



Applying Reframing Techniques in Individual Counseling to Reduce Self-Harm Behavior among Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the application of the reframing technique in reducing self-harm behavior among students at SMPN 18 Makassar. The study employed a quantitative approach using a Single Subject Research (SSR) experimental design with an A-B-A format. The research subject was one student identified as exhibiting self-harm behavior. Data were collected through questionnaires, observations, and interviews, and analyzed using descriptive analysis and visual analysis to examine behavioral changes across each research phase. The results indicate that before the intervention, the level of self-harm behavior was high and relatively stable. These findings demonstrate that the reframing technique is effective in helping students reconstruct negative perspectives, improve emotional regulation, and reduce urges to engage in self-harm behaviors. The study concludes that the application of the reframing technique has a positive effect on reducing self-harm behavior among junior high school students. The implications of this study highlight the importance of optimizing guidance and counseling services in schools, particularly individual counseling grounded in cognitive techniques, as both preventive and curative measures to support students' mental health and psychological well-being.

KATA KUNCI

Teknik reframing;
Konseling individu;
Perilaku menyakiti diri
sendiri;
Siswa SMP

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penerapan teknik reframing dalam mengurangi perilaku self-harm pada siswa SMPN 18 Makassar. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan jenis eksperimen Single Subject Research (SSR) dan desain A-B-A. Subjek penelitian adalah satu orang siswa yang teridentifikasi memiliki perilaku self-harm. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui angket, observasi, dan wawancara, sedangkan analisis data menggunakan analisis deskriptif dan analisis visual terhadap perubahan perilaku pada setiap fase penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebelum intervensi, tingkat perilaku self-harm berada pada kategori tinggi dan cenderung stabil. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa teknik reframing efektif dalam membantu siswa membongkar ulang sudut pandang negatif, meningkatkan regulasi emosi, serta mengurangi dorongan perilaku menyakiti diri. Kesimpulan penelitian menegaskan bahwa penerapan teknik reframing berpengaruh positif dalam menurunkan perilaku self-harm pada siswa SMP. Implikasi penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya optimalisasi layanan bimbingan dan konseling di sekolah, khususnya konseling individual berbasis teknik kognitif, sebagai upaya preventif dan kuratif dalam mendukung kesehatan mental dan kesejahteraan psikologis siswa.

1. INTRODUCTION

One stage in the human life course is adolescence. Based on age range, adolescence is divided into three stages: early adolescence (ages 10–13), middle adolescence (ages 14–17), and late adolescence (ages 18–21) (Steinberg, as cited in Ragita & Fardana N., 2021). During this period of growth and development, adolescents experience many changes, including changes in physical appearance, attitudes, ways of thinking, and behavior. They are no longer

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considered children, yet they have not fully reached adulthood with mature cognitive and emotional capacities. At this stage, adolescents' emotional lives and feelings often fluctuate, influencing their behavior and thought patterns (Izzani et al., 2024).

The physical and psychological changes experienced during adolescence demand the ability to manage emotions and cope effectively with problems. Fajaruddin (2024) states that one of the key developmental tasks of adolescence is developing emotional regulation skills to manage anxiety adaptively. Kusnadi (2021) notes that while some individuals can cope effectively with their problems, others often struggle to manage difficulties and find appropriate solutions. An inability to resolve problems can lead to psychological distress, which may eventually give rise to negative emotions or harmful outcomes such as self-harm. This is consistent with the findings of Rini (2022), who reported that difficulties in problem-solving are among the factors contributing to adolescents' engagement in self-harm behavior.

