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Developing the "Jejak Keberanian" Storybook to Foster Junior High School Students' Self-Confidence

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ABSTRACT

Self-confidence is a key personal–social competence in early adolescence, yet many junior high school students hesitate to voice opinions, ask questions, or perform in front of their peers. This study aimed to develop the illustrated storybook "Jejak Keberanian" (Traces of Courage) as a supporting medium for guidance and counseling services and to examine its feasibility for fostering the self-confidence of students at SMP Negeri 4 Tarakan, Indonesia. A research and development design adapted from the Borg and Gall model was carried out in seven stages: identifying potentials and problems, collecting data, designing the product, validating the design, revising the design, trialing the product, and revising the product. The storyline was structured around Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy. Media, content, and language experts validated the book, and a limited trial involved two school counselors and seven students in a group guidance session. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using feasibility percentages, while qualitative feedback guided the revisions. The book was rated feasible by the media expert (90.00%), the content expert (85.00%), and the language expert (85.42%). The counselors' responses averaged 93.33%, and the students' responses reached 82.86%, both in the feasible category. The novelty of this study lies in embedding the four sources of self-efficacy into the characters, conflicts, and plot of a storybook designed specifically for counseling services in junior high schools. The book is feasible as an alternative medium for group guidance, although its effectiveness in increasing self-confidence requires further experimental testing.

INTRODUCTION

Early adolescence is a period of rapid physical, emotional, and social change. In Indonesia, junior high school (Sekolah Menengah Pertama, SMP) students are generally between 12 and 15 years old, so they enter this stage at the same time as school life begins to demand more public forms of participation, such as class discussions, presentations, ceremonies, and competitions. Developmental research shows that the social–cognitive capacities needed to navigate peer relationships, including mentalizing, emotion regulation, and resistance to peer influence, continue to mature throughout adolescence, while sensitivity to social evaluation and rejection is heightened during these years (Andrews et al., 2021). For many young adolescents, being seen and judged by classmates is therefore a significant psychological event rather than a trivial one.

Within this developmental context, self-confidence becomes an important personal resource. In this study, self-confidence is understood as a student's belief in their own

capabilities that allows them to act without excessive anxiety, to take responsibility for their actions, and to interact constructively with others. Self-confidence overlaps with, but is not identical to, self-esteem, which concerns a person's overall evaluation of their worth. A large body of longitudinal and meta-analytic evidence indicates that positive self-evaluations are associated with better outcomes in relationships, school, work, and mental health, and that these associations hold across age and gender (Orth & Robins, 2022). Strengthening how adolescents view their own capabilities is therefore a legitimate target for school-based guidance services.

Students who are confident tend to share their opinions, take an active part in learning, and are willing to appear in front of others. Students with low self-confidence, in contrast, often doubt their abilities, fear making mistakes, hesitate to speak, and avoid situations that require them to perform. Fear of being judged in social settings is common at this age. In a school-based sample of 1,495 Portuguese adolescents, about one quarter reported intense social fears, and social performance situations were the most feared events (Alves et al., 2022). A survey of young people aged 16 to 29 in seven countries, including Indonesia, likewise found that more than one in three respondents met the threshold criteria for social anxiety (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020). These findings suggest that reluctance to speak in class is not merely a matter of shyness; if left unaddressed, it can restrict participation in learning and hinder the development of students' potential. Self-confidence is thus a personal–social developmental aspect that deserves attention in guidance and counseling (Bimbingan dan Konseling, BK) services at school.

Self-confidence is closely related to what social cognitive theory calls self-efficacy, namely perceived capability to learn or perform actions at designated levels. Self-efficacy influences the activities people choose, the effort they invest, their persistence when facing obstacles, and their eventual achievement (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Students with high self-efficacy tend to treat difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered, whereas students with low self-efficacy are more likely to become anxious, hesitate, and withdraw. Longitudinal data from students moving from late childhood into early adolescence show that self-efficacy predicts later emotional engagement and academic achievement (Olivier et al., 2019). Self-efficacy is shaped by four sources of information: mastery experience, vicarious experience gained by observing others, verbal or social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states (Gale et al., 2021; Hinduja et al., 2024). Because these sources can be deliberately arranged, interventions can be designed to strengthen them. A systematic review of intervention studies concluded that effective programs either manipulate the sources of self-efficacy directly or embed them in teaching methods and learning activities (Zakariya, 2022). One experiment found that integrating anxiety-coping strategies, modeling examples, mental practice, and encouraging feedback into a single online lesson produced substantially higher self-efficacy than a control condition (Huang et al., 2020).

