




A collaborative parent-teacher model for religious moderation education in early childhood in Indonesia



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Background: Effective collaboration between parents and teachers is a crucial component of early childhood education (ECE) institutions in Indonesia. Both parties hold a fundamental responsibility for imparting knowledge within the formal school setting and the informal home environment.

Aim: The present study investigates the patterns of collaboration between parents and teachers, with the goal of enhancing the role of both parties.

Setting: The study was conducted in Palopo City, South Sulawesi province, Indonesia. The researcher selected three ECE institutions involving a total of 15 teachers and 15 parents.

Methods: The study utilised the Discovering Cultural Themes model, which helped identify recurring patterns from prior analyses. The researchers examined themes, cultural focusses, values and symbols within each domain.

Results: The findings show that teachers serve a structural role, while parents contribute through a cultural role in the collaboration. The values instilled in children include religious moderation, national commitment, non-violence, a love of local culture and tolerance.

Conclusion: The collaboration between parents and teachers is reflected in the participatory activities initiated by parents in various school programmes, reinforcing the cultural responsibility of parents and the structural responsibilities of teachers.

Contribution: This study contributes to the collaborative teacher-parent model by emphasising role division and parental involvement to strengthen religious moderation education at home. As a result, the values instilled at school can be reinforced at home and vice versa. Indonesian society places significant importance on the values of cooperation and mutual assistance as emotional bonds among citizens.

Keywords: collaboration; teachers; parents; moderation; early childhood.

Introduction

Humans, from the womb through birth, growth and adulthood, always require education, including education on Islamic values (Khaidir & Suud 2020). Through education, Islamic values are internalised, such as how to speak appropriately, and act with confidence and a sense of responsibility (Mardiah 2023; Nuryana 2022). Religious education is not solely about imparting knowledge; it emphasises *feeling attitudes*, personal ideals and the activities of belief (Zinnbauer et al. 2015). Religious education has also become part of the realm of human rights, inherent to every individual. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his speech about the 'Four Freedoms' before the U.S. Congress on 06 January 1941, highlighted the freedoms of speech and expression, freedom of religion, freedom from fear and freedom from want (Kusnadi 1948). These freedoms are further reinforced and guaranteed in Indonesia under the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945) through Article 28E, paragraph (1) and Article 29, paragraph (2).

Building students¹ character requires collaboration between parents and teachers with both parties exchanging information about the child's condition and behaviour. Parents provide insights about the child's home life, while teachers share details about the child's progress in school. This collaboration ensures that if problems arise at home, teachers are quickly informed, and if issues emerge at school, parents are promptly notified. In the Regulation Number 20 of

1. The term *child* is used in relation to parents and the household, while the term *student* is used in relation to teachers and the school.

2018 of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia concerning Strengthening Character Education in Formal Education Units, Article (1), paragraph (b) states that character strengthening is implemented through collaborative activities and family involvement at school, home and within the community.

With effective parent–teacher collaboration, mutual blame is avoided when a student encounters difficulties. This statement is supported by research conducted in Indonesia during the pandemic, which found that parents were able to understand the material and assignments provided by early childhood education (ECE) teachers (Ambarita, Yuniati & Purnamasari 2021). Similarly, in rural Africa, parents recognised the importance of their involvement, although schools needed to empower them further (Myende & Nhlumayo 2022). A study conducted in Malaysia also revealed a shared understanding between teachers and parents, and that their collaboration would lead to better educational outcomes for students (Adams, Harris & Jones 2018). Early Childhood Education institutions in Indonesia play a vital role in instilling religious and cultural values at an early age, as children are more impressionable during this stage (Ghanimah 2024). The question arises whether these institutions, in partnership with parents, are successfully fostering a moderate outlook in religious education or, unintentionally, promoting divergent orientations. It is not merely an academic question but one with significant implications for the continuity between home and school, and the successful implementation of moderate religious values in ECE.