Based on data from the YouGov Omnibus survey, approximately 37% of the Indonesian population reported having engaged in self-harm, with the highest prevalence found among adolescents. Within this age group, 45% of adolescents reported having engaged in self-harm. In other words, two out of every five Indonesian adolescents have engaged in self-harm. However, many people are unaware of this phenomenon, and individuals who engage in self-harm are often reluctant to disclose their experiences to others (YouGov Survey Data, as cited in Melamita & Syukur, 2022). The World Health Organization reports that of the total adolescent population in Indonesia—approximately 9.1% or 23.4 million individuals—7.7% have engaged in self-harm, comprising 4.3% male adolescents and 3.4% female adolescents (Asyafina & Salam, 2022). Furthermore, the World Health Organization estimates that for every individual who dies by suicide, approximately 20 others engage in self-harm (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

Self-harm is a phenomenon involving deliberate self-injury without the intention to end one's life. Saputra et al. (2022) define self-harm as intentional self-injury performed as a means of channeling emotions without suicidal intent, which falls under the category of Nonsuicidal Self-Injury (NSSI). This behavior is driven by the desire to replace psychological pain with physical pain, allowing individuals to divert attention from emotional distress temporarily.

Based on observations conducted during a teaching assistance program at SMPN 18 Makassar, the researcher identified several indicators suggesting that one student, identified by the initials NS, had previously engaged in self-harm. These indicators included parallel line-shaped scars on the arms, frequently bringing broken mirror fragments to school, and deliberately covering scars by not rolling up the sleeves of the school uniform, unlike other students. On September 19, 2024, a survey was conducted with the counselee, who disclosed that self-harm was used as an outlet when experiencing pressure due to frequent scolding by parents. The counselee stated that in several situations, they were unable to refuse parental demands due to fear and low self-confidence. The counselee also explained that they had scratched their arms using sharp objects such as needles, razors, and cutters. According to the counselee, these actions were intended to relieve feelings of anger, sadness, and disappointment that could not be expressed directly. The counselee perceived cutting the arms with sharp objects as a way to release these suppressed emotions.

A second survey conducted on February 3, 2025, revealed that the counselee had engaged in various forms of self-harming behavior, including hitting their head against a wall, cutting their arms, mixing medications without a doctor's prescription, and consuming four glasses of Panther alcoholic beverages per day until experiencing intoxication, dizziness, and nausea. According to Tang et al., as cited in Tarigan and Apsari (2022), forms of self-harm include cutting the skin with sharp objects, burning the body, hitting oneself, picking at wounds, pulling hair, and ingesting toxic substances. In addition, the counselee reported experiencing trauma resulting from abuse by a former romantic partner. This condition was exacerbated by repeated harassment through direct messages containing abusive language and public exposure via Instagram stories. Robert, as cited in Insani and Savira (2023), states that bullying and cyberbullying can be contributing factors to self-harm behavior.

The counselee attempted to find a positive alternative by playing games to distract from self-harming urges. However, this effort was discontinued after the mother deleted the games from the counselee's phone. The counselee also reported several attempts to share daily school experiences with the mother, but the mother refused to listen. The counselee was reluctant to confide in the father due to feelings of sympathy for his exhaustion after work and concern about adding to his burden.

Based on these findings, it is evident that the student's self-harm behavior requires appropriate intervention to support healthier and more productive emotional regulation. Individual counseling services represent one form of intervention that can be provided to students who engage in self-harm. This service allows counselors to provide

focused, in-depth assistance through a personalized approach. In individual counseling, the counselee is given space to express feelings, thoughts, and internal conflicts that underlie the presenting problem.

The technique employed in the individual counseling process for this self-harm case is reframing. Reframing is a cognitive technique within the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach developed by Albert Ellis. Reframing is the reinterpretation of events from a more positive perspective without altering the factual circumstances (Hati et al., 2024). According to the researcher, reframing techniques used to reduce self-harm behavior can help the counselee view negative situations or experiences from a more adaptive perspective without changing the objective facts of the event. By viewing problems from alternative perspectives, the counselee may reduce negative thought patterns that trigger self-harming behavior. This aligns with the principles of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), which emphasize that negative emotions arise not from situations themselves, but from individuals' beliefs and interpretations of those situations (Corey, 2017). Through reframing, the counselee can be guided to reinterpret traumatic experiences into more constructive meanings. For example, trauma resulting from abuse can be reframed as a source of strength that encourages greater self-protection and the courage to say "no" when feeling uncomfortable. Emotional pressure from a former partner may instead become an opportunity to build self-confidence and recognize personal worth beyond others' negative judgments.

