

The Relationship Between Mindfulness and Subjective Well-being in Employed Women: The Mediating Role of Assertiveness

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present study aimed to examine the mediating role of assertiveness in the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being among employed women.

Methods and Materials: This descriptive-correlational study used structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze data collected from a sample of 480 employed women working in governmental offices in Shiraz during the last six months of 2024. Participants were selected through convenience sampling. Three validated self-report instruments were used: the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006), the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (Rathus, 1973), and the Subjective Well-being Scale (Keyes & Magyar-Moe, 2003). Data were screened for multivariate normality, and model fit was assessed using AMOS software. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and path analysis were employed to test the proposed mediation model.

Findings: Results revealed that mindfulness had a significant direct effect on both assertiveness ($\beta = 0.585$, $p < .001$) and subjective well-being ($\beta = 0.579$, $p < .001$). Assertiveness also had a significant direct effect on subjective well-being ($\beta = 0.299$, $p < .001$). Additionally, the indirect effect of mindfulness on subjective well-being through assertiveness was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.175$, $p < .001$), with a total effect of $\beta = 0.754$. Fit indices confirmed the adequacy of the proposed model ($\chi^2/df = 1.83$, RMSEA = 0.055, CFI = 0.978).

Conclusion: The findings suggest that assertiveness partially mediates the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being in employed women. Enhancing mindfulness may not only directly improve well-being but also indirectly increase it by fostering assertive behavior. These results highlight the importance of integrated psychological training in workplace mental health initiatives for women.

Keywords: Mindfulness; Subjective well-being; Assertiveness; Employed women

1. Introduction

In recent years, the subjective well-being of working individuals—especially women—has become a vital concern in psychological, organizational, and public health research. Subjective well-being is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct involving both emotional evaluations of life satisfaction and the presence of positive psychological functioning, often influenced by personality traits, coping skills, and contextual resources (Ryff, 2014). With the increasing complexity of occupational roles and sociocultural expectations placed on women, particularly those balancing professional and familial responsibilities, understanding the mechanisms underlying their well-being has gained renewed urgency (Ericson et al., 2021; Rohrer & Lucas, 2020). A growing body of empirical work suggests that mindfulness—defined as nonjudgmental awareness of present-moment experience—may serve as a protective psychological factor that enhances emotional regulation, reduces stress, and fosters personal fulfillment (Hanley et al., 2015; Sahdra et al., 2016).

Mindfulness has been widely investigated as a predictor of psychological and subjective well-being in diverse populations. It enables individuals to observe internal and external experiences with openness and acceptance, reducing cognitive reactivity and enhancing emotional clarity (Frelich & Debb, 2019; Keng & Ang, 2019). The theoretical underpinning of mindfulness lies in its capacity to increase self-awareness and reduce automatic behavioral responses, promoting a balanced perspective on stressors and challenges (Jin et al., 2020; McLaughlin et al., 2019). Empirical studies have consistently confirmed a positive relationship between mindfulness and components of well-being, including life satisfaction, resilience, and reduced psychological distress (Belen, 2021; Braun et al., 2019). Specifically, Braun et al. (Braun et al., 2019) demonstrated that teachers with higher mindfulness reported better occupational health and higher-quality relationships, suggesting mindfulness's utility in emotionally demanding work environments. Such findings have particular implications for employed women, who often encounter higher work-family conflict and role strain.

Assertiveness, often conceptualized as the ability to express one's needs, rights, and opinions while respecting those of others, has also garnered attention as a determinant of well-being (Speed et al., 2018). Assertive individuals tend to experience greater interpersonal satisfaction, self-efficacy, and lower emotional suppression—all factors that

facilitate psychological well-being (Metin et al., 2021; Şahin, 2019). Despite its historical roots in cognitive-behavioral training programs (Speed et al., 2018), recent perspectives increasingly consider assertiveness as an adaptive interpersonal competency that may be shaped by cognitive-affective factors such as mindfulness. For example, Belen and Yıldırım (Belen & Yıldırım, 2019) found that mindfulness was positively associated with subjective well-being and that assertiveness partially mediated this relationship. These findings imply that mindfulness may facilitate well-being indirectly by enhancing individuals' ability to assertively navigate interpersonal dynamics.

