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Competence and Work Discipline Strengthen Employee Job Satisfaction in the Kaimana Housing Agency

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Abstract

Purpose: This study analyzes whether competence and work discipline strengthen employee job satisfaction at the Land, Housing, and Settlement Areas Agency of Kaimana Regency, a local government technical agency in Indonesia.

Research Methodology: A quantitative explanatory and cross sectional design was used with a census of 90 employees. Questionnaire data on competence, work discipline, and job satisfaction were collected on a five point Likert scale and analyzed with reliability tests, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression.

Results: Job satisfaction recorded a mean score of 4.106. The regression model was significant, F (2,87) = 230.003, p<0.001, and explained 84.1% of the variance in job satisfaction. Competence was the stronger predictor (β=0.744, t=12.491, p<0.001), while work discipline also made a positive contribution (β=0.228, t=3.829, p<0.001).

Conclusions: Satisfaction in a public sector technical agency is shaped by employees' perceived ability to handle their responsibilities and by consistent work practices, not only by employment conditions.

Limitations: The study is limited to one agency and a cross sectional self report design.

Contributions: The study provides evidence from a remote local government agency and recommends competency mapping, targeted training, coaching, and fair enforcement of work standards.

Keywords: *Competence, Job Satisfaction, Local Government, Public Sector, Work Discipline*

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1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is a strategic concern for public sector organizations because employees' attitudes toward their work influence service reliability, commitment, and willingness to contribute. Research spanning a century of work psychology shows that job satisfaction is one of the most important job attitudes, linked to performance, citizenship behavior, and the intention to stay (Judge, Weiss, & Hulin, 2017). Low satisfaction is a well established antecedent of withdrawal and turnover, which disrupt continuity and increase costs for organizations (Hom, Lee, Shaw, & Hausknecht, 2017; Rubenstein, Eberly, Lee, & Mitchell, 2018). For local governments that depend on a limited pool of qualified staff, maintaining employee satisfaction is therefore part of maintaining institutional capacity.

At the Land, Housing, and Settlement Areas Agency of Kaimana Regency, employees carry responsibilities related to land administration, housing development, and settlement area management.

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These responsibilities require technical confidence and consistent work behavior, because errors in land records or housing programs can affect citizens directly. Kaimana Regency is located in a remote part of West Papua, where access to training and experienced personnel is more limited than in large cities. A better understanding of what drives job satisfaction is therefore important for strengthening the agency's internal management and the quality of its services.

Job satisfaction refers to an employee's positive evaluation of work experiences and the degree to which work outcomes meet expectations. Luthans (2018) explains that satisfaction reflects employees' perceptions of the job itself, supervision, rewards, promotion opportunities, and relationships at work. In public organizations, satisfaction can affect how employees respond to administrative demands and how consistently they maintain service standards (Al, Thumiki, Nawaz, Jurcic, & Gajenderan, 2022). Competence may shape satisfaction because employees who possess adequate knowledge and skills are more likely to feel confident when performing their responsibilities, complete tasks efficiently, solve problems, and receive recognition for their contributions (Mainardes, Nogueira, & Brugni, 2024). Employees who face assignments without sufficient capability may experience uncertainty or frustration, so competence development can be viewed not only as a performance strategy but also as a mechanism for improving the quality of work experiences (Krpálek, Berková, Kubišová, Frendlovská, & Spiesová, 2021).

Work discipline may also influence job satisfaction. Rules, time management, and accountability provide a predictable framework for daily activities, and discipline can reduce ambiguity and support fair expectations when it is implemented consistently (Sutrisno, 2016). Discipline should not, however, be equated with punitive control. A constructive discipline system combines clear standards, leadership by example, proportional supervision, and feedback, and such an approach can strengthen employees' sense of fairness and organizational support (Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart, & Adis, 2017).

