

Does job satisfaction moderate the nexus of employee motivation and productivity? Evidence from Nepalese hospitals



Dhan Raj Chalise¹

Bhumiswor

Sharma^{2*}

Mahananda
Chalise³

Jagat Timilsina⁴

Harshita Lekhak⁵

^{1,4,5}Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Management, Kathmandu, Nepal.

¹Email: chalisedr@shankerdevcampus.edu.np

⁴Email: jagat.timilsina@cdm.tu.edu.np

⁵Email: harshitalekhak42@gmail.com

^{2,3}Tribhuvan University, Central Department of Management, Kathmandu, Nepal.

²Email: bsworsharma1994@gmail.com

³Email: mahananda.chalise@tu.edu.np



(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 28 January 2025

Revised: 17 March 2025

Accepted: 27 March 2025

Published: 9 April 2025

Keywords

Healthcare
Hospital management
Job satisfaction
Motivation
Productivity
Structural modelling
Work environment.

JEL Classification:

E24; J28; J29; J30.

Healthcare, as a labor-intensive sector, is intricately linked to employee productivity, which is a key determinant of the organization's efficiency. Therefore, leveraging the full potential of human resources is a prerequisite for achieving higher standards in healthcare unit productivity and establishing a robust health ecosystem. This paper aims to bridge this gap by analyzing the factors driving Nepalese health professionals' productivity. Data from 386 hospital staff were analyzed using regression and Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The findings highlight the significant role of motivators such as remuneration, job achievement, and the work environment in influencing employee productivity. Notably, the study reveals that job satisfaction is pivotal in moderating the association between job environments and employee productivity. The study's findings have practical implications for Nepali hospital workers, offering actionable insights into addressing staff-related issues and implementing effective management strategies. By understanding the mechanisms of employee motivation, environment, productivity, and job satisfaction, strategic measures can be taken to enhance health efficiency, foster a positive work environment, improve the climate for employees, and acknowledge their contributions. In addition to being a potential area of future study, this study is invaluable for healthcare authorities, management, staff well-being, and policymakers in promoting efficiency.

Contribution/ Originality: This study, one of the first to investigate the factors influencing Nepalese healthcare workers' productivity, contributes to the body of previous literature, examining the relationship between employee motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. This advancement in management research provides valuable insights for healthcare management to improve employee performance and efficiency.

1. INTRODUCTION

Healthcare is a complex sector that relies heavily on human resources to provide services. According to Musinguzi et al. (2018), health employees' behavior significantly impacts the quality of services they provide. To improve the productivity of employees, administrators must prioritize the human factor. No matter what kind of business it is, employee productivity is crucial to staying ahead of the competition. Therefore, it has been acknowledged that one of the key elements impacting worker productivity in the company is employee motivation

(Huber & Schubert, 2019). Fostering employee productivity has become a key focus in all organizations, directly impacting the company's success in a competitive market (Abdelwahed & Doghan, 2023; Singh & Chaudhary, 2022). Today, many organizations want to implement best practices and make an effort to inspire their staff to be more productive, particularly in hospitals. Highly motivated employees can increase productivity and improve performance (Krauss, 2005). Hence, management should prioritize their employees and use appropriate motivation strategies to increase organizational productivity. If an organization uses appropriate motivational strategies and focuses on employees' job satisfaction, it will ultimately increase employee productivity (Yen, Chen, & Liu, 2018).

Healthcare is one of the most challenging professions, often exposed to heavy workloads (Naqvi, Khan, Kant, & Khan, 2013). As a result, this may lead to a lack of motivation, a decline in job performance, and a negative attitude towards the job. Understanding the factors that motivate employees can provide valuable insights into fostering employee productivity in the organization (Schopman, Kalshoven, & Boon, 2017). Motivating employees enhances individual performance and overall organizational productivity (Hanaysha & Majid, 2018; Khan, Alonazi, Malik, & Zainol, 2023). Motivation is one of the major aspects of Human Resource Management (HRM), which helps to encourage employees to perform their work effectively, leading to improved employee performance. Employees' productivity increases when they feel secure and satisfied (Mishra, Pathak, & Sharma, 2020).