Previous studies have examined the effectiveness of reframing techniques in helping individuals transform negative thinking patterns into more positive ones. Research conducted by Fajriani et al. (2022) demonstrated that reframing techniques reduced low self-esteem among high school students by improving their perspectives on the problems they experienced. Similarly, Wahyuni and Sa'idah (2021) found that reframing techniques applied in group counseling were effective in enhancing positive thinking skills among junior high school students. However, these studies primarily focused on self-confidence and general negative thinking patterns, without specifically examining self-harm as a complex maladaptive behavior. Furthermore, research by Widodo and Nursalim (2023) examined the effectiveness of the REBT approach in reducing self-injury among students, demonstrating that REBT-based counseling helped individuals identify and modify irrational beliefs that contributed to self-injury. Nevertheless, this study addressed REBT broadly and did not specifically highlight the role of reframing techniques within individual interventions for reducing self-harm behavior.

Although previous research has demonstrated that reframing techniques are effective in transforming negative thought patterns into more positive ones and contribute to improvements in self-confidence and adaptive thinking among adolescents, studies by Fajriani et al. (2022) and Wahyuni and Sa'idah (2021) did not specifically target self-harm behavior. Similarly, while the REBT approach has been shown to reduce self-injury, the specific role of reframing techniques within these interventions has not been thoroughly elaborated. Therefore, an important research gap remains regarding how reframing techniques can be specifically applied to reduce self-harm behavior.

This study offers novelty through the application of reframing techniques in individual counseling to reduce self-harm behavior among junior high school students. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on self-confidence enhancement or group counseling interventions, this study emphasizes individual cognitive restructuring through a more intensive, personalized approach. In addition, this study integrates reframing techniques with traumatic experiences and complex emotional conflicts, such as abuse and family pressure, that contribute to self-harm behavior. The purpose of this study is to examine the implementation of reframing techniques in reducing self-harm behavior among students at SMPN 18 Makassar and to describe changes in self-harm behavior before, during, and after individual counseling interventions using reframing techniques. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of guidance and counseling practices, particularly in addressing self-harm behavior among adolescents within school settings.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using an experimental Single-Subject Research (SSR) design. The research design applied was the A-B-A design. The A-B-A design is a development of the A-B design and is intended to demonstrate a causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

2.2 Location and Year of Research.

In this study, the researcher acted as both the data collector and an active instrument in gathering field data. The selection of the research subject was based on data from observations and interviews conducted by the

researcher. Based on the results of this analysis, one student identified as engaging in self-harm behavior was selected as the research subject.

2.3 Data Collection

Data collection in this study employed several instruments, including questionnaires, observations, and interviews.

2.4 Data Analysis

This study used descriptive and visual analyses. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the self-harm behavior of the subject (NS). Initially, the target behavior was continuously measured during baseline A1 for three sessions. This was followed by the intervention condition (B), which lasted 5 sessions. After administering the self-harm behavior questionnaire during the intervention condition (B), measurement of self-harm behavior was continued during the baseline A2 condition for three sessions.

2.5 Research Procedures

The research process began with obtaining permission from the school. After approval was granted, the researcher collected data through observations and interviews with a student who was indicated to be engaging in self-harm behavior. Repeated measurements were then conducted across each phase: baseline A1, intervention, and baseline A2. The results of these measurements were analyzed using graphs and tables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Reframing techniques were implemented to reduce self-harm behavior in subject NS across 11 sessions: 3 during the first baseline condition (A1), 5 during the intervention phase, and 3 during the second baseline condition (A2). The results of the within-condition analysis for subject NS are presented as follows.