Previous studies have discussed competence, discipline, and employee outcomes in various settings, but most have focused on performance rather than satisfaction (Indarti & Kurniawan, 2020). Fewer studies have examined job satisfaction within a local government land, housing, and settlement agency, and evidence from remote regions such as Kaimana remains scarce. This study addresses that gap with two objectives. The first is to examine whether competence and work discipline each have a positive effect on employee job satisfaction. The second is to determine which of the two factors provides the stronger basis for human resource policies aimed at improving satisfaction.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis/es Development

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

This study draws on the job demands resources model and social exchange theory. The job demands resources model proposes that job resources, such as skills, autonomy, supervisor support, and clear structures, help employees cope with job demands and foster positive attitudes, whereas demands that exceed available resources lead to strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Personal resources such as competence enable employees to meet demands with confidence, while clear rules and expectations reduce role ambiguity and make demands more manageable. Research on the challenge and hindrance model further shows that demands perceived as manageable challenges are associated with more positive outcomes than demands perceived as obstacles (Mazzola & Disselhorst, 2019).

Social exchange theory complements this perspective by explaining that employees reciprocate fair and supportive treatment with positive attitudes and behaviors (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017). When an organization invests in employees' competence and applies rules consistently and fairly, employees interpret these practices as signs that the organization values them, which increases satisfaction and commitment (Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart, & Adis, 2017). Self determination theory adds that satisfaction is higher when work fulfills basic needs for

competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which makes the experience of being competent a direct source of satisfaction (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017; Van, Howard, Leroy, & Gagné, 2021).

2.2 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an attitudinal outcome that reflects employees' reactions to the job itself, supervision, rewards, promotion, and work relationships (Luthans, 2018; Widyanarko, & Sukesi, 2020). It combines a cognitive evaluation of whether the job meets expectations with an affective reaction to daily work experiences (Judge, Weiss, & Hulin, 2017). Satisfied employees tend to show higher performance and engagement (Riyanto, Endri, & Herlisha, 2021), stronger loyalty and commitment (Meyer & Morin, 2016), and lower intention to leave (Alzoraiki, Merza, Ateeq, & Milhem, 2024). In public organizations, satisfaction is also shaped by the quality of supervision, by fair compensation and work environments (Milhem, Ateeq, Alzoraiki, Husain, & Alastal, 2024), and by fair opportunities for development and promotion (Mensah, 2019). Public service motivation can further strengthen satisfaction when employees see their work as serving the community (Ritz, Brewer, & Neumann, 2016). Studies of Indonesian organizations likewise show that job satisfaction is closely related to discipline and performance.

2.3 Competence and Job Satisfaction

Competence is the capacity to perform work through the combination of personal attributes, self concept, knowledge, and skills (Maulana, 2020). Employees who perceive themselves as competent are more likely to experience a sense of mastery and meaningful contribution, and competence can also attract positive feedback from supervisors and colleagues, which reinforces satisfaction. Research on public servants shows that individual competencies improve job performance and positive work outcomes (Mainardes, Nogueira, & Brugni, 2024), and studies of public administration employees highlight the importance of professional competences and soft skills for sustainable professional development (Krpálek, Berková, Kubišová, Frendlovská, & Spiesová, 2021). Well designed training improves competence and transfers to job behavior (Lacerenza, Reyes, Marlow, Joseph, & Salas, 2017), while talent management practices that develop employees' capabilities strengthen their attachment to public organizations (Kravariti, & Johnston, 2020; De, Meyers, & Dries, 2018).

From the perspective of self determination theory, feeling competent is a basic psychological need, and its satisfaction is associated with greater well being and more positive job attitudes (Gagné, Parker, Griffin, Dunlop, Knight, Klonek, & Parent, 2022). Employees who have the knowledge and skills required by their tasks experience fewer frustrations, can solve problems independently, and are more likely to be entrusted with meaningful assignments. Studies in Indonesian public agencies similarly report that competence improves employee outcomes (Ananda, Sembiring, Hutasuhut, & Tiara, 2023). The first hypothesis is therefore proposed as follows.

H_1: Competence has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction.

