Examining the Dynamics of Fashion Trends, Self-Brand Congruence, and Consumer Engagement, with a Mediating Lens on Brand Trust in Customer-Brand Relationships

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Abstract

This study examines the intricate relationship between fashion trends, self-brand congruence, brand trust, and the customer-brand relationship within the context of Pakistani consumers' interactions with clothing brands. Furthermore, the study objectives are to examine the mediating role of brand trust between observed variables. The objectives include the clarification of the collective influence of these aspects, filling a theoretical gap within the framework of Pakistan, and providing marketers with practical insights. The study used a quantitative research approach, using a convenience sampling technique to choose a sample of 300 participants. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is a statistical technique that is often used for the interpretation of data obtained from an online survey. The findings illustrate the interconnectedness of these dimensions by the observation of robust positive associations across fashion trends, self-brand congruency, brand trust, and customer engagement. Furthermore, the findings indicated that there is a significant mediating role of brand trust between Fashion Trends, Self-Brand Congruence, and Consumer Engagement, with a Mediating Lens on Brand Trust in Customer-Brand Relationships. This research has a distinctive quality since it specifically investigates these interactions within the Pakistani garment business, hence offering implications for consumer engagement initiatives and brand strategy. However, the use of cross-sectional data in this research imposes constraints on the capacity to establish causal relationships between the variables. This study is novel in the context of Pakistan as it is significant for customers, marketers, and policy makers for taking prudent decisions based on current research findings.

Keywords: Fashion Trends, Self-Brand Congruence, Brand Trust, Customer-Brand Relationship, Pakistan.

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1. Introduction

The investigation of the mechanisms behind the establishment of brand-customer engagement is a crucial area of inquiry within the contemporary landscape of consumer behaviour and brand management (Albert & Thomson, 2023; Lin & Wu, 2023). This study examines the intricate dynamics between fashion trends, self-brand congruence, brand trust, and the customer-brand relationship within the Pakistani consumer environment. Understanding these connections is of utmost importance due to the dynamic nature of fashion trends, the constantly changing preferences of customers, and the substantial impact of brand perceptions (Chandni & Rahman, 2020). Given these circumstances, the objective of this research is to elucidate the intricate interconnections that exist among these variables and their collective influence on the establishment of enduring customer relationships with garment enterprises in the Pakistani market.

The rationale for leading this examination is derived from the developing dynamics of consumer-brand engagement and the progressions found in the Pakistani fashion sector. Different variables assume a significant role in molding consumers' perspectives and conduct as they endeavor to lay out more grounded associations with firms (Khan et al., 2023). These variables incorporate customer engagement, alignment with fashion trends, congruency with self-branding, and the foundation of trust (Cardoso et al., 2022). In spite of the broad examination led on these variables across numerous unique circumstances, there is a significant information gap about their transaction and effect on the connections between Pakistani customers and fashion trends (Marmat, 2023).

To improve calculated interconnections, the factors analyzed in this study have been meticulously depicted. Customer engagement alludes to the dynamic engagement and personal stake of consumers in exercises related to a business, while fashion trends remember the powerful moves for inclinations and styles seen inside the fashion business (Palaniswamy and Duraiswamy, 2023). Brand trust alludes to the degree of certainty and dependability with which consumers partner with a firm (Chairunnisa and Ruswanti, 2023). Then again, self-brand congruency alludes to how much a singular's self-idea lines up with the apparent picture of a brand (Wijnands and Gill, 2020). The customer-brand relationship includes the close-to-home and social associations laid out among consumers and brands (Anantharaman et al., 2023).

