RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effect of Ethical Leadership on Organizational Commitment under Organizational Justice- Case Study of Algerian Economic Companies

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Abstract

The study analyses the organizational commitment based on the ethical leadership and the organizational justice in order to find out more about the effect of the ethical leadership on the organizational commitment under the organizational justice as a median variable. In so doing, we use the descriptive method to cover all the theoretical aspects, questionnaires to collect data from 111 employees in economic companies in Algeria, and VB-SEM and SmartPLS4. Findings show an effect for the ethical leadership on the organizational commitment under the organizational justice. Amid the rapid contemporary changes in workplaces, it is necessary to focus on leadership types to promote the ethical dimension in treating employees and making decisions. In this regard, an ethical leadership is characterized with integrity, justice, transparency, and interest in employees' welfare; therefore, it fosters the organizational commitment that reflects the labour force stability and institutional performance efficiency.

Introduction:

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However, the relation between the ethical leadership and the organizational commitment is not always direct, as it may be influenced by median factors that affect its nature, including the organizational justice that mirrors the employees' perception of fairness in resources distribution, performance evaluation, and decision making. It affects employees' satisfaction and provides a perceptual frame that affects their interpretation of their leaders' behaviours and, thus, their readiness to commit to the organization objectives. Based on what was said, this study highlights the median role of organizational justice in the relation between the ethical leadership and the organizational commitment by examining how justice perception by employees affects the relation between the ethical leadership and commitment.

Problematic:

The professional organizations witness an increasing interest in ethical leadership to improve the organizational performance and foster job commitment. In this context, the organizational justice is vital for shaping the employees' perception of their leaders' behaviours and for interpreting their motives. Based on what was said, we raise the following problematic, "to what extent does the organizational justice as a median variable help interpret the effect of ethical leadership on organizational commitment inside the organization?".

Questions:

To answer the problematic, we have, first, to tackle these sub-questions:

- Does the ethical leadership affect the organizational justice in the economic companies in Algeria?
- Does the ethical leadership affect the organizational commitment in the economic companies in Algeria?
- Does the organizational justice affect the organizational commitment in the economic companies in Algeria?
- Is there a statistically significant effect for the organizational justice as a median variable between the ethical leadership and the organizational commitment?

Hypotheses:

We hypothesize that:

- There is a statistically significant effect for the ethical leadership on the organizational justice in the economic companies in Algeria.
- There is a statistically significant effect for the ethical leadership on the organizational commitment in the economic companies in Algeria.
- There is a statistically significant effect for the organizational justice on the organizational commitment in the economic companies in Algeria.
- There is a statistically significant effect for organizational justice as a median variable between the ethical leadership and the organizational commitment in the economic companies in Algeria.

Importance of the study:

The organizational justice is an efficient variable that affects the employees' decision to remain in the company, as the material incentives are not sufficient for the organizational commitment without ethical behaviours, such as equity and equality in procedures, policies, and transactions. Besides, the ethical behaviour is not achieved without leaders who commit to the ethical criteria and foster the ethical practices in the organization.

Aims of the study:

- Shedding light on the concepts of the study.
- Identifying the effect of ethical leadership on the organizational justice in the economic companies in Algeria.
- Identifying the effect of ethical leadership on the organizational commitment in the economic companies in Algeria.
- Examining the effect of organizational justice on the relation between the ethical leadership and the organizational commitment in the economic companies in Algeria.

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The Theoretical Frame:

The Organizational Justice:

1.1 Concept of Organizational Justice:

It is a paramount question in administration and a focal point for many studies that focus on human resources. In this context, scholars have proven a relation between the organizational justice and many organizational and behavioural variables that affects productivity in general. The establishment of an organizational justice between employees is a main challenge in contemporary organizations due to the diversity of resources, cultures, and economic and scientific conditions. It requires abandoning destructive policies that promote for bureaucracy, injustice, and insecurity, and embracing organizational support to ensure the organization's long-term survival and efficiency.