The collaborative roles of parents at home and teachers at school help children manage their behaviour and instil the importance of morality (Akrim & Junaidi 2021). Furthermore, children can be taught to control their emotions when making decisions (Chang et al. 2019), with consideration of moral and religious values (Azizah 2022). In Indonesian ECE institutions, students are taught moderate cultural and religious values. This religious moderation helps shape young children into individuals who are less likely to blame others or spread hate speech against people of different faiths (Muallifatul Khorida Filasofa, Prayogo & Khasanah 2021).

Indonesia's ECE institutions, commonly referred to as Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD), are designed to support children's optimal growth and development, particularly in the first 5 years of life. The curriculum predominantly focusses on character development, especially religious values, while also supporting cognitive, affective and psychomotor development. One key service provided by PAUD in Indonesia is the partnership with parents (Kemendikbud 2022). To develop optimally, children need stimulation at all times, not just while they are at ECE centres. Therefore, the partnership between ECE institutions and parents is crucial for the continuity of play activities and educational values at home. As the first educational institution for students, experiences in ECE are extremely important. If the learning experiences they have at ECE are not enjoyable, there will be no positive feelings towards learning, which is essential for their future educational progress.

Research has shown that collaboration between parents and teachers bridges the gap in religious education, especially in fostering religious moderation. A study done in Australia found that Muslim parents taught religious pedagogy through imitation, memorisation and instruction, although empirical realities vary greatly (Kolb 2023). Other research highlights that parents believe their involvement is crucial to their children's educational success. Two types of parent–teacher collaboration, transactional and culturally responsive, are key (Sianturi, Lee & Cumming 2023). From this study's perspective, the roles of parents and teachers will be examined in terms of instilling moderate Islamic values rooted in both culture and religion. Cultural values serve as essential instruments for family and societal harmony (Pajariato, Pribadi & Sari 2022), and all educational institutions, including ECE, share the responsibility of fostering moderate character in students (Pajariato et al. 2023a), strengthened by religious moderation among Indonesia's youth (Pajariato, Pribadi & Galugu 2023b, 2024). Islam emphasises moderation, promoting the truth of Islam with tolerance and respect for both believers and non-believers (Mubasirun 2021).

This study focusses on how parents and teachers collaborate to instil religious values, which is sometimes hindered by parental perfectionism (Kawamoto, Furutani & Alimardani 2018). The Indonesian community strongly adheres to religious values, with 96% of its population believing that faith in God is essential for instilling morality and good values (Tamir, Connaughton & Salazar 2020), and emphasising ideological principles in state governance (Mu'ti & Burhani 2019). This study aims to enhance the partnership between parents and teachers in delivering religious moderation education and improving parent and teacher support for children's activities at home.

Literature review

This literature review systematically examines previous studies on the theme of family–teacher collaboration in strengthening religious moderation education for early childhood. Key aspects discussed include the concept of ECE in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its implementation in Indonesia. Family–teacher collaboration in ECE is also linked to the implementation of religious moderation, which has become a significant issue in Indonesia. The *Guidelines for Organizing Quality Early Childhood Education*, published by the Directorate General of Early Childhood Education, Basic Education, and Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia, also highlights the roles of teachers and parents in such collaboration.

Early childhood education

Indonesia has set ambitious targets to achieve the SDGs by 2030, focussing on accelerating the fulfilment of 169 targets across 17 goals, which was initiated in 2015. Early Childhood Education in Indonesia is one of the priorities within the

SDGs, specifically under Goal 4: Quality Education. Quality education is regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 137 of 2014 on the National Standards for Early Childhood Education. This regulation is further reinforced by the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 7 of 2022 on Content Standards for Early Childhood Education, Basic Education, and Secondary Education. To meet this goal, Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency has set specific milestones to be achieved by 2030 (Amanah, Riyanto & Rizqullah 2023).