There is also accumulating evidence that suggests mindfulness not only helps reduce maladaptive coping mechanisms but also supports the development of prosocial and emotionally intelligent behaviors such as assertiveness and empathy (Sünbül & Güneri, 2019; Uygur, 2017). According to Sahdra et al. (Sahdra et al., 2016), the concept of “nonattachment” in mindfulness theory closely aligns with assertiveness, wherein individuals detach from validation-seeking behavior and act authentically. Similarly, Stevenson et al. (Stevenson et al., 2019) reported that dispositional mindfulness was a significant predictor of emotional regulation and adaptive coping, which are both prerequisites for assertive communication. These insights are particularly important in workplace contexts where assertive behavior can reduce burnout, improve conflict resolution, and ultimately enhance subjective well-being (Voci et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2020).

Subjective well-being itself encompasses both hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions, incorporating affective experiences (positive and negative emotions) as well as cognitive judgments about one's life satisfaction and personal growth (Mason et al., 2020; Ryff, 2014). Scholars argue that psychological constructs such as mindfulness and assertiveness contribute to both types of well-being by enhancing an individual's sense of control, autonomy, and purpose in life (Klussman et al., 2021; Walsh et al., 2019). For instance, Klussman et al. (Klussman et al., 2021) demonstrated that engagement in self-connected physical activity—often practiced mindfully—was associated with higher well-being. Moreover, mindfulness fosters not only internal calm but also behavioral agency, which in turn promotes assertiveness and reduces avoidant behaviors that undermine subjective well-being (Ge et al., 2019).

Despite the growing consensus on the individual effects of mindfulness and assertiveness on well-being, the

interactive dynamics among these variables remain underexplored—particularly among employed women. This demographic is often subject to social expectations that simultaneously demand assertiveness in the workplace and compliance in familial or relational roles, potentially creating internal conflict and stress (Barqi Irani et al., 2015; Deniz et al., 2017). Within this socio-psychological framework, mindfulness could act as a foundational resource that strengthens assertive behavior and enables women to assert needs and boundaries without guilt or social penalty (Singh & Hwang, 2021). Mindfulness-based interventions have indeed been shown to promote self-compassion, reduce emotional reactivity, and increase emotional regulation—all of which are critical in supporting assertiveness (Hanley et al., 2015; Mason et al., 2020). Furthermore, interventions based on mindfulness have demonstrated effectiveness in improving coping skills and reducing stress in working populations (Metin et al., 2021; Ramadas & Simões, 2019).

At the same time, mindfulness is also associated with higher self-determination and clarity of values, which may empower individuals to act in congruence with their personal needs, thus promoting assertive behaviors (Şahin, 2019; Wilson et al., 2020). Assertiveness in turn contributes to subjective well-being by reducing interpersonal conflict and enhancing emotional expression (Speed et al., 2018; Voci et al., 2019). This triadic relationship among mindfulness, assertiveness, and well-being suggests that assertiveness may function as a mediating variable, translating the benefits of mindfulness into enhanced life satisfaction and psychological resilience.

This study aims to build upon the theoretical and empirical foundations described above by examining the mediating role of assertiveness in the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being among employed women.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study is categorized as basic research based on its objective and adopts a descriptive-correlational design using structural equation modeling. The statistical population comprised all employed women working in government offices in Shiraz during the last six months of 2024. Given that the minimum required sample size for structural equation modeling is 200 participants, and to enhance the representativeness of the sample, 500 employed women

were selected through convenience sampling and administered the research questionnaires. However, 20 questionnaires were not fully completed, reducing the final sample size to 480 participants. The following instruments were used for data collection in this study:

2.2. Measures

The Subjective Well-being Questionnaire was developed by Keyes and Magyar-Moe (2003) and consists of 45 items. This questionnaire includes three dimensions: emotional well-being (items 1–12), psychological well-being (items 13–30), and social well-being (items 31–45). The items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." For both psychological and social well-being subscales, the minimum score is 18 and the maximum is 126 for psychological well-being, and the minimum is 15 and the maximum is 105 for social well-being. A higher score indicates a higher level of subjective well-being, while a lower score indicates lower well-being. Keyes and Magyar-Moe (2003) confirmed the three-factor structure of the scale through confirmatory factor analysis. The internal consistency of the psychological and social well-being subscales ranged from 0.4 to 0.7, and the total reliability of the two subscales was 0.8 or higher. Golestani Bakht (2007) validated the questionnaire on a sample of 57 participants, reporting correlation coefficients of 0.78 for the total scale and 0.76, 0.64, and 0.76 for the emotional, psychological, and social well-being subscales, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was 0.80 for the total scale and 0.86, 0.80, and 0.61 for the subscales, respectively. In a study by Barghi Iranian et al. (2015), the Cronbach's alpha was reported as 0.78. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach's alpha, yielding values of 0.79 for the total scale and 0.78, 0.74, and 0.75 for emotional, psychological, and social well-being subtests, respectively.

The Mindfulness Questionnaire developed by Baer et al. (2006) is a 39-item self-report instrument. It assesses five components—observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience, and non-reactivity to inner experience—using a 5-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). The items corresponding to each component are: Observing (items 1, 6, 11, 15, 20, 26, 31, 36), Describing (items 2, 7, 12, 16, 22, 27, 32, 37), Acting with Awareness (items 5, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 34, 38), Non-judging (items 3, 10, 14, 17, 25, 30, 35, 39), and Non-

reactivity (items 4, 9, 19, 21, 24, 29, 33). A higher score indicates a higher level of mindfulness, and a lower score indicates lower mindfulness. Internal consistency across the subscales was appropriate, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.75 (non-reactivity) to 0.91 (describing). Inter-factor correlations were moderate and statistically significant, ranging from 0.15 to 0.34. In a validation study conducted by Ahmadvand et al. (2012) in Iran, test-retest correlation coefficients ranged from $r = 0.57$ (non-judging) to $r = 0.84$ (observing). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients in that study were also acceptable, ranging from $\alpha = 0.55$ (non-reactivity) to $\alpha = 0.83$ (describing).

The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) is a 30-item instrument designed to assess assertive behavior using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "very much like me" (+3) to "very much unlike me" (-3). The total score is calculated after reversing the signs as necessary. Scores can range from -90 to +90, with scores closer to +90 indicating higher assertiveness and scores closer to -90 reflecting lower assertiveness (Rathus, 1973). Voltan (1980) reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.70 and a test-retest reliability of 0.92 for the scale. In a study by Seyed Fatemi et al. (2013), the reliability was reported as 0.82 using Cronbach's alpha. In the present study, the reliability was estimated to be 0.86 using Cronbach's alpha.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data were screened for multivariate normality, and model fit was assessed using AMOS software. Descriptive

statistics, correlation analysis, and path analysis were employed to test the proposed mediation model.

3. Findings and Results

The demographic analysis of the study sample ($N = 480$) indicated that 65.8% of employed women were married, while 34.2% were single. In terms of age, the age group of 50 years and older had the highest frequency with 162 participants (33.8%), and the lowest frequency was observed in the 20–30 age group with 58 participants (12.1%). Regarding educational attainment, the largest proportion held a bachelor's degree ($n = 212$, 44.2%), while the lowest proportion had an associate's degree ($n = 24$, 5%). In terms of work experience, the 6–10 years category had the highest frequency ($n = 293$, 61.0%), and the 1–5 years category had the lowest ($n = 39$, 8.1%).