The need for such support was evident at SMP Negeri 4 Tarakan. During the school field experience program (Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan, PLP) from 31 August to 17 December 2025, the researcher reviewed the results of the Student Needs Analysis (Analisis Kebutuhan Peserta Didik, AKPD) for class VIII-1. The analysis showed that 21 students reported that they did not yet feel confident and were afraid to ask or answer questions in class, and this item was classified as a high-priority need. Classroom observation confirmed the pattern: during discussions and presentations, several students remained passive, and

when asked to present, some appeared nervous, spoke softly and haltingly, or tried to avoid the task altogether. An interview with the school counselor reinforced these observations. According to the counselor, several students were actually capable but were afraid to express opinions, raise their hands, or come to the front of the class. The same reluctance appeared outside the classroom, for example when students were invited to serve as flag ceremony officers or to join competitions, because they felt embarrassed and feared failure. The counselor believed that these students mainly needed encouragement and support. However, services had so far relied largely on lectures and discussions, and no dedicated medium was available to help students understand and develop their self-confidence.

Illustrated storybooks offer one promising medium. From the perspective of the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, people learn more deeply when words and pictures are combined in a well-designed way than when they receive words alone (Mayer, 2024). Stories also work through an experiential route. Research on narrative transportation shows that readers who become absorbed in a story world and identify with its characters can change how they see themselves and the world around them (Green & Appel, 2024). Experimental studies with young children have found that picture-book reading can teach an adaptive emotion regulation strategy (Schoppmann et al., 2023) and that socially themed picture books can increase prosocial behavior by strengthening empathy (Chen et al., 2025). More broadly, storytelling has been used across educational levels to support learning, reflection, and personal expression (Wu & Chen, 2020). In mental health practice, bibliotherapy, which involves reading, reflecting on, and discussing literature, is recognized as an accessible non-pharmacological form of psychological support (Monroy-Fraustro et al., 2021), and a recent systematic review of creative bibliotherapy delivered in schools to children and adolescents aged 5 to 16 reported promising, although still limited, evidence for mental health-related outcomes (Redman et al., 2025).

A storybook can also fit naturally into group guidance, one of the core services in Indonesian school counseling. Group guidance is preventive and developmental: the counselor facilitates interaction among members so that they can learn from one another. A systematic review of school-based group counseling found that interventions led by school counselors were associated with positive outcomes, particularly when they drew on multiple therapeutic factors of the group process (Steen et al., 2022). Creative, narrative-based group activities have also been used to support social connection and growth among early adolescents aged 10 to 13 (Kilmer et al., 2024). A story read and discussed together provides shared material for reflection, allowing students to talk about a character's fears and successes before talking about their own.

Despite this potential, most experimental work on picture books has involved preschool children, and most self-efficacy interventions have been developed for academic subjects such as mathematics or statistics (Zakariya, 2022). Studies that develop a storybook specifically as a medium for counseling services in junior high schools, and that use the sources of self-efficacy explicitly as the basis for designing the characters, conflicts, and plot, remain scarce. To address this gap, the present study developed the educational storybook "Jejak Keberanian" (Traces of Courage) for students at SMP Negeri 4 Tarakan. The book addresses problems that are close to students' daily lives, such as fear of speaking in front of the class, hesitation in expressing opinions, and difficulty interacting socially. Its plot follows the main character's transformation from fear to courage by integrating Bandura's four sources of self-

