformational leadership*

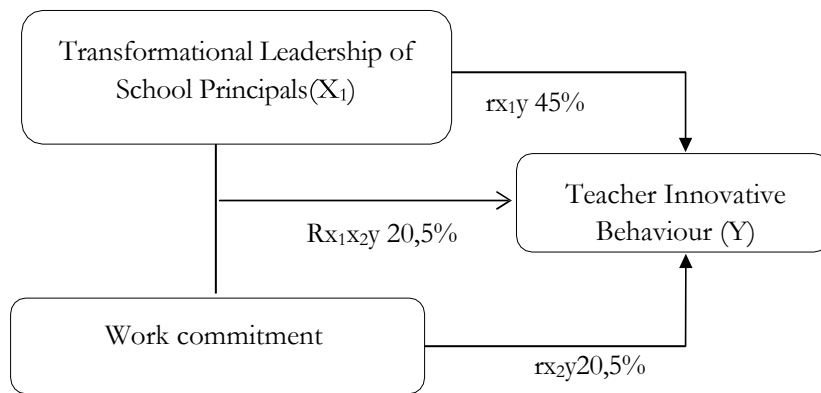


Figure 1 shows a model of the research findings, illustrating how two factors—transformational leadership of the principal and work commitment—affect the innovative behaviour of elementary school civil servant teachers. Based on the statistical analysis, the principal's transformational leadership directly impacts teacher innovative behaviour by 45% ($r_{x_1y} = 0.612$). This means that better transformational leadership increases the likelihood of teachers being innovative.

Based on the statistical analysis, the principal's transformational leadership directly influences teacher innovative behaviour by 45% ($r_{x_1y} = 0.612$). This indicates that the higher the quality of transformational leadership, the greater the tendency for teachers to engage in innovative behaviour in learning. Furthermore, teacher work commitment contributes 20.5% ($r_{x_2y} = 0.453$) to innovative behaviour. This means that teachers who are highly dedicated and engaged in their duties are more likely to demonstrate creativity in learning activities.

When these two variables (transformational leadership and work commitment) are combined, their simultaneous contribution to teacher innovative behaviour is 20.5% ($r_{yx_{12}} = 0.453$). Although this combined contribution is numerically equal to the individual contribution of work commitment, theoretically, the two are mutually reinforcing in creating teacher innovative behaviour.

This model emphasizes the importance of the principal's role in building a culture of innovation in schools through a transformational leadership style and the importance of internalising work commitment in teachers. The remaining 79.5% is influenced by other factors not examined in this research, such as organizational culture, intrinsic motivation, professional training, technological support, and the external school environment.

Discussions

The research results indicate that the principal's transformational leadership significantly contributes to the innovative behaviour of civil servant teachers in elementary schools, accounting for 45%. This finding strengthens the argument that principal leadership is not merely an administrative function but plays a key role in shaping a work culture that

encourages innovation. In the context of 21st century education, the role of transformational leaders is crucial in guiding teachers in facing dynamic changes, demands for a more flexible curriculum, and integrating technology into learning (Fullan & Quinn, 2020).

Transformational leadership is recognized through four main dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual activation, and individualised consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In the context of this research, these dimensions are reflected in the principal's behaviour, which provides inspiration, motivation, emotional support, and intellectual space for teachers to experiment with developing learning methods, media, and strategies. Also, Ismail and Mydin (2019) and Khan et al. (2019) also confirmed the importance of transformational leadership. They showed that principals with a transformational leadership style can encourage teachers' innovative behaviour by creating a favourable work climate, fulfilling affective needs, and providing trust in decision-making. Principals consistently practicing transformational leadership will increase teachers' confidence in creating contextual and innovative learning. Furthermore, the research results also indicate that teacher work commitment contributes 20.5% to innovative behaviour. This suggests that while principal leadership is important, teachers' internal motivation and awareness are also highly influential. Teacher work commitment, which encompasses loyalty, responsibility, and dedication to professional duties, drives continued development and innovation (Razak et al., 2009). Teachers with high commitment tend to be more resilient when faced with limitations, whether in infrastructure or constantly changing educational policies.

In this context, Dwiyanti et al. (2022) explained that teacher work commitment is divided into three main dimensions: affective, normative, and continuance. The affective dimension indicates an emotional attachment to the profession, the normative dimension emphasizes moral responsibility, and the continuance dimension relates to rational considerations. Field observations and interviews in this research indicate that the affective and normative dimensions are more dominant. Many teachers demonstrate innovative behaviour even with limited resources because they feel responsible for providing the best for their students.