The current literature review needs far-reaching examination concerning the interaction and total effect of these components, particularly in Pakistan. This study attempts to connect the theoretical gap by looking at the interrelationships among these ideas in the setting of Pakistani consumers. The one-of-a kind socio-cultural qualities of Pakistan's piece of fashion industry, alongside developing consumer inclinations, highlight the requirement for experimental review to address the theoretical and practical gaps in this cultural and monetary setting. The objective of this exploration lies in its capacity to give practical bits of knowledge to advertisers, brand chiefs, and policymakers. The goal of this study is to give practical ramifications to brand systems, showcasing efforts, and consumer engagement exercises by means of a thorough examination of the interrelationships among these elements. This technique is expected

to enhance the connection between brands and consumers, leading to increased brand performance and progress in the Pakistani market. The target of this examination is to investigate the complex interconnections of fashion trends, consumer engagement, self-brand alignment, brand trust, and the customer-brand relationship inside the Pakistani fashion industry. Moreover, this study aims to contribute to the current discourse on consumer-brand engagements by addressing the gap in the literature using experimental evidence. Thus, it desires to offer careful information on these linkages explicitly within the cultural setting of Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

The idea of "customer engagement" relates to the degree of interest, contribution, and dynamic support shown by consumers in different exercises related to a brand (Lim et al., 2022). Lim and Rasul (2022) expressed that customer engagement was a critical component that had an impact on consumer conduct and buying choices. As indicated by Ao et al. (2023), expanded degrees of engagement lead to the advancement of more grounded associations with brands as well as further developed consideration and data handling capacities. Moreover, academic examinations directed by Bazi et al. (2023) have highlighted the meaning of support in laying out enduring connections among consumers and firms, as well as the ideal relationship between customer contribution and brand reliability.Fashion trends remember the unique movements for inclinations, feel, and winning decisions inside the domain of fashion (Beam and Nayak, 2023). The review led by Akhilendra and Aravendan (2023) gave an extensive comprehension of the impact of fashion trends on consumer conduct and brand discernment. As indicated by Dai (2023), the buying behavior of consumers is affected by trends. In addition, Sudhakar et al. (2023) declare that trends assume an urgent role in driving consumer engagement and brand reception. Besides, the review directed by Pradana et al. (2023) uncovered that the utilization of showcasing systems lined up with contemporary fashion trends affects brand value and consumer discernment.

Self-brand congruency alludes to the alignment between a singular's qualities, self-idea, and the apparent persona or picture related to a specific brand. The idea of the self-congruity hypothesis was first proposed in a review led by Wijnands and Gill (2020). The present theoretical system states that people have a proclivity to show a preference for and keep up with devotion to associations that are consistent with their self-idea. Li et al. (2022) have led research on the effect of self-brand congruency on brand affiliations and associations, as well as its importance in forming consumer perspectives, mentalities, and buying expectations. Examining a brand's trust can reveal the extent of consumer trust in that brand.

Many scholastic requests have underlined the meaning of trust in the foundation and food of customer-organization connections (Khamitov et al., 2023). In their original work, Singh and Sharma (2023) underlined the meaning of trust in cultivating enduring connections and guaranteeing consumer unwaveringness. Additionally, Yang and Ngo (2023) highlighted the profitable impact of trust on customers' aims to suggest and repurchase things, featuring its critical ramifications for the success and life span of these

ventures. The customer-brand relationship incorporates the foundation of conduct, mentality, and close-to-home associations among consumers and brands.

Anantharaman et al. (2023) concentrates on putting significant emphasis on the complicated collaboration between brand affiliations and their effect on consumer conduct and buying choices. The foundation of customer-brand connections has been shown to emphatically affect customer maintenance and brand unwaveringness, as confirmed by a few exploration studies (Aslam and Farhat, 2023). These findings highlight the urgency pretended by such associations in cultivating brand achievement and improving business sector execution. Various examinations have validated the perplexing interrelationships among fashion trends, consistency between self-branding and consumer personality, dynamic consumer engagement, trust in brands, and the dynamics of the customer-brand relationship. The designers emphasize the interchange of these opinions as influential in shaping consumer attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, underscoring their significance in fostering robust and meaningful customer-business interactions.

3. Methodology

This study utilized a research methodology with the target of directing a comprehensive analysis of consumers' perspectives and behaviors regarding various fashion brands in a Pakistani setting. The target demographic comprised individuals who kept up with standard interactions with diverse dress manufacturers across Pakistan. To ensure a satisfactory representation of the diverse scope of clients who connect with these companies, we purposely selected a sample size of 300 participants (Jawad and Sohail, 2022). This sample size strikes a balance between being reasonable and giving a representative sample. The study utilized an online survey methodology that relied on questionnaires to accumulate quantitative information. The target audience's widespread commonality and ease of use with online platforms influenced the decision to choose this specific strategy. The present study utilized a quantitative research methodology to examine consumer perceptions and their associations with brand-related factors. A similar strategy was used by various researchers (Khan et al., 2022).