2.4 Work Discipline and Job Satisfaction

Work discipline is the employee's willingness to respect organizational rules and complete work responsibly (Sutrisno, 2016). It includes compliance with regulations, effective use of working time, and responsibility for assigned tasks (Dessler, 2020), and it reflects the direction and persistence of work effort that motivation research associates with goal attainment (Kanfer, Frese, & Johnson, 2017). Discipline may improve satisfaction when expectations are transparent and applied fairly, because employees benefit from clarity about attendance, working time, and task responsibilities that help organize work and reduce uncertainty. Consistent discipline also supports a fair work environment in which colleagues share workloads equitably, which is an important source of satisfaction (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017).

Empirical studies support a positive relationship between discipline and employee outcomes. Work discipline has been found to improve employee performance (Afif, Chairunnisa, & Habibi, 2020) and to operate together with job satisfaction in shaping performance (Tanjung, Ariyati, & Yolandari, 2020;

Widyanarko, & Sukesi, 2020). Trust in leaders who model disciplined behavior strengthens the effects of leadership on performance (Legood, van der Werff, Lee, & Den, 2021). Discipline is therefore expected to contribute to satisfaction when it is perceived as fair and supportive rather than punitive. The second hypothesis is proposed as follows.

H_2: Work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction.

Testing both predictors simultaneously makes it possible to distinguish satisfaction related to employees' capability from the contribution of consistent work practices. The research model is presented in Figure 1.

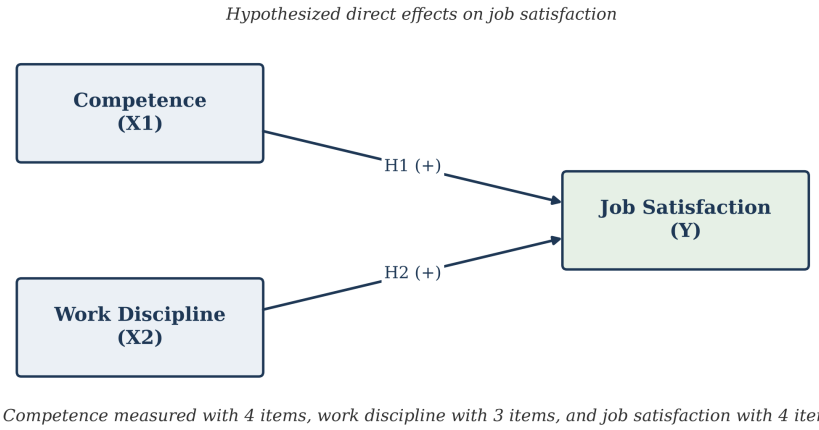


Figure 1. Research model

Figure 1 shows the research model, in which competence (X_1) and work discipline (X_2) are the independent variables and job satisfaction (Y) is the dependent variable. The arrow labeled H_1 represents the expected positive effect of competence, reflecting the view that employees who feel capable experience mastery and recognition, while the arrow labeled H_2 represents the expected positive effect of work discipline, reflecting the view that clear and fairly applied rules reduce uncertainty. Both predictors are tested together, so each coefficient represents the unique contribution of one factor while holding the other constant. The note at the bottom indicates that competence is measured with four items, work discipline with three items, and job satisfaction with four items.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design, Population, and Sample

This research used a quantitative explanatory and cross sectional design. The population comprised all 90 employees of the Land, Housing, and Settlement Areas Agency of Kaimana Regency. Saturated sampling, also known as a census, was applied, meaning that every employee was included as a respondent. This approach is appropriate when the population is small and fully accessible, because it eliminates sampling error and represents the whole organization, although the results cannot automatically be generalized to other agencies.

3.2 Measurement Instrument

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The variables and their indicators are presented in Table 1.