Employee productivity is one of the major challenging issues in business these days (Singh & Chaudhary, 2022). A lack of motivation is one of the major factors leading to reduced employee productivity. Various studies indicate that motivated employees exhibit higher productivity (Abdelwahed & Doghan, 2023), which is crucial for an organization. Many organizations often neglect important aspects of employee relations, communication, recognition, and involvement essential to employees (Omah & Obiekwe, 2019). Jobs at hospitals are very stressful because of the day and night shifts of the workers (Ferri et al., 2016; Mariappan, Kumar, & Varma, 2017). Healthcare workers with high motivation levels may demonstrate significantly higher job performance, leading to increased efficiency in hospital operations. Studies have shown that employee motivation positively correlates with productivity (Singh & Jain, 2013). Diverse factors affect employee motivation, including remuneration, employment security, working environment, and job achievement (Kayode, Adeyinka, & Abiodun, 2019). As employees are essential assets of the organization, appropriate measures should be taken to motivate employees to survive in the long run.

The link between employee productivity and motivation, a topic of significant importance and complexity, is still being explored and understood despite extensive study. Various studies have shown mixed results regarding this correlation (Abdelwahed & Doghan, 2023; Mariappan et al., 2017; Parikh, Taukari, & Bhattacharya, 2004; Singh & Chaudhary, 2022). Although the healthcare sector is characterized as highly professional, challenges related to using appropriate motivation strategies are still faced by this sector. The assessment of employee motivation is required to explore its potential impact on employee productivity in Nepalese hospitals. Many studies have been conducted in other contexts (Abdelwahed & Doghan, 2023; Borst, Kruyen, Lako, & de Vries, 2020; Huber & Schubert, 2019; Liu, Yang, & Yu, 2015; Rubel, Hung Kee, & Rimi, 2021). The absence of empirical research on the influence of employee motivation on productivity challenges the issue of whether motivation strategies or mixtures of variables enhance productivity, particularly in Nepalese hospitals.

As a novel study, the current research goal is to plug a gap in the framework of Nepalese hospitals. The study investigates the effect of employee motivations (remuneration, job achievement, and environment) on productivity. It also explores how job satisfaction moderates the nexus of motivation and productivity. Moreover, the study makes policy recommendations based on its findings. By addressing the affinity between employee productivity and motivation and the function of job satisfaction as a moderator, this study brings a fresh perspective to the field. This study is invaluable for healthcare authorities, management, staff well-being, and policymakers in promoting efficiency.

2. LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Remuneration

Analyses have consistently revealed that higher employee motivation is interrelated with improved employee performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Compensation is an essential element in worker productivity, and institutions seeking to improve their performance should use a comprehensive system that includes competitive compensation (Singh & Jain, 2013). Compensation is a worker's reward for their dedication to the company (Kayode et al., 2019). It is a method used to boost employee productivity and is a key factor influencing individuals' decisions to work in the organization (Adari & Satyarayana, 2018). Compensation exerts a favorable and considerable effect on employee efficiency, and any alterations in remuneration policies can have a tangible impact on employee productivity (Gerhart & Rynes, 2003; Sitorus & Hidayat, 2023). Remuneration significantly increases workers' performance and productivity (Abdelwahed & Doghan, 2023; Adari & Satyarayana, 2018; Onyekwelu, Dike, & Muogbo, 2020). Calvin (2017) also found a strong connection between employee productivity and remuneration, and they serve as employee motivation. Motivated by the preceding literature, the current study considers remuneration as a motivational factor in Nepalese hospitals.

2.2. Job Achievement

Job achievement is a sense of accomplishment that employees derive from their work. Various studies have shown that when employees feel their work contributes to their growth, they are more likely to perform better (Locke, 1976). Job accomplishment fosters employees' deep commitment to the organization, leading to better organizational performance (Borst et al., 2020). Remuneration and job achievement have significantly affected employees' productivity, either partially or simultaneously, with a close relationship, where achievement is the most influential factor (Baba & Si, 2015; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Employee recognition significantly impacts employees' willingness to remain with the organization, ultimately improving employee productivity (Masri & Abubakr, 2019; Subramaniam, Choo, & Johari, 2019). Motivated by prior research, the current study looks at job achievement as one of the motivators in Nepalese hospitals.