To prepare the data for structural equation modeling (SEM), the dataset was first screened for missing values and outliers. Multivariate normality was confirmed using Mardia's coefficient (1.331, $t = 0.483$), suggesting that the assumption of normality was met. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations among the variables are presented in Table 1. The results showed that mindfulness was positively and significantly correlated with both assertiveness ($r = .58$, $p < .01$) and subjective well-being ($r = .65$, $p < .01$). Assertiveness also showed a significant positive correlation with subjective well-being ($r = .42$, $p < .01$). Mean scores and standard deviations for all variables were within reasonable ranges given the scales used.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix for Study Variables (N = 480)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Mindfulness	132.45	15.78	—		
2. Assertiveness	41.20	10.36	.58**	—	
3. Subjective Well-being	198.67	22.91	.65**	.42**	—

** $p < 0.01$

To evaluate the fit of the conceptual model, several goodness-of-fit indices were examined. The results, shown in Table 2, indicate that all indices fall within acceptable

thresholds: $\chi^2/df = 1.830$, PCFI = .679, CFI = .978, PNFI = .662, RMSEA = .055. These results confirm that the model had a good fit to the data.

Table 2

Model Fit Indices for the Conceptual Model

Model	χ^2/df	PCFI	CFI	PNFI	RMSEA
Acceptable Range	< 3	> .60	> .90	> .60	< .08
Tested Model	1.830	.679	.978	.662	.055

The direct effects among variables were analyzed using SEM. As shown in Table 3, mindfulness had a significant direct effect on assertiveness ($\beta = 0.585, p < .001$) and subjective well-being ($\beta = 0.579, p < .001$). Furthermore,

assertiveness had a significant direct effect on subjective well-being ($\beta = 0.299, p < .001$), supporting the presence of a mediation mechanism.

Table 3

Direct Effects Among Variables

Path	Unstd. Coeff.	Std. Coeff.	SE	CR	p-value
Mindfulness → Assertiveness	2.703	.585	0.606	4.461	.001
Mindfulness → Subjective Well-being	2.377	.579	0.589	4.035	.001
Assertiveness → Subjective Well-being	2.266	.299	0.060	4.436	.001

In addition to direct effects, the mediating role of assertiveness in the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being was examined using bootstrap analysis. The results in Table 4 demonstrate that the indirect effect of mindfulness on subjective well-being through assertiveness was significant (standardized = 0.175,

unstandardized = 0.719, $p < .001$), with bootstrap confidence intervals ranging from 0.104 to 0.250. The total effect of mindfulness on subjective well-being was also statistically significant (standardized = 0.754, unstandardized = 3.096, $p < .001$).

Table 4

Indirect and Total Effects of Mindfulness on Subjective Well-being

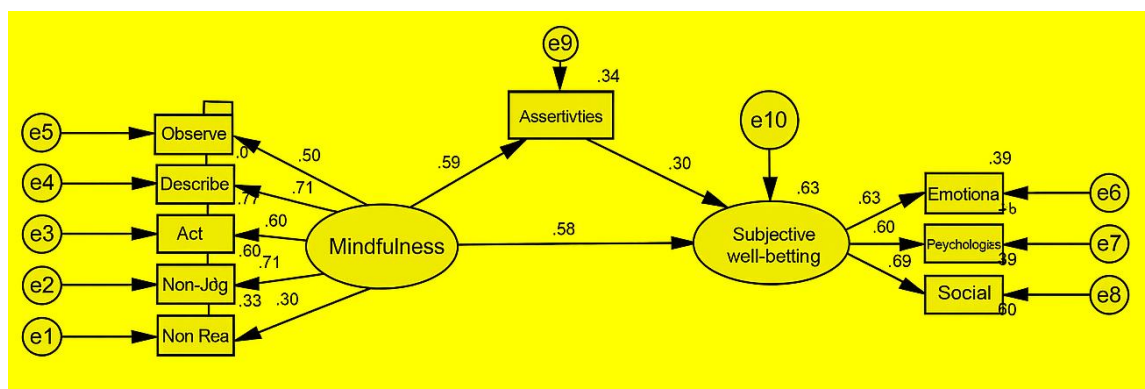
Path	Indirect Effect (Std.)	Indirect Effect (Unstd.)	Total Effect (Std.)	Total Effect (Unstd.)
Mindfulness → Subjective Well-being	0.175	0.719	0.754	3.096

These findings provide empirical support for the proposed mediation model, indicating that assertiveness partially mediates the relationship between mindfulness and

subjective well-being. In other words, mindfulness contributes to higher subjective well-being both directly and indirectly by increasing assertiveness in employed women.