The expression "organizational justice" has, first, appeared in 1987 in the writings of Greenberg to denote the worker's feeling of justice and integrity in the workplace. Greenberg defines it as the method through which an individual judges the justice of the director's human and professional treatment to workers (Ouadi, 2007, p. 04). Moreover, it is defined as the individual's feeling of justice at work, as people's behaviours are driven by the need to be treated equally because the worker compares how he is treated to his efforts and revenues and to his colleagues; when he feels equality, justice prevails. However, if he feels that the inputs exceed the relative or perceived returns, inequality prevails (Ahmed Ben Yahya & Kacem Chaouch, 2022, p. 136). In this context, the organizational justice relies, basically, on the worker's desire for an equal treatment and belief that he is treated equally to his colleagues. In other words, it is an administrative principle that reflects the workers' feeling of equity towards the policies, procedures, and transactions in the workplace.

1.2 Types of Organizational Justice:

Many studies point to three types of organizational justice, as follows:

- Distributive Justice: It is about the outputs obtained by the individual from his job, mainly the salaries, the in-kind benefits, and the promotions. The worker feels distributive justice when he believes the rewards he gets suit his efforts compared to his colleagues (Zayed, 2006, p. 18). Thus, the distributive justice has two main aspects:

- A material aspect (the distributions structure): It expresses the size or content of rewards.
- A social aspect: It is about the director's personal treatment of the individual who gets rewards.

Procedural Justice: It reflects the workers' feeling of justice in the methods of determining the outputs of their efforts, the integrity of criteria, and the safety of procedures adopted in judging the outputs, as the performance evaluation procedures (Al Tabouli, Karim Ramdan, & al Abbar Ibtissem, 2014, p. 68). Therefore, the procedural justice includes the official rules and criteria of procedures, the explanation of procedures and decision making, and the interaction between the decision makers and the workers.

Interactional Justice: It is about the workers' feeling of justice when the official procedures are applied, and about their awareness of the reasons behind their application. This justice prevails when workers are treated respectfully by the director, workers and director trust each other, and director focuses on the workers' needs and interests (Al Taamsa & Hasballah, 2015, p. 295). Interactional justice covers two aspects:

- The director's treatment of the workers.
- The suitable explanation of decisions because the logical justification provided by the organization helps workers perceive higher justice.

Thus, the organizational justice is a concept that refers to the fair treatment of all workers in the workplace. It is measured by distributive, procedural, and interactional justices and is vital for the organizational behaviour because it has a direct effect on the workers' satisfaction, motivation, productivity, and loyalty.

1.3 Importance of the Organizational Justice:

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It is necessary for a healthy work environment because it fosters workers' satisfaction and motivation and reduces conflicts. In addition, it:

• Shows the truth of the wages' distributive system through the distributive justice.
• Helps achieve full control and authority on decision making thanks to the procedural justice.
• Affects the workers' satisfaction with their leaders, organizational citizenship behaviours, and organizational commitment.
• Sheds light on the organizational atmosphere of the organization through interactional justice.
• Determines the quality of internal controls and evaluation and the ability to promote feedback to ensure the sustainability of organizational operations and achievements.
• Shows the ethical, social, and religious values and identifies the methods of interaction and ethical maturity of the members regarding their perceptions of justice in the organization (Barbaoui & Slimani, 2017, p. 171)

Thus, the organizational justice can increase job satisfaction and loyalty, improve performance, foster the positive attitudes towards job and organization, reduce internal conflicts, and increase the organization's efficiency.

2. The Ethical Leadership:

2.1 The Concept of Ethical Leadership:

Lately, it has gained much interest with the increasing interest in ethics in administration in general, as ethics and values are tightly linked to leadership, and leaders aim at changing the individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. The leadership trust and integrity are very essential for the ethical behaviour because the leaders' unethical behaviours destroy organizations, economy, and people's lives. Therefore, a successful leader integrates the ethical dimensions into his goals and tools. The ethical leadership is an administrative method that identifies and fosters the ethical values and principles inside and outside the organization to enforce correct behaviours and encourage correct decision making (Bouchkifa, Raoui, & Kerairi, 2023, p. 52).