2.3. Job Environment

Companies should create workspaces in such a way that they help to improve employee commitment, motivation, and perception, which leads to positive outcomes (Hanaysha, 2016). An encouraging work environment fosters employee motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Chandrasekar, 2011). Various studies indicate that adequate resources, proper lighting, comfortable seating, and a pleasant climate contribute greatly to higher motivation and work satisfaction (Borst et al., 2020; Huber & Schubert, 2019; Valdez & Nichols, 2013). A positive work environment enhances employee motivation (Kahn, 1990; Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). The work environment influences employee productivity, and behavioral aspects of the workplace affect productivity more than physical aspects (Massoudi & Hamdi, 2017). Guided by previous studies, the current study examines the job environment as a motivator in Nepalese hospitals.

2.4. Employee Motivation and Productivity

Employees are vital for the success and efficiency of organizations, so management should ensure that employees are motivated to perform the assigned tasks effectively (Huber & Schubert, 2019). Motivated employees exhibit higher commitment and productivity, contributing positively to organizational goals and efficiency (Grant, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Employee motivation enhances individual performance and encourages a collective sense of obligation among team members, improving organizational outcomes (Frimayasa, 2021). Motivated employees have more potential to exhibit behaviors that contribute to the organization's success by fostering employee engagement, increased effort, and commitment (Kahn, 1990; Shuck, Shuck, & Reio Jr, 2013).

Remuneration and productivity enclose a significant and favorable association (Onyekwelu et al., 2020; Sitorus & Hidayat, 2023). Adetola et al. (2022) found that healthcare providers' motivation and performance are linked and positively related to employee job performance (Singh & Chaudhary, 2022). The working environment impacts job satisfaction and employee productivity (Idris, Adi, Soetjipto, & Supriyanto, 2020). The work environment and employee performance are positively related (Ismail & Puteh, 2021; Wiebell, 2019). Similarly, Aduo-Adjei, Emmanuel, and Forster (2016) and Rubel et al. (2021) indicated that motivation is the key to the work performance of nurses in hospitals. The following hypotheses are developed for the study, considering the empirical review discussed above.

H₁: Remuneration has a significant positive effect on employee productivity.

H₂: Job achievement has a significant positive effect on employee productivity.

H₃: The job environment has a significant positive effect on employee productivity.

2.5. Job Satisfaction as a Moderator

Job satisfaction is a crucial moderating factor influencing the association between employee motivation and retention (Abdirahman, Najeemdeen, Abidemi, & Ahmad, 2018; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Pang & Lu, 2018). Employee satisfaction increases the likelihood of employee motivation, productivity, and loyalty to the company (Krishnan, Loon, & Tan, 2018). Employees respond with greater motivation and perform better when they believe their employer values their contributions (Blau, 1986; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986), which leads to increased productivity. Similarly, job satisfaction significantly moderates motivation, commitment, and productivity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 2011). In addition, Kholifah et al. (2024) also found that the relationship between employee productivity and motivation is moderated by job satisfaction. Employees are more likely to be engaged when satisfied with their jobs, strengthening the positive relationship between motivation and performance (Naz et al., 2020). Motivated by existing studies, as discussed above, the following hypotheses have been developed.

H₄: Job satisfaction moderates the relationship between employee remuneration and productivity.

H₅: Job satisfaction moderates the relationship between job achievement and productivity.

H₆: Job satisfaction moderates the relationship between job environment and productivity.

The above-formulated hypothesis constitutes the study model. The current study used the following research framework: motivated by Pang and Lu (2018) and Huber and Schubert (2019). Figure 1 exhibits the direct effect of three motivational factors on employee productivity with the moderating role of job satisfaction.