Researchers acquired the findings of the study by analyzing quantitative information and objective metrics. The essential focus of the research was on consumers, empowering a comprehensive analysis of their attitudes, preferences, and behaviors towards various clothing brands in Pakistan. The research is grounded in the philosophical structure of positivism, which prioritizes assessing evident observations and exact facts to understand and explain the connections among consumers and brands in Pakistan's material industry. The study utilized convenience sampling as a member enlistment strategy to upgrade accessibility and practicality. Similarly, most of the studies whose nature is quantitative use convenience sampling (Shafiya et al., 2023). This approach facilitates the selection of participants based on their accessibility and willingness to partake, perceiving the logistical constraints associated with drawing in a diverse audience across Pakistan. The questionnaire for the survey was meticulously selected, consolidating approved questions and constructs from the existing group of writings on consumer conduct and brand discernment with regards to clothing

companies. The execution of this approach has improved the questionnaire's legitimacy and unwavering quality, accordingly, bolstering the validity of the information assortment process (Iftikhar et al., 2023). In addition, it has worked with a significant comparison and analysis of the findings. The researchers used Structural equational model to analyze the data and test the hypothesis of the study.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Measurement Model

Table 4.1: Reliability analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Trust	0.819	0.819	0.87	0.529
Customer Brand Relationship	0.775	0.783	0.839	0.529
Customer Engagement	0.787	0.728	0.754	0.541
Fashion Trends	0.753	0.754	0.817	0.591
Self-Brand Congruency	0.736	0.756	0.824	0.587

The reliability analysis findings, using several metrics such as Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), are shown in the table for various constructs inside research. These metrics are essential for evaluating the constructs' dependability and internal consistency in a research setting. An elevated degree of internal consistency is shown by the Cronbach's Alpha for "Brand Trust," which is 0.819. The great reliability also shown by the rho_A and Composite reliability values of 0.87 and 0.819, respectively, affirm this. The latent construct seems to account for 52.9% of the variation in the indicators, according to the Average variation Extracted (AVE) value of 0.529.

A similar pattern of reliability is shown in different constructs, such "Customer brand relationship," which has an AVE of 0.529, a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.775, a rho_A of 0.783, and a Composite dependability of 0.839. According to this consistent AVE value, the latent construct for this variable accounts for around 53% of the variation in the indicators. Additionally, there are minor variations in reliability measures for "Fashion Trends," "Customer engagement," and "Self-Brand Congruency". They all have Cronbach's Alpha scores of 0.787, 0.753, and 0.736, respectively, indicating adequate internal consistency. They do, however, have somewhat varying rho_A and Composite reliability ratings, suggesting somewhat variation in their reliability from other angles. "Fashion Trends" and "Self-Brand Congruency" have AVE values that are comparatively higher than the other variables, at 0.591 and 0.587, respectively. This indicates that more of the variation in the indicators is explained by the respective latent constructs.

4.2 Discriminant Validity

The heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations data are shown in the table, which shows the discriminant validity between research constructs. The diagonal values demonstrate the convergent validity of the correlations by representing the magnitudes of the correlations between the constructs. These ratios should ideally be less than 0.85

for discriminant validity, meaning that the constructs are more different than the correlations among the same components. All of the construct pairings in this table have HTMT ratios that are less than 0.85, indicating the discriminant validity of the constructs.