In alignment with this objective, ECE is recognised as a key priority in the SDGs. Early Childhood Education contributes to achieving these targets by fostering children's awareness and responsibility for the environment from an early age (between 2 years and 5 years of age). In Indonesia, society places a strong emphasis on religious and cultural values. Introducing religious moderation at a young age can be effectively carried out in educational institutions and at home through parental involvement. Early childhood is known as the 'golden age', a period of rapid development that is considered crucial because it represents the best time to stimulate a child's growth.

In Indonesia, ECE is defined as efforts aimed at nurturing children from birth to the age of six, providing educational stimulation to support their physical and spiritual growth. It prepares children to transition into more advanced stages of education. The standards for Early Childhood Development focus on aspects of child development, including religious and moral values, Pancasila values, physical motor skills, cognitive, language and socio-emotional development (Kemendikbudristek 2024). Thus, ECE plays a critical and strategic role in Indonesia's educational policies, both in terms of institutional setup and the fulfilment of educational standards.

Religious moderation

Indonesia is a highly diverse country with numerous ethnic groups, languages and religions, necessitating a moderate understanding of religion to prevent extremism. Three key reasons underline why Indonesia needs religious moderation. Firstly, religion is inherently peaceful and values humanity. Secondly, sectarianism, often caused by extreme interpretations of religious texts, can lead to conflict and must be avoided. Thirdly, in Indonesia, religious moderation is seen as a strategy for nation-building (Pokja 2020; Saifuddin 2019). For these three reasons, religious moderation has become a social-religious policy implemented by the government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Religious moderation has four indicators: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence and accommodation of local cultures (Mulyana 2023). National commitment refers to a shared national ideology, where Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia are final and binding for all citizens. No group, ethnicity or religion

should challenge or question these foundations. Tolerance is implemented as a movement to respect ethnic and religious differences, allowing each religion to practice its beliefs freely. Anti-violence is a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution through consensus rather than violence. Finally, accommodating local cultures emphasises the importance of preserving Indonesia's original cultures, which number in the thousands across the nation.

Collaborative parent-teacher model

Family-teacher collaboration has become an integral part of Indonesia's education policy and serves as one of the indicators of quality ECE. The Guidelines for Organizing Quality Early Childhood Education outlines the Parent Class Program as a key partnership initiative. This programme aims to equip parents with knowledge, attitudes and skills to ensure that the education and caregiving children receive at home align with those provided at ECE institutions and vice versa. The success of this teacher-parent partnership becomes even more meaningful through two-way interaction and the exchange of information about challenges in enhancing parents' knowledge, attitudes and skills, particularly those whose children are enrolled in ECE institutions (Nia Nurhasanah 2022).

Parents at home are tasked with several roles in fostering a sense of tolerance in children. Firstly, parents should appreciate their children's efforts to recognise differences between themselves and those closest to them, such as family members and siblings. Secondly, they can help eliminate stereotypes and prejudices by providing learning media, such as illustrated storybooks or visits to culturally diverse places, which help children directly observe various differences. Thirdly, fostering empathy is another important role, achieved by using tools such as basic emotion cards (e.g. sad, angry, happy) to help children identify their own emotions and those of others, while encouraging the use of polite expressions such as 'sorry', 'thank you' and 'please'. Lastly, inclusivity can be built by encouraging social interactions within extended families and the neighbourhood, such as inviting relatives and neighbours over for playdates or allowing children to visit their homes (Nia Nurhasanah 2022).

Education in Indonesia is built upon three main domains: school, home and community. Parents play a crucial role in instilling moderate attitudes, which in turn foster tolerance in children towards the diversity present in Indonesia. This collaborative model emphasises role division and involvement between teachers and parents. When children are at school, parents' roles are supplemented by teachers, and when children are at home, parents continue and reinforce the education initiated by teachers at school.