The combined effect of transformational leadership and work commitment on teacher innovative behaviour yielded a 20.5% contribution, indicating a simultaneous relationship, although numerically, their contributions appear smaller than their contributions. This suggests that these two variables are not mutually exclusive but mutually supportive and reinforcing. Successful transformational leadership fosters teacher commitment: conversely, highly committed teachers are more likely to respond to direction and inspiration from the principal (Kılınç et al., 2024).

However, 79.5% of teachers' innovative behaviour is influenced by other factors, which are not covered in this research. These factors may include school organizational culture, intrinsic teacher motivation, ongoing professional training, technological support, administrative workload, and the external school environment. For example, Gkontelos et al. (2023) emphasized that self-efficacy, burnout, and irrational beliefs influence teachers' innovative behaviour. When teachers lack strong self-confidence or experience emotional exhaustion, their tendency to innovate decreases, even if support from the principal is available.

Furthermore, access to technology is also a crucial factor. Despite the government's provision of devices like Chromebooks in many schools, their optimal utilization remains elusive. This issue could be due to a lack of technical training or a work culture that does not effectively integrate technology into the learning process. In addition, [Lubis et al. \(2023\)](#) showed that effective digital learning media can improve student learning outcomes and foster student interest in the subject.

A collaborative culture within schools is also a crucial factor. Field observations revealed that the syllabi and lesson plans used by teachers were often copied or adopted from teacher working groups (KKG) without adapting them to the actual conditions of students. This indicates that reflective and collaborative practices have not yet become an ingrained culture in many schools. According to [Thurlings et al. \(2015\)](#), innovation in education often emerges from reflective interactions between teachers, whether through group discussions, peer observation, or the development of professional learning communities. This finding also supports Fullan's organizational change theory, which emphasizes the importance of leadership that fosters collective and adaptive learning in the school environment. Thus, innovation development does not originate solely from individual teachers but results from organizational dynamics that support ongoing creative and reflective practices ([Fullan & Quinn, 2020](#)).

These findings align with research by [Alzoraiki et al. \(2023\)](#), which used a structural model and found that the combination of transformational leadership and teacher commitment contributed significantly to sustainable teaching performance. This research contribution value is likely influenced by differences in analytical methods, a smaller sample size, and a narrower geographic context, specifically within a single district.

The practical implications of this research are the need to strengthen principal training in concretely implementing transformational leadership principles in the field. Principals must be role models, effective communicators, facilitators of change, and learning leaders. Furthermore, educational policies must encourage increased teacher commitment through incentives, professional recognition, and contextualised training. Continuous professional development activities, such as in-house training, lesson study, and teacher coaching, are highly recommended to strengthen innovation at the elementary school level.

Furthermore, to increase the contribution of committed work, educational institutions should pay attention to teacher workloads and work-life balance and provide more space for teachers to explore learning methods and media tailored to students' interests and characteristics. Commitment will not grow solely through orders or regulations but also through a sense of belonging to the profession and support from a healthy work environment. Overall, this research provides evidence that principal leadership and teacher commitment are two strategic factors that can encourage innovation in learning at the elementary education level. Schools can build an adaptive, responsive, and highly competitive educational ecosystem by strengthening these two aspects.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and discussion, this research concludes that the principal's transformational leadership and teacher work commitment significantly contribute to the

innovative behaviour of civil servant teachers in public elementary schools in Sijunjung Regency. First, transformational leadership contributed 45%, indicating that the principal's role in providing inspiration, motivation, and personal support can encourage teachers to be more creative and innovative in their teaching practices. Second, work commitment contributed 20.5% to innovative behaviour, indicating that teacher dedication and professional responsibility are crucial in creating and implementing new ideas in the classroom. Third, the combined effect of transformational leadership and work commitment on teachers' innovative behaviour was found to be 20.5%, showing that both factors have a meaningful impact on how teachers innovate.

Thus, this research confirms that the successful development of teacher innovative behaviour is inseparable from the quality of the principal's transformational leadership and a high level of teacher work commitment. However, since there are still 79.5% of other factors that affect teachers' innovative behaviour beyond the ones studied, it is suggested that future research include additional elements like organizational climate, technological support, school culture, or teacher job satisfaction to better understand what influences teachers' innovative behaviour in elementary education.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Use of AI Statement

The authors declared that they had not used any AI tools in their manuscript preparation and submission.

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