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Table 1. Variables and measurement indicators

Variable	Number of Items	Indicators	Source
Competence (X_1)	4	Traits, self concept, knowledge, and skills	Maulana (2020)
Work discipline (X_2)	3	Compliance with rules, effective use of time, and work responsibility	Sutrisno (2016)
Job satisfaction (Y)	4	The job itself, supervision, rewards, and promotion opportunities	Luthans (2018)

Table 1 shows that the instrument contains 11 items across three variables. Competence is measured through four indicators that combine personal characteristics, namely traits and self concept, with acquired capabilities, namely knowledge and skills, following Maulana (2020). Work discipline is measured through three behavioral indicators, namely compliance with rules, effective use of working time, and responsibility for tasks, following Sutrisno (2016). Job satisfaction is measured through four facets of the work experience, namely the job itself, supervision, rewards, and promotion opportunities, following Luthans (2018). The relatively small number of items per variable keeps the questionnaire short for respondents, but it also means that each indicator carries considerable weight in the reliability of its scale.

3.3 Data Analysis

The complete set of 90 responses was analyzed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression (Ghozali, 2018). Reliability was considered acceptable when Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.60, in accordance with the criterion used in the underlying thesis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the level of each variable, and Pearson correlations were used to examine the bivariate relationships among the variables. Multiple linear regression was then used to estimate the unique contribution of competence and work discipline to job satisfaction. Regression significance was evaluated using the F test and t-tests at $p < 0.05$, and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were examined to identify potential multicollinearity between the two predictors.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Respondent Profile

The characteristics of the 90 respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent profile (n = 90)

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	63.3%
	Female	36.7%
Age	Above 40 years (largest group)	46.7%
Tenure	More than four years (largest group)	46.7%

Table 2 shows that 63.3% of the respondents were male and 36.7% were female. Employees above 40 years old represented the largest age group (46.7%), and employees with more than four years of tenure also represented 46.7% of the sample. These characteristics indicate that nearly half of the workforce consists of mature employees with substantial organizational experience, who are well placed to evaluate their competence, the agency's discipline practices, and their own satisfaction. The predominance of male employees is typical of technical agencies dealing with land and housing, and the experience profile suggests that the results reflect informed judgments rather than first impressions of the job.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

The descriptive statistics and reliability of the three variables are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and reliability assessment

Variable	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach alpha
Competence	4	4.461	0.393	0.661
Work discipline	3	4.474	0.455	0.744
Job satisfaction	4	4.106	0.568	0.875

Table 3 shows that all three variables have high mean scores on the five point scale, namely 4.461 for competence, 4.474 for work discipline, and 4.106 for job satisfaction, which indicates that employees generally perceive themselves as competent, disciplined, and satisfied. Job satisfaction has the lowest mean and the largest standard deviation (0.568), which indicates that satisfaction varies more among employees than competence or discipline and leaves more room for improvement. All Cronbach's alpha values exceed the threshold of 0.60, ranging from 0.661 for competence to 0.875 for job satisfaction, so all scales are acceptably reliable. The alpha for competence is the lowest and falls below the stricter threshold of 0.70, which suggests that its four indicators capture somewhat different aspects of competence and should be refined in future research.

The item level results provide an additional perspective. Within job satisfaction, employees rated promotion opportunities most favorably (mean = 4.211), while supervision of work quality received the lowest score (mean = 4.011). The difference is not large, but it indicates that constructive feedback and managerial communication remain relevant even when employees report generally positive satisfaction.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlations among the three variables are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlations among the research variables

Variable	Competence	Work Discipline	Job Satisfaction
Competence	1.000	0.696	0.902
Work discipline	0.696	1.000	0.745
Job satisfaction	0.902	0.745	1.000

Table 4 shows that competence has a very strong positive correlation with job satisfaction (r=0.902), while work discipline has a strong positive correlation with satisfaction (r=0.745). The two predictors are also substantially correlated with each other (r=0.696), which indicates that employees who feel competent also tend to report disciplined work behavior. Because of this overlap, the bivariate correlations overstate the separate contribution of each predictor, and multiple regression is needed to estimate their unique effects. The very high correlation between competence and satisfaction already suggests that competence is likely to be the dominant predictor.