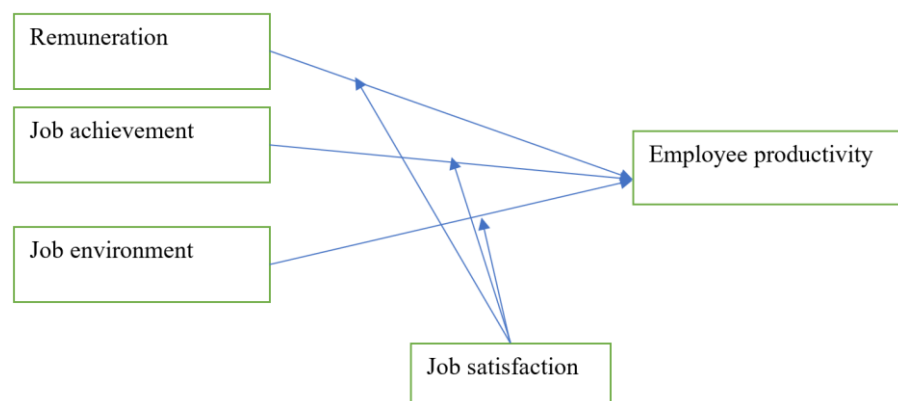


Figure 1. Conceptual research model.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the methods and techniques employed to achieve the study's primary objectives. It specifies the overall research method, including choosing a sample size, sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection sources, and data oversight.

3.1. Data Collection Procedure

This study follows a quantitative approach to interpret the data, which analyzes the effect of employee motivation on productivity. The researcher has developed a structured questionnaire that considers various factors of employee motivation and productivity. The primary data were collected from employees working in Nepalese hospitals. Besides that, existing literature was also reviewed for the research. The researcher relied on various articles, journals, and the internet to review the literature. Four hundred fifty structured questionnaires were distributed to the hospital employees, leading to a response rate of 71.78%. The study consists of five variables, and the questionnaire was prepared in two sections: the first presents demographic factors, and the second includes questions concerning the independent, moderating, and dependent variables. The study has used five-point Likert-scale questionnaires. Since many employees work in Nepalese hospitals, the study could not cover all the employees due to time and resource constraints. Hence, the study used a non-probability sampling technique (Fotis & Kamariotou, 2021). Within this, a convenience sampling technique was used, and samples were selected from the convenient population units at the convenience of the researchers (Susanto et al., 2022).

3.2. Measures and Analysis

The study employed a five-point Likert scale, with one denoting significant disagreement and five denoting strong agreement. The employee motivation scale consisted of three motivational factors, with 16 items to measure remuneration, job achievement, and job environment, as adopted from the study by Pang and Lu (2018). Likewise, in line with Pang and Lu (2018), the job satisfaction scale contained 12 items. Finally, employee productivity was measured through the study by Hanaysha and Majid (2018). The study used IBM SPSS and AMOS to analyze the data. Similarly, the SEM approach was used to evaluate the data, including the moderation effect. AMOS, a covariance-based SEM tool (Lei & Wu, 2007), was chosen to analyze relationships and provide accurate model fit testing (Sharma, Srikanth, & Suresha, 2022). The constructs' reliability and validity were assessed in the first stage to evaluate the measurement model. The hypotheses were then tested using the structural model.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most respondents were female, which constitutes 64.5% of the total population. Similarly, most respondents (57%) were aged 26-30. Regarding academic qualifications, 64% of the total respondents were undergraduates. Likewise, 50.3% of the respondents have work experience ranging from 1 to 5 years, and many respondents, 42%, had a monthly income of 30,000 to 45,000 Nepali rupees (see Table 1).

Table 1. Profile of respondents.