Figure 1

Final Model of the Study



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of assertiveness in the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being in employed women. Using structural

equation modeling, the findings confirmed that mindfulness had both direct and indirect effects on subjective well-being. Specifically, mindfulness was found to significantly predict assertiveness and subjective well-being, and assertiveness itself was a significant predictor of subjective well-being.

Furthermore, the indirect effect of mindfulness on subjective well-being through assertiveness was statistically significant, confirming the partial mediating role of assertiveness. These findings support the proposed model and provide evidence for the interconnected roles of mindfulness and assertiveness in shaping subjective well-being among women in professional environments.

The significant direct effect of mindfulness on assertiveness indicates that women who are more mindful are more likely to behave assertively in the workplace. This is consistent with the literature that identifies mindfulness as a factor that enhances interpersonal efficacy and self-regulated behavior (Sahdra et al., 2016; Stevenson et al., 2019). Mindfulness enables individuals to respond to interpersonal situations with awareness rather than automaticity, which fosters assertive, rather than passive or aggressive, responses (Hanley et al., 2015; Keng & Ang, 2019). According to Belen and Yıldırım (Belen & Yıldırım, 2019), individuals high in mindfulness show greater self-confidence in expressing needs and resisting pressure, core components of assertiveness. Furthermore, the cultivation of non-judgmental awareness in mindfulness may reduce fear of social evaluation, thereby enhancing individuals' willingness to engage in direct, honest communication (Frelich & Debb, 2019; Speed et al., 2018).

The positive direct association between mindfulness and subjective well-being is well-supported in existing research. Numerous studies have shown that mindfulness contributes to psychological functioning by promoting self-awareness, emotional regulation, and cognitive flexibility (Rohrer & Lucas, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020). These capabilities reduce susceptibility to negative emotions and increase positive affect and satisfaction with life (Jin et al., 2020; Walsh et al., 2019). The current study's finding aligns with Braun et al. (Braun et al., 2019), who found that mindfulness in occupational settings was significantly linked to lower stress and higher job-related well-being. Similarly, Barqi Irani et al. (Barqi Irani et al., 2015) demonstrated that mindfulness-based social skills training in adolescents resulted in increased emotional and psychological well-being, emphasizing its cross-contextual benefits. For working women facing work-life stress, multitasking, and role conflict, mindfulness offers a protective mechanism against emotional exhaustion and promotes a more stable and satisfying psychological state (Ge et al., 2019; Mason et al., 2020).

Assertiveness also showed a significant direct effect on subjective well-being, supporting the idea that assertiveness

is an important interpersonal skill linked to psychological health. Assertiveness enables individuals to express their needs and feelings constructively, resist manipulation, and maintain interpersonal boundaries, all of which contribute to greater life satisfaction and reduced stress (Metin et al., 2021; Şahin, 2019). Speed et al. (Speed et al., 2018) emphasized that assertiveness training improves self-respect, interpersonal competence, and emotional well-being. In line with these findings, Belen (Belen, 2021) reported that assertiveness significantly mediated the relationship between mindfulness and well-being, suggesting that self-expression may be the behavioral pathway through which mindfulness exerts its benefits. This interpretation is reinforced by Sünbül and Güneri (Sünbül & Güneri, 2019), who found that mindfulness predicted emotion regulation and self-compassion, which in turn supported assertive coping in adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The mediation analysis confirmed that assertiveness partially mediated the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being. This implies that while mindfulness has a direct impact on well-being, it also contributes indirectly by enhancing individuals' assertive behavior. This result aligns with the work of Voci et al. (Voci et al., 2019), who identified self-compassion and gratitude as key mechanisms through which mindfulness influences psychological well-being. Assertiveness, similarly, can be understood as a form of self-compassion in action—respecting one's own needs while remaining considerate of others. McLaughlin et al. (McLaughlin et al., 2019) further emphasized that mindfulness reduces emotional dysregulation, a critical barrier to assertiveness, thereby enhancing interpersonal functioning and subjective well-being.