Table 2: HTMT

	Brand Trust	Customer Brand Relationship	Customer Engagement	Fashion Trends	Self-Brand Congruency
Brand Trust					
Customer Brand Relationship	0.257				
Customer Engagement	0.564	0.382			
Fashion Trends	0.703	0.57	0.445		
Self-Brand Congruency	0.333	0.506	0.304	0.473	

In support of their differentiation, the ratio of Brand Trust to Customer Engagement, for example, is 0.564, suggesting a higher link within the categories than between them. Other ratios that support the uniqueness of these constructs are those between Customer Brand Relationship and Self-Brand Congruency (0.506) and Fashion Trends and Self-Brand Congruency (0.473). Consequently, the table provides evidence of the selected constructs' good discriminant validity, bolstering the validity of the study's measuring approach.
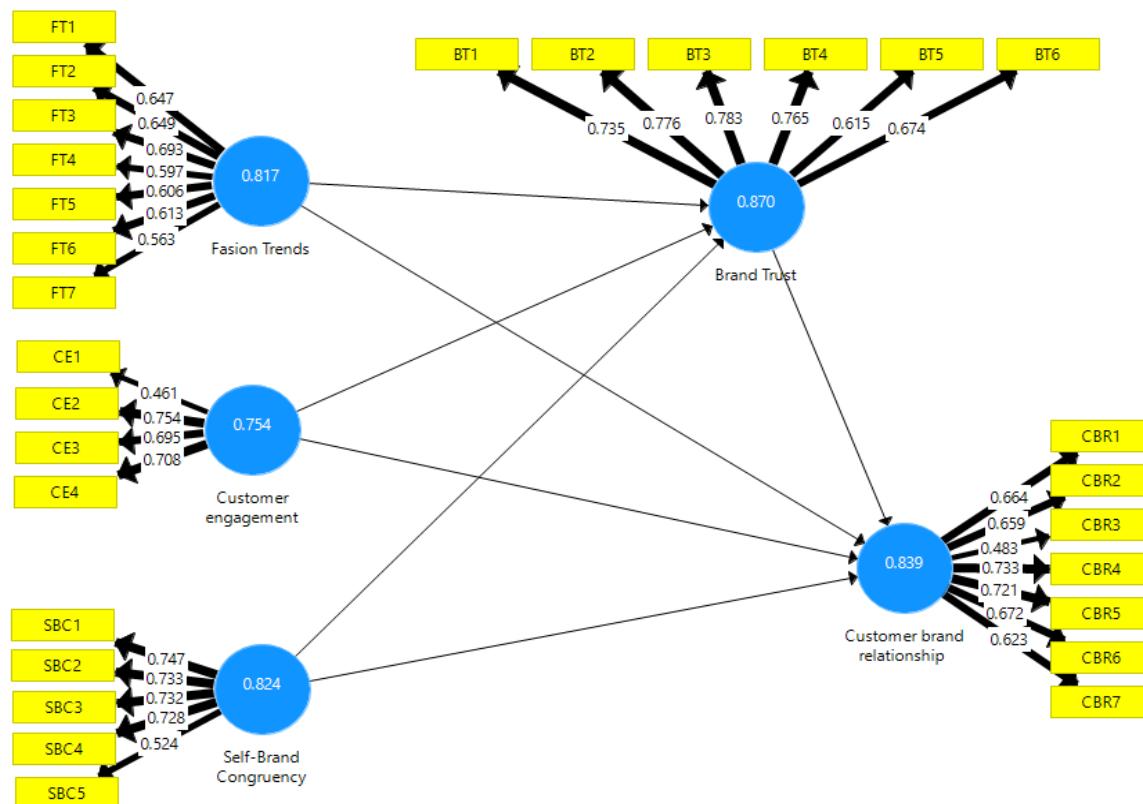

Figure 1: Reliability Analysis

4.3 Structural Equational Model

The analysis of the structural equation model revealed a number of statistically significant direct effects within the examined relationships. The study found that there was a significant positive association between brand trust and customer brand relationship (β = 0.182, p < 0.001). In a similar vein, it is worth noting that Customer involvement had a significant positive impact on both Brand Trust (β = 0.235, p < 0.001) and Customer brand relationship (β = 0.167, p < 0.001). The study found that there were significant direct impacts of Fashion Trends on Brand Trust (β = 0.485, p < 0.001) and Customer brand connection (β = 0.425, p < 0.001), suggesting a robust link between these variables.