efficacy. The novelty of the study lies in three aspects: the integration of self-efficacy sources into the narrative structure, a design tailored to the characteristics of junior high school students, and the positioning of the book as a supporting medium for counseling services. Accordingly, this study aimed to (1) describe the development of the storybook, (2) determine its feasibility based on assessments by media, content, and language experts, and (3) describe the responses of school counselors and students to the book as a supporting medium for improving students' self-confidence.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a research and development (R&D) design, that is, a systematic approach for producing an educational product and testing its feasibility on the basis of real needs in the field. The product developed was the educational storybook "Jejak Keberanian", intended as a supporting medium for guidance and counseling services to foster the self-confidence of students at SMP Negeri 4 Tarakan. The development procedure followed the Borg and Gall model, which remains widely used in educational R&D because it links needs assessment, product development, expert evaluation, and field testing in a structured sequence (Widodo et al., 2025). The version of the model commonly applied in Indonesian educational research consists of ten steps, beginning with the identification of potentials and problems and ending with mass production. Considering the available time, funding, and scope, this study implemented the first seven steps, up to product revision, as shown in Figure 1.

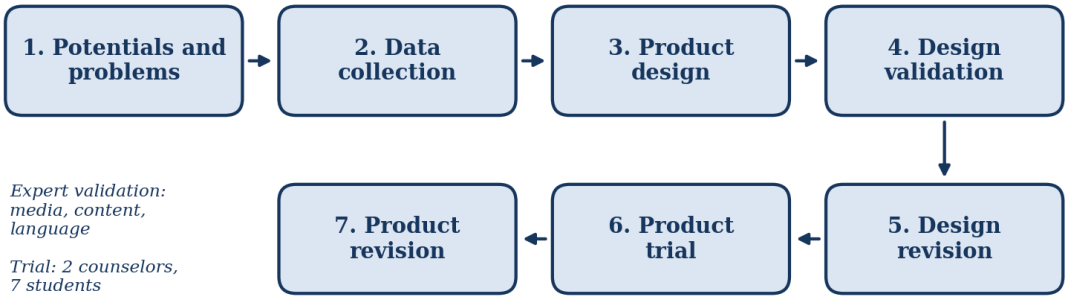


Figure 1. Development Procedure of the "Jejak Keberanian" Storybook

Development Procedure

The activities carried out in each stage are summarized in Table 1. The first two stages served as a needs analysis, the third and fourth stages produced and validated the initial prototype, and the final three stages refined the product through expert feedback and a limited trial with prospective users.

Table 1. Stages and Activities of the Development Procedure

Stage	Main Activities	Output
Potentials and problems	Identified the absence of a dedicated medium for developing self-confidence and the number of students who felt shy and hesitant when speaking in class	Problem statement
Data collection	Interviewed the school counselor and reviewed literature on student self-confidence and storybooks as learning media	Needs and content specification
Product design	Drafted the story concept, plot, characters, self-confidence values, and visual and linguistic aspects	Initial prototype
Design validation	Media, content, and language experts assessed the feasibility of the prototype before the trial	Validation scores and suggestions
Design revision	Revised the content, storyline, illustrations, and technical aspects based on the validators' input	Revised prototype
Product trial	Two counselors and seven students used the book in a group guidance session and completed response questionnaires	User response data
Product revision	Refined the book based on suggestions from validators and counselors to fit junior high school students and the development goals	Final product

Source: Research procedure, 2026

Participants

The design was validated by three experts: a media expert, a content (subject matter) expert, and a language expert. The media expert assessed appearance, layout, illustrations, readability, and print quality. The content expert assessed the suitability of the content, the courage values presented, conceptual accuracy, usefulness, contextual relevance, and the coherence of the plot. The language expert assessed spelling, sentence structure, and the clarity of the narration and dialogue. The product trial involved two school counselors (Guru BK) and seven students of SMP Negeri 4 Tarakan. The students were selected using simple random sampling and took part in the trial through a group guidance session, which reflects the setting in which the book is intended to be used.