The model tested in the current study reflects a salutogenic framework, wherein psychological resources such as mindfulness and assertiveness are emphasized as proactive contributors to health rather than mere buffers against pathology (Ericson et al., 2021). This perspective is particularly relevant for employed women, who are often subjected to multiple role demands and sociocultural expectations that can undermine their well-being. By enhancing their internal resources (mindfulness) and interpersonal agency (assertiveness), these women may be better equipped to manage stressors, set boundaries, and maintain psychological balance (Klussman et al., 2021; Ramadas & Simões, 2019). Moreover, Uygur (Uygur, 2017) highlighted that mindfulness promotes empathy and emotion

regulation—two capacities that complement assertiveness in facilitating healthy communication and emotional expression.

The implications of these findings extend to intervention design. Mindfulness-based programs have already demonstrated efficacy in reducing anxiety, improving emotion regulation, and enhancing overall well-being (Deniz et al., 2017; Hanley et al., 2015). Incorporating assertiveness training into such programs may offer synergistic benefits, particularly for working women seeking to balance career and personal life demands. For instance, Singh and Hwang (Singh & Hwang, 2021) emphasized the value of mindfulness for individuals with developmental and cognitive challenges in improving self-regulation and social functioning. This dual emphasis on intrapersonal awareness and interpersonal communication could be highly relevant for workplace wellness initiatives and gender equity programs.

Another noteworthy insight from this study is the robustness of mindfulness as a predictor of both internal (psychological) and external (behavioral) components of well-being. As Wilson et al. (Wilson et al., 2020) noted, mindfulness is often the bridge between internal experiences and external relational strategies. By fostering a grounded awareness of moment-to-moment experience, mindfulness enables individuals to respond rather than react, a prerequisite for both assertiveness and sustained well-being (Sahdra et al., 2016; Stevenson et al., 2019). The current study confirms this interactional dynamic and underlines the importance of integrating these constructs in both theoretical models and applied interventions.

In summary, the results validate a model in which mindfulness enhances subjective well-being both directly and indirectly via assertiveness. These findings are consistent with a growing body of literature that positions mindfulness as a core psychological resource and assertiveness as a behavioral manifestation of healthy self-regulation. Together, they contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how women in professional roles can maintain psychological well-being amid modern occupational pressures.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference regarding the relationships among mindfulness, assertiveness, and subjective well-being. Longitudinal or experimental designs would offer stronger evidence for the directionality of these associations. Second, the use of self-report questionnaires introduces the possibility of social

desirability bias, particularly in measuring assertiveness, which may be culturally or socially influenced. Third, the sample was restricted to employed women in a specific geographic region, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other populations, including men, unemployed individuals, or those in different cultural contexts.

Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to establish the causal links among mindfulness, assertiveness, and well-being. It would also be beneficial to examine additional mediators or moderators—such as self-compassion, emotion regulation, or cultural norms—that may influence these relationships. Moreover, comparative studies involving both genders or various occupational sectors could shed light on whether these mechanisms operate similarly across different demographic groups. Finally, qualitative studies exploring lived experiences of assertiveness and mindfulness in working women could provide richer insights into the processes underlying these constructs.

From a practical standpoint, the findings of this study underscore the value of integrating mindfulness and assertiveness training into employee development programs. Human resource departments and mental health professionals should consider offering workshops and interventions that combine mindfulness exercises with assertiveness skill-building. Such programs can help working women manage workplace demands, reduce interpersonal stress, and foster a stronger sense of agency and well-being. In educational settings, incorporating these skills into curricula could also prepare young women for future workplace challenges. Policymakers and organizational leaders should support systemic efforts to create psychologically supportive work environments where mindful communication and self-advocacy are encouraged.

Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the study and participated in the research with informed consent.

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