Table 1. Measurement Results Data at Baseline (A1), Intervention (B), and Baseline (A2)

Phase	Session	Number of Statements	Maximum Score	Obtained Score	Score (%)
Baseline (A1)	First	40	160	131	82
	Second	40	160	131	82
	Third	40	160	131	82
Intervention (B)	Fourth	40	160	88	55
	Fifth	40	160	84	52
	Sixth	40	160	80	50
	Seventh	40	160	81	51
	Eighth	40	160	80	50
Baseline (A2)	Ninth	40	160	80	50
	Tenth	40	160	80	50
	Eleventh	40	160	80	50

To examine changes in self-harm behavior across the first baseline condition (A1), the intervention phase (B), and the second baseline condition (A2), a graph was constructed as shown below:

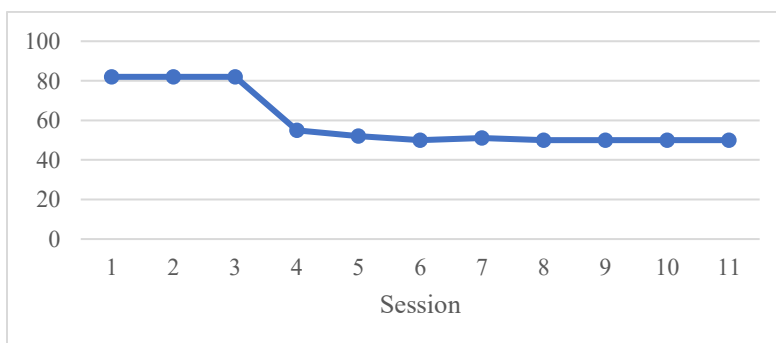


Figure 1. Measurement results during baseline A1, intervention (B), and baseline A2

A summary of the analytical components across the three conditions is presented in the following table:

Table 2. Summary of Visual Analysis Results across Baseline A1, Intervention (B), and Baseline A2

Condition	A1	B	A2
Condition Length	3	5	3
Trend Estimation			
Stability Trend	(=) Stable	(-) Stable	(=) Stable
Percentage of Stability	100%	100%	100%
Data Path			
Level and Stability	(=) Stable	(-) Stable	(=) Stable
Range	75.85-88.15	47.48-55.72	46.25-53.75
Level Change	82-82 (0)	55-50 (-5)	50-50 (0)

The summary of the visual analysis presented in Table 4.26 indicates that the first baseline condition (A1) consisted of three sessions, the intervention phase (B) comprised five sessions, and the second baseline condition (A2) included three sessions. During baseline A1, the trend line was horizontal, indicating that the self-harm behavior of subject NS remained stable from the first to the third session, with a constant score of 82. In contrast, the intervention phase (B) demonstrated a downward trend, suggesting a reduction in self-harm behavior from the fourth to the eighth session. In the second baseline condition (A2), the trend returned to a horizontal pattern, indicating stability of behavior following the intervention. The stability trend across all three conditions reached 100%, signifying that the data were stable throughout each phase. The data path during baseline A1 was flat, indicating no variation in behavior, whereas during the intervention phase (B), the data path showed a decreasing pattern, reflecting behavioral change in the form of reduced self-harm. In baseline A2, the data path again appeared flat, indicating consistent behavior after the intervention. Regarding level and range, baseline A1 showed a stable pattern with scores ranging from 75.85 to 88.15, the intervention phase (B) demonstrated a decreasing pattern with a range of 47.48 to 55.72, and baseline A2 exhibited a stable pattern with values ranging from 46.25 to 53.75. In terms of level change, no change was observed during baseline A1, as the score remained constant at 82. However, during the intervention phase (B), a level change occurred, with a decrease from 55 to 50, representing a reduction of five points. No level change was observed during baseline A2, indicating that the reduced level of self-harm behavior was maintained following the intervention.

After completing the within-condition analysis, a between-condition analysis was conducted. The summary of the between-condition analysis results is presented below.

Table 3. Summary of Between-Condition Analysis of Self-Harm Behavior in Subject NS

Comparison Condition	A1/B	B/A2
Number of Variables	1	1
Change in Trend Direction and Effect	to	to
Change in Stability Trend	(=) to (-) Stable to stable	(-) to (=) Stable to stable
Level Change	55-82 (-27)	50-50 (=)
Percentage of Overlap	0%	100%