In the same context, (Brown & Trivino) define it as showing the suitable leadership behaviour through the personal practices and the interactive relations, and supporting that behaviour with dual-communication, consolidation, and decision making (Adeoye, 2021, p. 163). Strategically speaking, it is the ability to change and influence the individual's values, behaviours, and beliefs to be models for others in the company (Cherifi & Dhaher, 2020, p. 74). Moreover, it is high abilities and features that allow the leader to influence the others to achieve common goals according to an inspiring view, taking into account the ethical and legal dimensions and the different interests (Al Kebir, 2016, p. 85).

The ethical leadership is based on values, principles, ethics, truth, equity, respect, responsibility, integrity, and transparency in behaviours and decision making. It has positive effects on the workers' trust and commitment and enhances the work environment. An ethical leader is a role model who continuously raises workers' awareness about ethics, rewards them to encourage positive behaviour, and sanctions the violators.

2.2 Importance of Ethical Leadership:

In the fast changing businesses, qualified and talented workers prefer organizations where ethics are respected. Therefore, ethical leadership is vital because it builds an institutional culture based on trust, integrity, and transparency. In this context, the ethical leadership (Latrache, 2018, p. 21):

• Helps achieve job satisfaction to foster workers' loyalty and reduce turnover.
• Improves the workers' performance thanks to the humanitarian treatment and the support, feedback, and development opportunities provided by the leader.
• Motivates the workers to provide new ideas to improve work, by encouraging opinion expression and listening to them.
• Positively affects the leader's knowledge, integrity, and efficiency, and improves the trust of workers and stakeholders.

2.3 The Dimensions of Ethical Leadership:

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It covers justice, integrity, ethical direction, role clarity, participation in authority, and direction towards stability. These dimensions are the basis for the leader's ethical behaviours and decisions. In this context, Ahmed Abdellah al Kebir (2016, pp. 115-116) identified the dimensions of ethical leadership as follows:

- The leadership conditions: This includes leadership skills, features, attitudes, and patterns.
- Consideration of ethical and legal dimensions: This covers commitment to the local laws and respect of international, social, and organizational values.
- Contribution to society development and blossom: This is about avoiding harm to society, contribution to development projects, employing and developing the human resources, and contributing to social responsibility programs.
- Smart balance in achieving interests: It is about achieving balance between the interests of the organization and of its employees, its society, and its leader, and between the close and far interests.

3. The Organizational Commitment:

3.1 The Concept of Organizational Commitment:

The organizational commitment has no common definition despite the big interest it has drawn due to the diversity of perspectives. In this regard, Porter Lyman et al. define it as the individual's compatibility and correlation with his organization. The authors point to many features that have big effect on the organizational commitment, namely (Porter Steers, Mowdat, & Boulian, 1974, p. 604):

- The strong belief in the organization's objectives and values.
- Readiness to make high efforts for the organization.
- The strong will to remain in the organization.

Furthermore, Schneider & Nygrenholl see that the organizational commitment is the process where the individual's goals conform the organization's, and that any voluntary behaviour beyond the official mirrors commitment (Ben Safia, 2014, p. 07). In addition, it is the set of behaviours that reflect the individual's conviction with the organization's goals and values, and the individual's readiness to make extra efforts for the organization (Al Amri, 2017, p. 50).

The organizational commitment is a reflection of the individual's relation with the organization, as it is a mental state that affects the individual's decision of remaining in the organization (Dominic & Salim, 2018, p. 26). In sum, the organizational commitment is a basic concept in organizational behaviour that reflects the individual's relation with his organization, readiness to make extra efforts for it, and will to remain in it. From these definitions, we conclude the following:

- The organizational organization stems from the personal will to remain in the company, not from external pressure.
- The individual feels that leaving the organization will cost a lot of privileges and professional relations; therefore, he decides to remain.
- The individual gets emotionally attached to the organization and feels proud of belonging; this fosters his loyalty and readiness to make extra efforts.
- The committed individual adopts the organization values and goals and considers them as personal goals.
- The organizational commitment fosters the intrinsic motivation and pushes people to target better results without continuous control.
- The committed people prefer remaining for long periods in their jobs; this reduces turnover and fosters organization stability.
- The organizational commitment creates a better and positive work environment that pushes workers to innovation and participation in improving the general performance.