Instruments

Data were collected using expert validation sheets and user response questionnaires. Each validation sheet contained items covering the aspects relevant to the expert's field, together with space for written comments and suggestions. The maximum attainable score was 60 for the media validation sheet, 60 for the content validation sheet, and 48 for the language validation sheet. The response questionnaires for counselors and students asked respondents to rate the suitability of the material, the readability of the language, the appearance of the book, and its usefulness; the maximum score was 60 per respondent, giving a maximum of 420 for the seven students combined. Qualitative data consisted of the validators' written suggestions and the open-ended comments of counselors and students.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative and descriptive quantitative techniques. The qualitative analysis organized the suggestions and comments from validators

and users into revision points. The quantitative analysis converted the scores from validators and respondents into feasibility percentages using the following formula: $P = (\Sigma x / \Sigma x_{max}) \times 100\%$, where P is the feasibility percentage, Σx is the total score obtained, and Σx_{max} is the maximum attainable score. The resulting percentages were interpreted using the criteria in Table 2.

Table 2. Criteria for Interpreting Feasibility Percentages

Percentage	Category	Interpretation
76–100%	Feasible	The product can be used, with minor revisions where suggested
56–75%	Fairly feasible	The product can be used after substantial revision
40–55%	Less feasible	The product requires major revision before use
0–39%	Not feasible	The product is not suitable for use

Source: Research instrument criteria, 2026

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Product Development

The study produced the educational storybook "Jejak Keberanian" as a supporting medium for guidance and counseling services to develop the self-confidence of students at SMP Negeri 4 Tarakan. The needs analysis in the first two stages confirmed that students' reluctance to speak and perform in public was a high-priority issue and that counselors lacked a medium designed specifically for this problem. On this basis, the story was set in a junior high school environment so that students could easily recognize the situations and identify with the characters. The plot follows the main character, Raka, as he moves from fear and self-doubt toward greater courage.

The content of the book refers to three indicators of self-confidence: (1) the courage to express opinions, (2) the ability to speak and appear in front of others, and (3) the ability to interact actively in social situations. Each indicator is represented by situations that Raka faces at school, such as being asked a question in class, being assigned to present in front of classmates, and joining group activities with peers. The book was produced in A5 format using Canva and is accompanied by illustrations that support the narrative. To make the narrative a deliberate vehicle for building confidence, the four sources of self-efficacy were embedded in the storyline as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Integration of the Sources of Self-Efficacy into the Storyline

Source of Self-Efficacy	Meaning	Embodiment in the Story
Mastery experience	Belief strengthened by one's own successful performance	Raka gradually succeeds in facing challenges, such as answering a question and presenting in class
Vicarious experience	Belief gained by observing a similar person succeed	Readers observe Raka, a peer-like character, overcome his fear and serve as a model
Verbal persuasion	Belief strengthened by encouragement from others	Teachers and friends encourage Raka and express confidence in his ability
Physiological and emotional states	Belief influenced by how one interprets bodily and emotional reactions	Raka's emotions shift from fear and anxiety to calm and courage as he learns to manage his nervousness

Source: Product design, 2026

Expert Validation

The prototype was validated by the media, content, and language experts before it was tried out with users. The quantitative results are presented in Table 4. All three validators placed the book in the feasible category, with the media expert giving the highest rating.

Table 4. Results of Expert Validation

Validator	Aspects Assessed	Score	Percentage	Category
Media expert	Appearance, layout, illustrations, readability, print quality	54 of 60	90.00%	Feasible
Content expert	Content suitability, courage values, conceptual accuracy, usefulness, context, plot coherence	51 of 60	85.00%	Feasible
Language expert	Spelling, sentence structure, clarity of narration and dialogue	41 of 48	85.42%	Feasible

Source: Data processing results, 2026

In addition to the scores, each validator provided qualitative suggestions. The three validators stated that the book was feasible to be tried out after revision, and the revisions were completed before the trial. Table 5 summarizes the suggestions and the corresponding revisions.

Table 5. Validators' Suggestions and Product Revisions

Validator	Suggestion	Revision Made
Media expert	Arrange the narration of the material according to the self-confidence indicators	The narrative sequence was reorganized so that each part of the story reflects one of the three indicators
Content expert	Include guidance notes in the draft of the book	Guidance notes were added to help counselors and students reflect on the message of each part of the story
Language expert	Adjust the spelling to the Indonesian spelling guidelines (EYD) and simplify sentences and dialogue	Spelling was corrected according to EYD, and long sentences and dialogue were simplified to suit junior high school readers

Source: Validation sheets, 2026

User Trial

After revision, the book was tried out with two school counselors and seven students through a group guidance session. The results are presented in Table 6. Both counselors rated the book in the feasible category, with an average of 93.33%, and the seven students obtained a combined score of 348 out of 420, or 82.86%, which also falls in the feasible category.