The summary of the between-condition analysis presented in Table 4.31 indicates that one variable was manipulated across the baseline A1, intervention (B), and baseline A2 conditions. The change in trend direction from baseline A1 to the intervention phase (B) shifted from a stable pattern to a decreasing trend, indicating an improvement in subject NS's self-harm behavior following the intervention. Furthermore, the trend direction from the intervention phase (B) to baseline A2 shifted from decreasing to stable, suggesting that the improvement in behavior was maintained after the intervention was withdrawn. The stability trend across conditions remained stable, indicating consistency in the data. In terms of level change, a decrease of 27 points was observed between baseline A1 and the intervention phase (B), whereas no level change occurred between the intervention phase (B) and baseline A2. Regarding data overlap, the percentage of overlapping data between baseline A1 and the intervention phase (B) was 0%, indicating a strong intervention effect on the target behavior. In contrast, the

overlap between the intervention phase (B) and baseline A2 reached 100%, suggesting that the data remained stable and that no deterioration in self-harm behavior occurred after the intervention was terminated.

3.2. Discussion

The research findings reveal that self-harm behavior in subject NS can be reduced through the reframing of perspectives. This finding is consistent with the study by Rahma et al. (2024), which reported that modifying individuals' thinking patterns can reduce self-harm behavior. Based on behavioral measurements, it was evident that, following the intervention, subject NS experienced a significant change, as indicated by a decrease in self-harm behavior. This decrease was reflected in lower scores compared to those obtained during the baseline A1 condition (before the intervention). In the affective domain, subject NS demonstrated improved ability to recognize feelings of disappointment and guilt and to regulate emotions before reacting. This finding aligns with the study by Inayah et al. (2024), which reported that reframing techniques can enhance adolescents' emotional regulation.

Improvements were also observed in the cognitive domain, as subject NS began to reject negative thoughts, such as the belief that they deserved to be hurt, and no longer perceived self-harm as a solution to problems. From a biological perspective, impulsive urges to engage in self-injury were better controlled, and the subject increasingly chose to delay or redirect these urges when they arose. The environmental aspect showed enhanced coping abilities in dealing with social and academic pressures without resorting to self-harm as an escape. Meanwhile, in the behavioral domain, subject NS was able to manage emotions more constructively, such as calming down when feeling angry or disappointed, thereby eliminating self-injurious behaviors. Overall, the application of the reframing technique was effective in reducing self-harm behavior among students at SMPN 18 Makassar.

The implementation of reframing techniques through individual counseling services demonstrated a significant impact on reducing self-harm behavior among junior high school students. During the pre-intervention phase, self-harm behavior was categorized as high and exhibited a relatively stable pattern. This condition indicated an accumulation of unmanaged negative emotions and maladaptive cognitive patterns that framed problems as overwhelming and unsolvable. Within the context of adolescent development, self-harm behavior often emerges as a form of emotional escape when individuals lack adequate emotional regulation skills and effective coping strategies.

The application of reframing techniques in individual counseling enabled students to identify and reevaluate negative thoughts that triggered self-harm behavior (Linda & Wastuti, 2024). Through therapeutic dialogue, students were guided to understand that their interpretations of life events strongly influence their emotional and behavioral responses. Shifting perspectives from irrational and pessimistic interpretations toward more realistic and constructive viewpoints helped students develop new meanings of their life experiences (Habibulloh & Equatora, 2025). A reduction in both the frequency and intensity of self-harm urges following the intervention evidenced this process.

These findings are consistent with cognitive approaches that emphasize cognitive restructuring as a key mechanism for behavioral change (Nurkia & Sulkifly, 2020). Reframing techniques function as a means of reducing cognitive distortions such as overgeneralization and catastrophizing, which are commonly experienced by adolescents with self-harm tendencies. With increased cognitive awareness and improved emotional regulation, students became better able to manage psychological stress adaptively, including verbalizing emotions, seeking social support, and using healthier problem-solving strategies (Putri, 2020).

Guidance and counseling services play a crucial role in supporting students' mental health and psychological development (Umar & Salahudin, 2025), particularly in addressing complex emotional issues such as self-harm behavior. During early adolescence, students are in a developmental phase that is highly vulnerable to emotional stress, interpersonal conflicts, and difficulties in stress management. Without appropriate support, students are at risk of developing maladaptive behaviors as a means of emotional release, underscoring the need for guidance and counseling services within the school environment.