3.2 The Importance of the Organizational Commitment:

It reflects the quality of relation between the individual and the organization, mainly in the modern work environments that target institutional stability and excellence. Its importance manifests in:

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Improving the institutional performance: The committed individuals show high levels of productivity and efficiently and carefully perform their tasks. This positively affects the organization and fosters its competitiveness.

Limiting turnover: It reduces resignation and turnover, saves the costs of employment and training, and fosters the labour force stability.

Fostering loyalty and belonging: It affects the feeling of belonging and loyalty to the organization and pushes the workers to defend its interest and participate in its growth even under harsh conditions.

Fostering the positive organizational culture: The commitment creates a healthy organizational atmosphere that encourages development and growth, as it helps fossilize values of cooperation, respect, and discipline inside the work place.

Response to change and development: It facilitates the execution of the new strategies and increases the organization's flexibility, as the committed individuals are ready to accept change and take part in improvement and development (Slimani, 2024, p. 379).

In addition, the organizational commitment is a psycho-behavioural factor that reflects loyalty to the organization and positively affects professional performance, job satisfaction and professional stability because it is a basic factor for success. In addition, it influences productivity, turnover, and relation between the organization members. Therefore, organizations aim at promoting this commitment by adopting efficient leadership methods and providing work environments that achieve justice and motivate people.

3.3 The Dimensions of the Organizational Commitment:

It is a key concept in the organizational behaviour, as it affects the workers' performance, satisfaction, loyalty, and belonging. In addition, it covers different dimensions that reflect the diversity of motives that push workers to remain in their organizations and efficiently participate in the achievement of its goals. These dimensions include:

The affective commitment that reflects the worker's relation with, and belonging to, the organization regardless the material considerations.

The normative commitment that reflects the worker's will to remain in the organization as an ethical commitment.

The continuance commitment that reflects the losses the worker expects after leaving his job and the gains of remaining in it (Oussama Slimane & al Attar, 2019, p. 92).

Understanding these dimensions helps organizations develop the strategies of human resources management that considers the diversity of commitment motives, fosters the affective and normative aspects, and reduces reliance on continuance commitment alone. In addition, the analysis of these dimensions provides an effective frame to interpret the behaviours and predict their job satisfaction and contribution to the organizational goals.

Methodology:

To answer the study questions, we used the descriptive method and reviewed literature on ethical leadership, organizational commitment, and organizational justice. Our sample covered 111 workers in some Algerian economic companies, to whom we administered a questionnaire of 04 axes. The first axis is about the personal information and job, the second includes 14 items on the ethical leadership, the third includes 05 items on the organizational justice, and the last one includes 05 items on the organizational commitment. Moreover, we used CB-SEM and Smart PLS4 to model the relation between the variables.

Table 01: The properties of the sample:

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	85	76,6%

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	Female	26	23,4%
Age	Less than 30	11	9,9
	30 to 40	46	41,4
	41 to 50	39	35,1
	+50	14	12,6
Education	Secondary or lower	17	15,3
	Technical	20	18,0
	University	55	49,5
	Higher studies	19	17,1

Source: by the authors based on SPSS

The table shows that most informants (76.6%) are males, most (41.4%) are aged between 30 and 40, and that most (49.5%) have university levels.

Results:

We used VB-SEM in Smart-PLS4, as shown in figure 01:

Figure 01: The study model
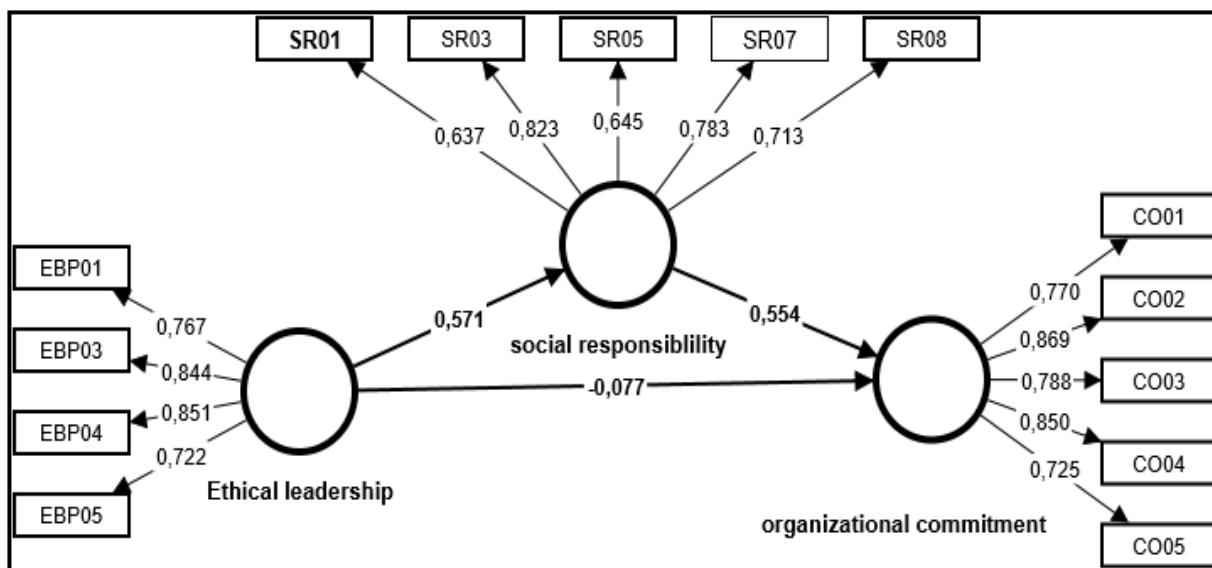
Source: by the authors based on the outputs of Smart PLS-4

Table 04: The results of AVE

Variable	AVE

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Ethical leadership	0,636
Organizational justice	0,524
Organizational commitment	0,643

Source: by the authors based on the outputs of Smart PLS-4

The table shows that AVE values are greater than 50% and reflect the high consistency of the study tool.

Table 05: Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	AVE
Ethical leadership	0,807
Organizational justice	0,769
Organizational commitment	0,861

Source: by the authors based on the outputs of Smart PLS-4

The table shows that the study tool has high consistency.

Table 06: Composite reliability

Variable	AVE
Ethical leadership	0,875
Organizational justice	0,845
Organizational commitment	0,900

Source: by the authors based on the outputs of Smart PLS-4

The composite reliability measures the tool's consistency. The table shows that all the axes had values greater than 70%, showing the high consistency of the study tool.

Cross-loading:

It measures the items divergence from each other (ethical leadership, organizational justice, and organizational commitment).

Table 07: Cross loading results:

	Ethical leadership	Organizational justice	Organizational commitment
Q1	0,767	0,431	0,153
Q2	0,844	0,458	0,248
Q3	0,851	0,472	0,248

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Q4	0,722	0,463	0,100
Q5	0,767	0,431	0,153
Q6	0,363	0,637	0,275
Q7	0,533	0,823	0,264
Q8	0,343	0,645	0,415
Q9	0,361	0,783	0,518
Q10	0,461	0,713	0,352
Q11	0,170	0,442	0,770
Q12	0,273	0,481	0,869
Q13	0,099	0,334	0,788
Q14	0,194	0,335	0,850
Q15	0,197	0,408	0,725

Source: by the authors based on the outputs of Smart PLS-4

The table shows that Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, and S5 correlate with the ethical leadership with values greater than those of other variables, and that Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, and Q10 correlate with greater values with the social justice, and that Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14, and Q1 correlate with the organizational commitment. Thus, we can say that the indicators really belong to their variables.

Variable Correlation:

It measures the latent variables' divergence from each other.

Table 08: CL results:

	Ethical leadership	Organizational justice	Organizational commitment
Ethical leadership	0,798		
Organizational justice	0,239	0,802	
Organizational commitment	0,571	0,510	0,724

Source: by the authors based on the outputs of Smart PLS-4

The table shows that VC values for all variables (ethical leadership, Organizational commitment, and organizational justice) correlate with themselves with values greater than those with the other axes. Thus, these variables are independent from each other.