Table 3: Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Brand Trust -> Customer Brand Relationship	0.182	0.184	0.047	3.83	0
Customer Engagement -> Brand Trust	0.235	0.236	0.033	7.2	0
Customer Engagement -> Customer Brand Relationship	0.167	0.172	0.042	3.992	0
Fashion Trends -> Brand Trust	0.485	0.489	0.044	11.123	0
Fashion Trends -> Customer Brand Relationship	0.425	0.42	0.061	7.006	0
Self-Brand Congruency -> Brand Trust	0.138	0.136	0.042	3.267	0.001
Self-Brand Congruency -> Customer Brand Relationship	0.143	0.142	0.039	3.637	0

It is worth noting that Self-Brand Congruency had a moderate but statistically significant direct impact on Brand Trust (β = 0.138, p < 0.001), underscoring its significance in shaping this specific association. Furthermore, it was shown that the Customer brand connection was significantly positively impacted by Self-Brand Congruency (β = 0.143, p < 0.001). The T statistics were found to be considerably high in each of the connections that were evaluated, suggesting a great degree of significance. The T statistics' absolute values varied from 3.267 to 11.123. The robustness of the observed correlations was further supported by the fact that all of the associated p-values were 0.

4.4 Mediation Analysis

This study employed a mediation analysis to examine the relationship between three pathways and the customer brand relationship, with a specific emphasis on the mediator of brand trust. The initial data set includes the Original Sample (O) values for each route, which indicate the interrelationships and respective contributions of Fashion Trends, Brand Trust, Self-Brand Congruency, and Customer Involvement to the development of Customer Brand Connection. Based on the statistical data, there appears

to be a modestly positive correlation (O = 0.043) between brand trust and consumer participation. In a similar vein, it has been observed that Fashion Trends exhibit a more robust and favorable association with Brand Trust (O = 0.088). This suggests that Brand Trust is influenced to a greater extent by Fashion Trends as opposed to Customer engagement. In contrast to the other components, it can be demonstrated that Self-Brand Congruency exhibits a slightly lower correlation (r = 0.025) with Brand Trust.

Table 4: Mediation Analysis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Customer Engagement -> Brand Trust -> Customer Brand Relationship	0.043	0.043	0.013	3.344	0.001
Fashion Trends -> Brand Trust -> Customer Brand Relationship	0.088	0.09	0.025	3.468	0.001
Self-Brand Congruency -> Brand Trust -> Customer Brand Relationship	0.025	0.025	0.01	2.462	0.014

The mean path values of the sample are consistent with the original sample mean values, indicating that the connections established throughout the entire sample are stable. The Standard Deviation (STDEV) is a statistical metric utilized in data analysis to quantify the level of variability or dispersion present within a given dataset. The standard deviation values for fashion trends, consumer participation, and self-brand congruency are 0.025, 0.013, and 0.011, respectively. These values represent the degree of variation observed in these variables.

The T statistics, shown as the absolute value of the observed value divided by the standard deviation, provide a measure of the strength of the correlations between variables in terms of the observed variability. Both customer involvement (T = 3.344) and fashion trends (T = 3.468) exhibit higher T statistics, indicating stronger correlations in comparison to the variability seen within the data. The variable of Self-Brand Congruency (T = 2.462) has a lower T statistic, indicating a somewhat weaker link when considering its variability. Furthermore, it is worth noting that all three routes exhibit statistically significant P values. Specifically, the pathway of customer interaction has a P value of 0.001, the pathway of fashion trends also shows a P value of 0.001, and the pathway of self-brand congruency displays a P value of 0.014.

5.1 Discussion, Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations

The structural equation model's results feature various significant relationships that give credibility to the study's established hypothesis. First off, the association between customer brand connections and brand trust is positive, which is consistent with earlier research featuring the critical role that trust plays in creating enduring relationships among customers and companies. Several studies have shown that trust serves as a foundation, boosting responsibility and loyalty in these kinds of relationships (Cardoso et al., 2022). The study highlights the significant impact of customer participation on brand trust and the customer-brand relationship. This is consistent with

earlier studies that featured the importance of customers engaging in brand-related activities as a mean of building trust and strengthening relationships (Wongsansukcharoen, 2022).