4.4 Multiple Regression and Hypothesis Testing

The regression model was statistically significant, F (2,87) = 230.003, p<0.001, and explained 84.1% of the variance in job satisfaction (adjusted R^2=0.837). The coefficients are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Multiple regression results for employee job satisfaction

Predictor	*B*	SE	*β*	*t*	*p* value	VIF
Constant	−1.967	0.285		−6.912	< 0.001	
Competence	1.076	0.086	0.744	12.491	< 0.001	1.939
Work discipline	0.285	0.074	0.228	3.829	< 0.001	1.939

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Table 5 shows that both predictors have positive and significant effects on job satisfaction, so H_1 and H_2 are supported. Competence is the stronger predictor (B=1.076, β=0.744, t=12.491, p<0.001), meaning that a one point increase in competence is associated with an increase of about 1.08 points in satisfaction when discipline is held constant. Work discipline also makes a significant contribution (B=0.285, β=0.228, t=3.829, p<0.001), although its standardized effect is about one third of that of competence. The VIF of 1.939 for both predictors is well below common thresholds, which indicates that multicollinearity does not prevent interpretation of the coefficients. The negative constant has no substantive meaning because no respondent scored zero on the predictors. The estimated model is presented in Figure 2.

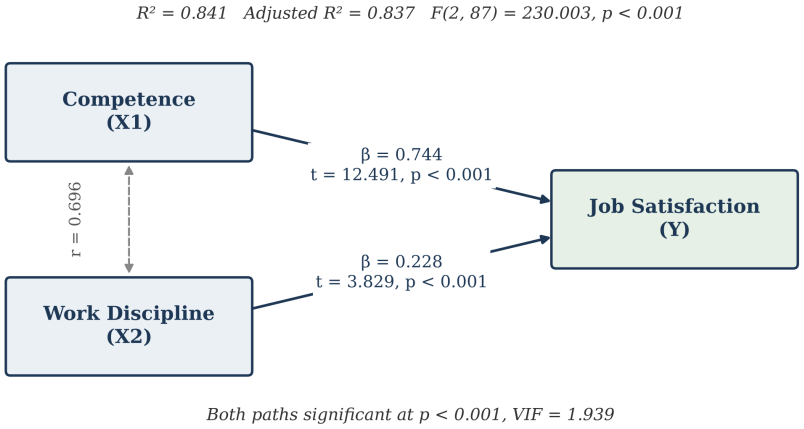


Figure 2. Regression model results

Figure 2 presents the standardized coefficients, t statistics, and p values of the two predictors together with the overall model fit. The larger contribution of competence is visible in its coefficient of 0.744, which is more than three times the coefficient of work discipline (0.228), while both paths are significant at p<0.001. The dashed line between the two predictors shows their correlation of 0.696, which explains why their joint explanatory power of 84.1% is lower than the sum of their separate correlations would suggest. The figure therefore shows that competence carries most of the explanatory weight, while discipline adds a smaller but meaningful unique contribution to employees' satisfaction.

4.5 Discussion

The results show that competence is a strong predictor of employee job satisfaction. Employees who understand their responsibilities and possess the required skills are more likely to experience confidence, mastery, and a sense of contribution. This finding is consistent with the view that competence improves employees' ability to respond to work demands (Maulana, 2020; Mainardes, Nogueira, & Brugni, 2024) and with self determination theory, which identifies the experience of competence as a basic psychological need whose fulfillment increases satisfaction (Van, Howard, Leroy, & Gagné, 2021). It also supports evidence that employee capability is associated with positive work outcomes in Indonesian public agencies (Ananda et al., 2023). In a technical agency dealing with land and housing, where tasks require specialized knowledge, competence may be especially important because employees who lack it face frequent uncertainty and difficulty.

The standardized coefficient for competence was substantially larger than the coefficient for work discipline. This result does not mean that discipline is unimportant. Instead, it indicates that employees' perception of their own capability has a particularly strong relationship with satisfaction in this technical public agency. From the perspective of the job demands resources model, competence functions as a personal resource that allows employees to meet demands without strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The agency should therefore use competency mapping to identify gaps in knowledge and skills and connect the results to training, mentoring, and job assignment decisions,

using training designs that have been shown to transfer to job behavior (Krpálek, Berková, Kubišová, Frendlovská, & Spiesová, 2021).