Research methods and design

The research methodology was conducted rationally, based on scientific reasoning and empirical approaches that are both empirically and rationally accountable. Methodologically,

the study was systematised following operational steps, taking into account the researcher's resources and capabilities. The methodological aspects of this research are as follows:

Research paradigm

This study aims to develop a collaborative model between teachers and parents in nurturing, maintaining and fostering religious values in early childhood. The data sources in this research consist of subjects from whom the data is obtained (Arikunto 2013; Moleong 2007). This qualitative research paradigm assumes that social, cultural and human behaviour phenomena cannot be fully understood through mere observation but must also be examined in their total context (Murdiyanto 2020). The qualitative paradigm believes that there is natural order within a society, and the researcher's task is to discover this order rather than impose theoretical boundaries.

Participants

Participants were identified using purposive sampling techniques. The study involved three ECE institutions: Bustanul Athfal Aisyiyah Kindergartens in Palopo, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. In Indonesia, ECE institutions are categorised into two types: government-run and foundation-managed. Bustanul Athfal Aisyiyah Kindergartens are operated by the Aisyiyah Foundation, a religious organisation that is part of Muhammadiyah. Bustanul Athfal Aisyiyah Kindergartens were selected because of their uniqueness in incorporating the *Al-Islam Kemuhammadiyah* aspect, which serves as one of the implementations of moderate religious practice. A total of 15 teachers were selected as participants based on inclusion criteria of having taught for at least 5 years and willingness to participate. Likewise, 15 parents were chosen based on having children in the selected institutions and their consent to participate.

Settings

The research was conducted in Palopo, Indonesia, a country known for its rich biodiversity, diverse tribes, ethnicities and religions (Von Rintelen, Arida & Häuser 2017). This megadiverse country is home to thousands of tribes and sub-tribes, hundreds of languages and a wide range of religions, all contributing to its unique cultural landscape (Pajarianto 2022). The informants for this study were teachers and parents from three Bustanul Athfal Aisyiyah ECE institutions in Palopo, providing a diverse and representative sample for the research. Bustanul Athfal Aisyiyah ECE institutions are managed by the Aisyiyah women's religious organisation, which is part of the Muhammadiyah organisation. In Palopo, there are six Bustanul Athfal Aisyiyah schools, all following a relatively similar standard and curriculum to government-managed ECE institutions, with an additional unique curriculum of *Al-Islam Kemuhammadiyah* as a characteristic feature of these institutions.

Data collection

The researcher carried out data collection through semi-structured interviews and observations at the research site. Interviews were conducted with 15 teachers selected as

participants at the school during school days, while simultaneously observing educational activities related to religious moderation education. Interviews were also conducted with 15 parents selected as participants at their homes, alongside observing educational activities at home. Data collection began on 01 January and continued until 30 February 2024.

Interviews have the advantage of obtaining current constructions about people, events, activities, organisations, feelings, motivations, acknowledgements, concerns and so forth (Murdiyanto 2020). The reconstruction of these conditions is expected to occur in the future and serves as verification, checking and development of information through construction, reconstruction and projections derived from previous data.

Data analysis approach

Data analysis was ongoing throughout the data collection process. The analytical approach employed was the Discovering Cultural Themes model, which involved collecting various themes, cultural foci, values and symbols present in each domain (Spradley 1980). The Discovering Cultural Themes method was utilised because, at the final stage of analysis, it forms a holistic unity, ultimately revealing which themes are dominant and which are less dominant. Data analysis occurred simultaneously with the data collection process, following the suggested flow: data reduction, data presentation and conclusion or verification (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2018).

Data reduction is used to select data that aligns with the researcher's needs. After the reduction and sorting stages, the data are then presented. Following this, verification is carried out, and conclusions relevant to the research theme are drawn. In addition, conceptualisation, categorisation and description are developed based on field incidents (Miles et al. 2018).

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval to conduct this study was obtained from the Institution of Research and Community Services, Muhammadiyah University Palopo (No. 01/KEP/III.3. AU/F/2023).