Moreover, the study's findings on what fashion trends mean for consumer trust in brands and the subsequent customer-brand relationship validate the ongoing conversation about what trends mean for consumer behavior (Shimul et al., 2023). Consumers see brands and shape relationships through fashion trends, which frequently serve as a platform for self-expression and character construction. Besides, studies featuring the impact of congruency in embellishment customer views are supported by the modest yet important impact of self-brand congruency on brand trust. Self-idea alignment with a brand promotes loyalty and trust, which helps fabricate a strong association between the brand and the customer. This result is in accordance with other research emphasizing the role that brand congruency plays in consumers' decision-making processes (Zambrano Roldan et al., 2023). The mediation analysis further clarifies the intricacies of these interactions. Fashion trends, self-brand congruency, customer participation, and brand trust correlate to varying degrees, influencing the advancement of brand trust and the customer-brand relationship through multiple paths. This is consistent with current ideas that feature the many antecedents impacting the improvement of relationships and trust in marketing environments. The mean values' stability across the sample and original data demonstrates the consistency of these relationships. Additionally, the variance in standard deviation values across the components illustrates the various levels of variability found in the dataset, illuminating the range of consumer attitudes and behaviors related to these constructs (Bhatnagar, 2023).

Overall, these results support the proposed hypotheses empirically and advance information on the intricate relationships between fashion trends, self-brand congruency, brand trust, and the resulting customer-brand relationship. They supplement and expand on existing theoretical frameworks in relationship marketing and consumer behavior. Examining the complicated linkages between fashion trends, self-brand congruency, brand trust, and consumer inclusion as well as the resulting customer-brand relationship was the goal of this research. The results provide important causal relationships and support the initial hypothesis of the research. The strong positive relationships found between brand trust and the customer-brand relationship serve to highlight the critical role that trust plays in creating dependable relationships among consumers and brands. Additionally, the research reveals the significant impact that fashion trends and customer participation have on brand trust and the subsequent association between the customer and the company, emphasizing the critical role that changing trends and consumer engagement have in affecting brand perceptions and relationships. Aligning consumer self-idea with brand image is crucial, as shown by the modest but considerable impact of self-brand congruency on brand trust and the customer-brand relationship. These observations enhance our understanding of the mind-boggling interactions that happen between customer behaviors, perceptions, and relationship dynamics with regards to branding and marketing.

The study's theoretical implications provide significant insights into the field of relationship marketing and customer behavior. First, established theoretical frameworks highlighting the importance of trust in building lasting relationships are corroborated by the verified positive links between brand trust and the customer-brand relationship. These results support and expand on ideas that suggest trust is a key component of interactions between brands and consumers. Furthermore, by adding a variety of antecedents that influence the development of relationships and the establishment of trust, the study's confirmation of the effects of fashion trends, self-brand congruency, and customer engagement on brand trust and the ensuing customer-brand relationships enhances current models. By demonstrating the interdependence of several consumer-related elements in influencing perceptions and behaviors within brand encounters, this deepens theoretical knowledge.

In practical terms, the study's conclusions provide brand managers and marketers with useful information to improve their interactions with consumers. The research highlights the importance of trust and the need for businesses to give priority to tactics that seek to maintain and build trust with their target audience. Furthermore, organizations may create engagement strategies that resonate with consumer tastes by acknowledging the impact of customer interaction and keeping an eye on emerging fashion trends. This can strengthen relationships and enhance brand trust. The research also emphasizes how crucial it is to match customer self-concept with brand message and values, supporting efforts that promote relevant and genuine brand experiences. All in all, these useful ramifications enable companies to proactively use trend relevance, brand congruency, and customer involvement to foster long-lasting connections and increase brand loyalty.

This study's dependence on cross-sectional data restricts its capacity to identify causal correlations between the variables. Longitudinal or experimental designs may be used in future studies to explore the temporal dynamics and causal relationships among the dimensions under investigation. Furthermore, broadening the study's focus to include other cultural settings or industrial sectors might improve understanding by revealing subtle differences in customer attitudes and actions related to relationships and brand trust.

Ethical Consideration

The authors declare that this submission follows the policies of AJSS as outlined in the Guide for Authors and in the Ethical Statement. Full consent was obtained from the participants prior to the study and all procedures were carried out in accordance with approved ethical standards.

Informed Consent

A fully informed, considered, and freely given decision about whether or not to participate in the study, without the exercise of any pressure or coercion was taken from the respondents.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors declare that we have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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