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Table 07: hypotheses testing

	Regression coefficient	Standard error	T test	Probability	Remark
Ethical leadership--> organizational justice	0,328	0,114	2,821	0,002	Accepted
Ethical leadership--> organizational commitment	0,514	0,164	2,975	0,002	Accepted
Organization justice--> organizational commitment	0,669	0,235	2,788	0,003	Accepted

Source: by the authors based on the outputs of Smart PLS-4

The Organizational Justice as a Median:

Table 08: Hypotheses testing

	Regression coefficient	Standard error	T test	Probability	Remark
Ethical leadership--> organizational justice--> organizational commitment	0,361	0,1146	3.152	0,001	Accepted

Source: by the authors based on the outputs of Smart PLS-4

The Indicators of Conformity Quality:

After testing the hypotheses of the field study, we have to tackle the indicators of the constructivist model quality, mainly R^2, F^2, and GoF, as shown in table 09:

	R^2			F^2	
Axis	R^2	R		F^2	Remark
Ethical leadership	0,264	0,251		0448	Strong
Organizational justice	0,326	0,320		0.281	Strong

Source: by the authors based on the outputs of Smart PLS-4

The table shows that the correlation between the ethical leadership and the organizational commitment is estimated at 0.264, reflecting a low and direct correlation between the ethical leadership and the organizational commitment, and meaning that the increase of the ethical leadership increases the organizational commitment. In this context, ethical leadership interprets 25.1% of the change in the organizational commitment. In addition, the correlation between the organizational justice and the organizational commitment is estimated at 0.326, reflecting a low and direct correlation between the organizational justice and the organizational commitment, and meaning that the increase of the organizational justice increases the organizational commitment. In this context, organizational justice interprets 32% of the change in the organizational commitment, and F^2 is estimated at 0.448 and is more than 0.35, indicating a strong effect for the ethical leadership on the organizational commitment. Moreover, the effect of the organizational justice on the organizational commitment is estimated at 0.281 and is greater than 0.35, reflecting a strong effect for organizational justice on the organizational commitment.

Conclusion:

The ethical leadership is a cornerstone for boosting the ethical conduct, truth, respect, integrity, good treatment, and other behaviours that reflect the good atmosphere in the organization. The ethical behaviours build an organizational environment far from the destructive policies that promote for oppression, threatening, and bias. The organizational justice is based on the ethical practices of the leaders, as the workers want just and transparent decisions from them. Thus, we can say that the organizational justice is based on the leaders' ethical practices and that the worker's feeling of justice and equity in treatment fosters satisfaction with the prevailing practices inside the company and increases their will to remain in the organization. Therefore, we can say that the ethical leadership is a cornerstone for the organizational justice, which highly affects the organizational commitment.

Many studies have discussed the relation between the ethical leadership and the organizational commitment in Algeria and have provided unconvincing interpretations of the relation. Therefore, this study was an attempt to add the organizational justice as an important variable to interpret this relation. In the end, our findings show that:

- There is a statistically significant effect for the ethical leadership on the organizational justice in the study companies.
- There is a statistically significant effect for the ethical leadership on the organizational commitment in the study companies.
- There is a statistically significant effect for the organizational justice on the organizational commitment in the study companies.
- There is a statistically significant effect for organizational justice as a median variable between the ethical leadership and the organizational commitment in the study companies.

Recommendations:

- The organization administration should focus on the ethical aspect when dealing with the workers by taking just decisions and administrative procedures.
- The organization leaders had better provide an organizational environment marked with ethical criteria.
- The workers' organizational commitment must be fostered by promoting values and ethical behaviours.
- It is necessary to focus on the human relations when dealing with the workers.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with recognized ethical research standards. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to employees of Algerian economic companies on a voluntary basis. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and their informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were strictly ensured, and no personally identifiable information was collected or stored. The data were used exclusively for academic research purposes. The study did not involve any experimental intervention, sensitive personal data, or vulnerable groups; therefore, formal ethical committee approval was not required.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial or non-financial interests that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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