Results and discussion

The primary aim of this study is to explore how collaboration between teachers and parents supports religious moderation education both at home and at school. In addition, the study identifies the roles of teachers and parents in providing support for children's activities that are aligned with the values of religious moderation, including national commitment, anti-violence, cultural accommodation and tolerance. These activities can be implemented structurally through the ECE curriculum or culturally based on household practices in Indonesian society.

The role of teacher and parents' collaboration in moderated education

Etymologically, the word 'collaboration' comes from 'co' and 'labour', which means combining energies or enhancing capacities to achieve pre-set or mutually agreed-upon goals (O'Leary & Van Slyke 2010). Collaboration often refers to the process of working together across borders, sectors, relationships (O'Leary & Van Slyke 2010), or across organisations and even across countries.

In general, collaboration is a pattern and form of relationship carried out between individuals or organisations who wish to share, participate fully with each other and mutually agree to take joint action by sharing information, resources, benefits and responsibility in making joint decisions to achieve a common goal or to resolve various problems faced by those collaborating.

Based on in-depth interviews with teacher informants (1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12) and parent informants (3, 6, 9, 13, 15), the model of collaboration between teachers and parents in instilling religious moderation values in early childhood can be summarised as follows:

Teachers instil values of love for the country, anti-violence, tolerance and nationalism in a structured manner, as these values are integrated into the curriculum. While, parents, on the other hand, contribute through cultural means within their households. For example, teachers maintain local language use in learning, foster friendships among children and sing national songs during class. Meanwhile, parents engage their children in cultural carnivals, practice religious rituals at home and teach national songs. (Interview, 2024)

In summary, the collaborative model between parents and teachers in delivering religious moderation education can be illustrated as shown in Figure 1.

In Figure 1, teacher and parent collaboration is divided into two main tasks. Firstly, the teacher plays a structural role using the cultural carnival method, mediator, praying according to religion and teaching the national anthem. Teachers carry out the value of moderation in loving culture by involving students in various cultural carnival activities, and teachers play anti-violent attitudes by mediating with other teachers if student disputes occur.

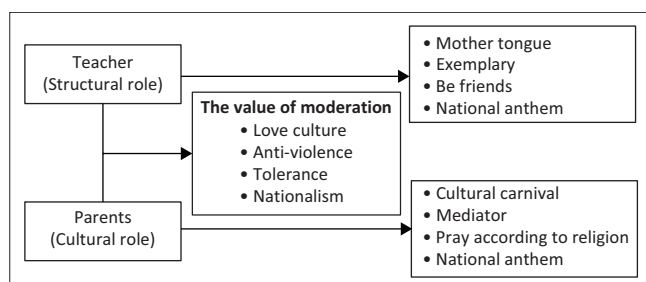


FIGURE 1: Teacher and parents collaboration model.

Meanwhile, tolerance is a value that provides opportunities for all students to pray based on their respective religious beliefs. Meanwhile, the value of nationalism is instilled by teachers by teaching students various national songs that are sung during each learning break.

Secondly, parents play a cultural role by continuing what the teacher has done with a cultural approach. To instil the value of love for culture, parents introduce their children's mother tongue (regional language) to sustain the family environment. Meanwhile, the value of anti-violence is carried out by providing an example of resolving problems with dialogue and kinship. Parents instil the value of tolerance by allowing their children to socialise and make friends with their peers in their environment. Parents instil nationalist values by repeating the national anthem taught at school.

Based on information from informants, teachers and parents, a WhatsApp group is used to communicate various aspects related to instilling the value of moderation:

'We have a WA Group, which is used by parents and teachers, as well as parents and other parents, to communicate about learning materials at school so that there is an understanding between teachers and parents. Even some activities in the context of moderation education are supported by parents in the form of organising costs.' (Interview, 2024, Informants number 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 15)

Meanwhile, the values of religious moderation instilled include national commitment or nationalism, non-violence, love of local culture and tolerance, which are currently the main issues in implementing a moderate attitude in a multicultural population. Several educational institutions have played a role in forming a moderate character (Makmur et al. 2023); through intellectual humility, young people have an attitude of religious moderation (Pajarianto et al. 2023b, 2024).