Table 6. Results of the Product Trial

Respondent	Score	Percentage	Category
School counselor 1	57 of 60	95.00%	Feasible
School counselor 2	55 of 60	91.67%	Feasible
Counselors (average)	112 of 120	93.33%	Feasible
Students (n = 7)	348 of 420	82.86%	Feasible

Source: Data processing results, 2026

The qualitative responses were consistent with the scores. The counselors described the book as inspiring and educational and considered that it could support the strengthening of students' character. The students reported that they liked how Raka changed over the course of the story and found the book attractive and easy to understand. When asked what they had learned, the students mentioned the importance of daring to appear in front of others, believing in their own abilities, and supporting friends who are speaking in public. Several students noted that they were touched by the way Raka's friends supported him.

Discussion

The results indicate that "Jejak Keberanian" is feasible as a supporting medium for guidance and counseling services. All validation and trial percentages exceeded the 76% threshold, and the qualitative feedback suggests that the book's message was understood by its intended users. These findings are discussed below in terms of the book's content, its self-efficacy-based narrative, its media qualities, and its use in group guidance.

Relevance of the Content to Students' Needs

The content expert's rating of 85.00% suggests that the book's substance matches the problems that prompted its development. The story deals with fear of making mistakes, reluctance to express opinions, and anxiety when appearing in front of the class, which are precisely the difficulties identified through the AKPD, observation, and the counselor interview. This alignment matters because social performance situations are among the most feared events for adolescents (Alves et al., 2022) and because heightened sensitivity to peer evaluation is a normal feature of this developmental period (Andrews et al., 2021). A story that depicts these situations realistically allows students to recognize their own experience without having to disclose it directly, which may lower the threshold for discussing it in a group.

Presenting self-confidence through a character also makes an abstract construct more concrete. Students do not simply receive the advice that they should believe in themselves; they watch a peer-like character struggle, hesitate, receive support, and eventually succeed. Research on narrative transportation suggests that this kind of absorption and identification is one of the main pathways through which stories influence readers' self-perceptions (Green & Appel, 2024). The students' statements that they learned to believe in their abilities and to

support friends who speak in public indicate that the intended message was captured.

Self-Efficacy as the Basis of the Narrative

Bandura's self-efficacy theory was used as the foundation for constructing the storyline rather than as a variable to be measured. All four sources were translated into narrative elements. Mastery experience appears when Raka gradually succeeds in facing challenges; vicarious experience is offered to readers as they watch Raka succeed as a model who resembles them; verbal persuasion is represented by the encouragement Raka receives from teachers and friends; and physiological and emotional states are depicted through the shift in Raka's feelings from fear and anxiety to calm and courage. This design is consistent with the conclusion that effective self-efficacy interventions either manipulate the sources directly or embed them in learning activities (Zakariya, 2022), and with experimental evidence that combining several self-efficacy-building strategies in one learning experience can produce substantial gains (Huang et al., 2020).

The narrative format may be particularly suited to providing vicarious experience and verbal persuasion, which are difficult to supply consistently in ordinary classroom interactions. Studies of the sources of self-efficacy show that social models and encouragement from significant others contribute meaningfully to students' beliefs about their capabilities (Gale et al., 2021; Hinduja et al., 2024). A character such as Raka, whose situation mirrors that of the readers, can serve as an accessible coping model, while the supportive remarks of his teacher and friends model the kind of encouragement that students can offer one another. The students' emotional response to the support Raka received from his friends suggests that this element of the story was salient. Whether reading such a story actually changes students' self-efficacy and self-confidence is, however, a question that the present design could not answer and that requires experimental testing.

Media Quality and Visual Design

The media expert's rating of 90.00% shows that the appearance and presentation of the book were judged appropriate. Combining text and illustrations helps readers build a more coherent understanding of the message, in line with the principles of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2024), and evidence from picture-book studies indicates that illustrated stories can support social-emotional learning by modeling behaviors and emotions that children can then apply (Chen et al., 2025; Schoppmann et al., 2023). These findings with younger children are consistent with the positive responses of the junior high school students in this study, who found the book attractive and easy to understand.