Demographic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	137	35.5%
	Female	249	64.5%
Age group	Below 25	112	29%
	26 - 30	220	57%
	31 - 35	37	9.6%
	36 and above	17	4.4%
Academic qualification	Intermediate	47	12.2%
	Undergraduate	247	64%
	Postgraduate	91	23.8%
Experience	Less than a year	95	24.6%
	1 - 5 years	194	50.3%
	5 - 10 years	68	17.6%
	10 and more	29	7.5%
Income	15,000 - 30,000	104	26.9%
	30,000 - 45,000	162	42%
	45,000 - 65,000	61	15.8%
	65,000 and above	59	15.3%

4.1. Measurement Model

Table 2 shows that the measurement model assesses Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and CR. Every construct satisfies the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$) and CR ($CR > 0.70$) thresholds (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2012). The model's convergent validity is also assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Each construct's AVE value is greater than 0.5, indicating high convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2. Reliability and validity of results

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	CR (RHO_A)	CR (RHO_C)	AVE
Remuneration	0.821	0.826	0.875	0.586
Job achievement	0.833	0.837	0.878	0.545
Job environment	0.822	0.822	0.875	0.585
Employee productivity	0.815	0.822	0.871	0.574

Note: AVE = Average extracted variance and CR = Composite reliability.



Figure 2. SEM analysis.

Figure 2 illustrates the effects of remuneration, job achievement, and job environment on employee productivity. The results revealed that there was a substantial positive impact of remuneration ($P < 0.001$), job achievement ($P < 0.001$), and job environment ($P < 0.001$) on employee productivity. Hence, H1, H2, and H3 were supported. However, job satisfaction was found to have no mediating effect on the relationship between motivational factors and employee productivity. Hence, H4 and H5 were rejected, and H6 was accepted.

Table 3. Moderation analysis.

Path	Beta	Mean	SD	t-value	CI-2.5%	CI-97.5%
R-> EP	0.266	0.268	0.046	5.713	0.175	0.360
JS-> EP	0.463	0.461	0.045	10.260	0.370	0.545
R*JS-> EP	0.029	0.031	0.037	0.772	-0.037	0.108
JA -> EP	0.468	0.469	0.041	11.437	0.389	0.547
JS -> EP	0.304	0.304	0.045	6.740	0.216	0.393
JA*JS-> EP	0.054	0.054	0.032	1.655	-0.009	0.119
JE -> EP	0.347	0.347	0.052	6.618	0.244	0.451
JS -> EP	0.338	0.338	0.053	6.372	0.232	0.438
JE*JS->EP	0.096	0.097	0.035	2.701	0.031	0.166

Note: R= Remuneration; JA = Job achievement; JE= Job environment; JS = Job satisfaction; EP= Employee productivity.

The authors have executed a moderation analysis to test the moderating effect of employee motivation. As exhibited in Table 3, the interaction effect of R and EP ($R*JS \rightarrow 0.029$, $t=0.772$, [CI 0.037, 0.108], $p=0.441$), JA and EP, ($JA*JS \rightarrow 0.054$, $t = 1.655$, [CI 0.009, 0.119], $p = 0.098$), and JE and EP, ($JE*JS \rightarrow 0.096$, $t = 2.701$, [CI 0.031, 0.166], $p = 0.007$), indicating that satisfaction has no significant moderate effect on the relationship between remuneration, job achievement, or job environment and employee retention. However, job satisfaction has a substantial moderating impact on the connection between the environment and employee productivity.

This study analyzes the association between employee motivation and productivity in Nepalese hospitals, assuming two variables: motivation and satisfaction. Employee motivation was examined through three variables, namely remuneration, job achievement, and job environment. Additionally, job satisfaction was taken as a moderating variable. The study's findings indicated that employee motivation factors significantly impacted employee productivity. The influence of employee motivation and employee productivity was found to be significant and positive. Remuneration ($\beta = 0.266$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$) had a positive impact on employee productivity, supporting the conclusions of prior investigations that emphasize the importance of fair compensation in driving employee productivity. Under-remuneration negatively impacts productivity, while fair or excess remuneration boosts productivity levels; these findings are consistent with Van Zyl (2010) and Nagarajan, Swamy, Reio, Elangovan, and Parayitam (2022). Similarly, job achievement ($\beta = 0.468$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$) also revealed a substantial impact on employee productivity, sustaining the function of the compensation strategy in improving and enriching employee productivity, aligning with the findings of Khan et al. (2023) and Shields and Ward (2001). Likewise, the job environment ($\beta = 0.347$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$) also positively impacted employee productivity, which supports the notion that a well-structured and supportive job environment enhances employee performance and productivity. These findings are also supported by Chandrasekar (2011) and Awan and Tahir (2015). Furthermore, job satisfaction was inferred to moderate the link between motivational factors and productivity; the findings indicated that it does not significantly influence remuneration and job achievement. However, satisfaction mediated between job environment and productivity ($\beta = 0.096$, $p\text{-value} = 0.007$), indicating that a supportive work environment fosters employee productivity. It also suggests that employees need a good and positive work environment in healthcare institutions, which ultimately leads to increased productivity at work.

5. CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this research is to analyze the effect of employee motivation factors on productivity. The medical profession is demanding and stressful, with extended and varying working hours, workloads, job-related stress, and low pay. However, understanding and addressing these occupational stressors through improved motivation can lead to job satisfaction and enhanced employee outcomes. The study identified that remuneration, job achievement, and job environment are the significant factors influencing employee motivation and productivity. These motivation factors are important in motivating employees to perform better, leading to increased and better outcomes. Healthcare organizations should offer competitive salaries, recognize employee achievements, and create a stable and supportive work environment. These measures can enhance employee productivity in the healthcare industry. However, this study did not find job satisfaction to significantly moderate relationships between motivation and employee productivity; the results suggest that job satisfaction should not be overlooked, particularly in its interaction with the job environment. Future studies could explore whether other variables, like leadership style and organizational culture, mediate the link between motivation and productivity. Expanding the research to other industries or regions could also provide broader insights into how motivation and productivity are linked. Exploring factors like work-life balance and career growth could help create a more complete picture of what drives employee productivity at work.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The current study contributes to existing theories of employee motivations and productivity by investigating internal and external motivating elements in Nepalese hospitals. It emphasizes the combined influence of job achievement, remuneration, and job environment, considering job satisfaction as a mediating factor in strengthening the link between the job environment and employees' productivity. This research contributes to theoretical knowledge by examining the importance of employee motivation in productivity, particularly in the understudied setting of Nepalese hospitals. These findings might significantly influence future studies as they encourage more investigation into topics like work-life balance, career advancement, and organizational support to boost productivity. By combining these findings, organizations may create strategies that meet the different demands of their employees, resulting in increased productivity and organizational performance.

5.2. Managerial and Policy Implications

The medical profession is one of the most demanding fields, often faced with heavy workloads, time constraints, and high expectations. As a result, if employees are not motivated or satisfied with their work, it can lead to decreased productivity (Kayode et al., 2019). This study has important implications for organizations and managers, especially in hospitals in developing countries like Nepal. The findings emphasize that employee motivation is the key to enhancing productivity, directly impacting organizational success. Managers should focus on creating an environment that supports intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, such as providing competitive compensation, opportunities for job achievement, and a favorable workplace environment. By addressing these motivational factors, hospitals can boost employee performance.

Additionally, implementing strategies such as improving infrastructure, offering professional development, and promoting work-life balance can increase satisfaction and productivity. Positive workplace cultures that make workers feel appreciated and involved can enhance productivity. Aligning organizational policies with employee needs and fostering open communication can motivate employees to perform at their best, ultimately enhancing the quality of healthcare services.

5.3. Scope for Future Research

The fact that this study was carried out in hospitals in Nepal may restrict how broadly the results can be applied to other nations and sectors. Many organizational and cultural factors may influence the link between employee satisfaction, productivity, and motivation. Similarly, the data collection relied on a survey-based questionnaire; despite assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, respondents may have provided answers they believed were socially acceptable. Future studies could use qualitative data and a mixed-method approach through interviews and focus groups to achieve more in-depth understandings of employee motivation and productivity. This study primarily examines the moderating effect of satisfaction on the association between motivational factors and productivity. However, other individual and contextual factors, such as leadership styles, organizational support, and work-life balance, could also significantly enhance employee productivity.

Funding: This research is supported by the University Grant Commission (UGC), Nepal

Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the Shanker Dev Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal has granted approval for this study on 15 June 2024 (Ref. No. 583/2024).

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Data Availability Statement: The corresponding author can provide the supporting data of this study upon a reasonable request.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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