In the context of addressing self-harm behavior, individual counseling services provide a safe and supportive space for students to express emotions, thoughts, and experiences that are difficult to communicate in everyday social settings. Counselors serve as professional facilitators who assist students in understanding the sources of their difficulties and in developing healthier perspectives toward themselves and their environment (Iloakasia, 2024). Through an empathetic, trusting counseling relationship, students feel accepted without stigma, allowing psychological recovery processes to proceed more optimally (Buana & Zulwidyaningtyas, 2025).

The application of reframing techniques in individual counseling services demonstrates that guidance and counseling are not merely curative but also oriented toward developing students' cognitive and emotional skills

(Dharsana et al., 2019). Reframing helps students reconstruct negative thoughts into more rational and constructive interpretations, enabling them to regulate emotions adaptively and reduce the urge to engage in self-harm. This finding underscores the tangible contribution of guidance and counseling services in fostering healthy and sustainable coping strategies.

Furthermore, guidance and counseling services function as a preventive effort to mitigate the risk of more severe self-harm behaviors (Syah et al., 2025). Through early detection, psychological assessment, and appropriate intervention, counselors can identify at-risk students and provide timely support before problems escalate. This preventive approach is essential for creating a school climate that prioritizes mental health and the psychological well-being of all school members.

The urgency of strengthening guidance and counseling services highlights their role as an essential component of an education system oriented toward holistic student development. Optimizing counselors' roles in implementing reframing techniques through individual counseling should be supported by school policies, continuous professional development, and collaboration with teachers and parents. These efforts are expected to foster a safe, supportive, and responsive educational environment that addresses students' mental health needs, enabling them to develop optimally both academically and psychologically.

4. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study theoretically strengthen and extend existing evidence that reframing techniques are effective in modifying negative thought patterns among adolescents. These findings not only support previous research on cognitive modification but also provide a novel contribution by specifically demonstrating the effectiveness of reframing techniques in reducing self-harm behavior among junior high school students.

From a practical perspective, school guidance and counseling teachers can apply reframing techniques as an individual intervention strategy to support students who exhibit symptoms of self-harm. This approach offers a practical alternative that is relatively easy to implement within the school setting.

From a managerial perspective, the results of this study may serve as a foundation for schools and policymakers in designing prevention and intervention programs targeting self-harm behavior. Such programs can be developed through counselor training and professional workshops for guidance and counseling teachers focused on the application of reframing techniques.

Methodologically, this study demonstrates that Single Subject Research with an A-B-A experimental design is effective for evaluating behavioral changes in depth at the individual level. Future researchers may utilize this approach to examine the effects of other counseling techniques on different issues, thereby strengthening evidence-based guidance and counseling practices grounded in empirical data.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study demonstrate that the application of reframing techniques through individual counseling is effective in reducing self-harm behavior among students at SMPN 18 Makassar. Following the intervention, a significant decrease in self-harm behavior was observed in subject NS, and this improvement remained stable during the baseline A2 phase. This sustained change indicates that reframing does not merely produce short-term behavioral adjustments but contributes to more enduring cognitive and emotional changes. By helping students reinterpret stressful experiences and negative thoughts from a more constructive perspective, reframing enables them to regulate emotions better, challenge irrational beliefs, and reduce maladaptive coping strategies such as self-harm. As a result, students are more likely to adopt healthier and more adaptive ways of expressing emotional distress.

Based on these findings, it is strongly recommended that school guidance and counseling teachers integrate reframing techniques into individual counseling services and into structured self-harm prevention programs. The incorporation of reframing can enhance students' emotional awareness, cognitive flexibility, and resilience when facing academic or social pressures. Furthermore, future research is encouraged to involve a larger, more diverse sample to increase the generalizability of the findings. Combining reframing with other counseling approaches, such as emotion regulation training or cognitive-behavioral strategies, may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective interventions for reducing self-harm behavior among adolescents.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

All authors participated in the discussion of the research findings and contributed to refining the final manuscript. INR was responsible for drafting the initial manuscript, collecting data, and conducting data analysis. AS and A contributed to the conceptualization of the study, provided theoretical input, and critically reviewed the manuscript to ensure its readiness for publication.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING 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.

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