A practical challenge arose in maintaining consistent character appearance and facial expressions across illustrations generated with the AI-assisted features of Canva. Generative text-to-image tools can produce attractive visuals quickly, but researchers have noted that their outputs may drift from the designer's intentions and that their black-box nature raises questions about control, bias, and originality (Vartiainen & Tedre, 2023). Studies of text-to-image tools in art and design education similarly describe the creative process as iterative, involving repeated prompting, selection, and refinement (Ringvold et al., 2024). In this study, the inconsistency was addressed through prompt adjustment, careful selection of illustrations, and gradual revision. For future developers, it is advisable to establish a fixed character reference sheet before generating images and to check every page for visual continuity, since

inconsistencies in a character's appearance may disrupt readers' identification with that character.

Use of the Book in Group Guidance

The positive responses from the counselors (93.33%) and students (82.86%) indicate that the book can be used in group guidance services. In this setting, the counselor acts as a facilitator who creates positive interaction among group members, and the focus is preventive and developmental rather than remedial. A review of school-counselor-led group interventions found that positive outcomes were more likely when interventions drew on several therapeutic factors of group work (Steen et al., 2022). A shared story can activate such factors: members discuss the character's experiences, recognize that their fears are shared by others, and rehearse supportive responses to one another. This use is consistent with the broader practice of bibliotherapy, in which reading is followed by reflection and discussion (Monroy-Fraustro et al., 2021), and with the growing interest in school-delivered creative bibliotherapy (Redman et al., 2025). The guidance notes added at the content expert's suggestion are intended to support this process by giving counselors prompts for reflection after each part of the story.

The higher rating from counselors than from students is also informative. Counselors evaluated the book primarily as a professional tool and judged its relevance to their service goals, whereas students evaluated it as readers, for whom attractiveness and ease of reading weigh more heavily. The students' score of 82.86% is clearly within the feasible category, but it leaves room to strengthen the features that appeal most to adolescent readers, such as more varied illustrations, more dialogue between peers, or interactive reflection pages. Since creative, narrative-based group activities have been used to support social connection among early adolescents (Kilmer et al., 2024), the book could also be complemented with role-play or short presentation exercises so that students move from observing Raka's success to gaining mastery experiences of their own.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study stopped at the product revision stage and examined only feasibility and user responses; the effectiveness of the book in increasing students' self-confidence has not yet been tested. Second, the trial involved a small number of users, two counselors and seven students from a single school, so the results cannot be generalized. Third, the feasibility percentages are based on the judgments of validators and users rather than on direct measures of change in students' behavior or beliefs. Future studies should therefore conduct the remaining Borg and Gall stages, including a main field test with a larger sample, and use a quasi-experimental or experimental design with validated measures of self-confidence and self-efficacy, ideally with a follow-up to assess whether any effects are sustained.

CONCLUSION

This research and development study, which applied seven stages of the Borg and Gall model, produced the illustrated storybook "Jejak Keberanian" as a supporting medium for guidance and counseling services to foster the self-confidence of students at SMP Negeri 4 Tarakan. The book addresses three indicators of self-confidence, namely the courage to

express opinions, the ability to speak and appear in front of others, and the ability to interact actively, and its storyline embeds the four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. Expert validation placed the book in the feasible category, with ratings of 90.00% from the media expert, 85.00% from the content expert, and 85.42% from the language expert. The limited trial also showed positive responses, with an average of 93.33% from two school counselors and 82.86% from seven students, both in the feasible category. These results indicate that the book is feasible for use in guidance and counseling services, particularly in group guidance, as an alternative medium that helps students understand and develop courage and self-confidence. Counselors are encouraged to use the book together with guided reflection and discussion and to follow it with activities that give students direct experiences of success. Future research should test the effectiveness of the book with larger samples and experimental designs.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

S: Conceptualization, investigation, product development (storybook writing and illustration), data collection, formal analysis, and writing – original draft preparation. N.A.: Supervision, methodology, validation of research instruments, and writing – review and editing. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this manuscript.

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