Work discipline also positively affected job satisfaction. Clear standards regarding attendance, time use, and task responsibility can create a more predictable and fair working environment. This result aligns with the perspective of Sutrisno (2016), who defines discipline as voluntary respect for organizational rules, and with studies that link discipline and satisfaction to employee outcomes (Tanjung, Ariyati, & Yolandari, 2020). From the perspective of social exchange theory, consistent and fair discipline signals organizational justice, which employees reciprocate with positive attitudes (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017). When discipline is applied consistently and accompanied by leadership by example, it can support satisfaction rather than being perceived merely as control (Legood, van der Werff, Lee, & Den, 2021).

The descriptive results offer a practical direction for management. Supervision of work quality recorded the lowest satisfaction item mean, so employees may benefit from regular feedback sessions, clearer performance expectations, and coaching that focuses on problem solving. Promotion opportunities received the highest mean score, which suggests that career expectations are relevant to the work experience and that transparent criteria for recognition and promotion should be maintained (Kwon & Jang, 2022). The model explained 84.1% of the variance in job satisfaction, which is high for a behavioral study. This result should be interpreted carefully, because the cross sectional self report design can inflate relationships through common method bias (Kock, Berbekova, & Assaf, 2021), and the very high correlation between competence and satisfaction may partly reflect overlapping perceptions measured with the same questionnaire.

Several managerial implications follow from these findings. The agency should establish a structured competency development process in which competency mapping identifies the knowledge and skill requirements of different units, while training, mentoring, and job rotation help employees address specific gaps (Kravariti & Johnston, 2020). Discipline policies should be implemented consistently and transparently, with clear information about attendance, working time, reporting obligations, and task standards, and supervisors should use feedback and coaching rather than punishment to encourage improvement. The lower score for supervision indicates a need to strengthen managerial communication through regular feedback meetings, recognition of achievement, and clear explanations of promotion criteria, so that employees understand how their efforts are evaluated and how they can develop their careers (Kravariti, Tasoulis, Scullion, & Alali, 2023). Because satisfied employees are more likely to remain and perform well, these practices can also support retention in a remote region where replacing experienced staff is difficult (Hom, Lee, Shaw, & Hausknecht, 2017).

5. Conclusions

Competence and work discipline positively and significantly strengthen employee job satisfaction at the Land, Housing, and Settlement Areas Agency of Kaimana Regency. Competence is the stronger predictor, with a standardized effect more than three times that of discipline, but discipline also provides a meaningful unique contribution, and together the two factors explain 84.1% of the variance in satisfaction. These findings support the job demands resources and self determination perspectives, which emphasize competence as a personal resource and a basic need, and the social exchange view that fair and consistent rules foster positive attitudes. The agency should integrate competency mapping, targeted training, mentoring, clear work standards, fair monitoring, and constructive feedback into its human resource practices.

This study has several limitations. It was conducted in a single agency, so the results cannot be generalized to other local governments without further evidence. The cross sectional design does not allow causal conclusions, and the use of self reported data from one questionnaire may introduce common method bias and social desirability. The reliability of the competence scale was relatively low, the validity of the items was not reported, and the regression assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity were not presented. Future research should examine additional agencies and

regions, use longitudinal or multisource data such as supervisor ratings, refine the competence measure, and test mediating mechanisms such as engagement or perceived organizational support, as well as the effects of satisfaction on performance and retention.

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Author Contributions

SSH contributed to the conceptualization of the study, research design, data collection, data analysis, and the writing, review, and revision of the manuscript. BRP contributed to the conceptualization of the study, research design, data collection, data analysis, and the writing, review, and revision of the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently and objectively, and the authors have no financial, commercial, or personal relationships that could have influenced the research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, or publication process.

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