In several other research results, young children in Indonesia are accustomed to behaving with mutual respect and love of peace (Amala, Reswari & Iftitah 2022); therefore, the harmonisation process can be carried out in educational institutions containing early childhood children (Fajriyah & Riswandi 2022). Teachers and parents set examples thus children feel respected (Lian et al. 2020). Collaboration between teachers and parents is deemed necessary to build students' character. Like teachers must understand the lives and conditions of students at home, similarly parents must also understand the conditions of students at school. There needs to be more coordination between parents and teachers in building students' character because of a need for coordination and in providing each other with information about the child's condition at school and home. For this reason, with collaboration between teachers and parents, any problems and disparities in students will be resolved. Collaboration between teachers and parents can ensure a good relationship between teachers and parents and that there is no mutual blame.

Parents and teacher collaboration support in children's activities

Forming the character of students takes work. However, it is not easy because it goes through a long process and involves various elements, both from the human element, facilities and infrastructure, as well as the environment in which the child is raised and educated. These three elements greatly influence the formation of students' character. Building students' character requires collaboration between parents and teachers to provide each other with information about the child's condition and behaviour. Parents provide information to teachers about the child's condition at home. Likewise, teachers provide information about children's conditions at school. Thus, parents and teachers work together and each have responsibility. If a child has problems at home, the teacher quickly finds out, and if a child has problems at school, the parents quickly find out. With collaboration between parents and teachers, there will be no mutual blame between teachers and parents if the student has problems.

One area for improvement in educating children so far is that we still find parents who completely hand over their children to the teacher while they are at school and are no longer responsible while they are at school. It is very wrong because parents educate their children not only at home but must also always monitor where their children are.

Based on the observations, it is evident that several activities (Table 1) are carried out by early childhood children at schools which illustrate religious moderation education.

As seen in Table 1, parents and teachers provide support for various respective activities. Parents help their children carry out school programmes that teachers teach. It is a mutual desire to carry out communication that is appropriate to the conditions of the educational unit and the parents. The school community, from class to teachers, can manage communication with parents to unit heads or committees. Units need to manage when and how to communicate appropriately to convey something. The parent's committee can also take the initiative. Communication can be done in general and in a personal approach.

TABLE 1: Teacher and parents collaboration in children's activities.

No.	Value moderation	Early childhood activities	Observation results
1	Loves culture	Young children take part in a cultural carnival Archipelago cultural dance arts Visits to cultural sites	Teachers and parents participate and support each other
2	Anti-violence	Early childhood is accustomed to apologising Resolving conflicts	Parents report to teachers if violence occurs at school
3	Tolerance	Pray according to each religion Respect friends Read daily prayers	Teachers and parents act as educators, providing understanding
4	Nationalism	Monday ceremony Singing the national anthem Reading Pancasila	Parents take children to school according to school hours

The collaboration between parents and teachers will be an excellent example of educating young children. Early childhood children tend to imitate what their teachers and parents do (Syuraini et al. 2018); if teachers and parents establish a good relationship, it will become a solid basis for instilling character values in early childhood (Jaedun & Manaf 2020). The gentleness and cooperation among all the parties can help teach children values of tolerance and cooperation, which will provide guidance to the child and penetrate their heart with gentleness and love (Thaib & Syah 2019), resulting in the relationship between all parties becoming stronger (Meron 2021).

The collaboration between teachers and parents in building children's character is essential since both teachers and parents are responsible for educating children. Parents are responsible for educating their children at home, while teachers are responsible for educating them at school. For this reason, good collaboration between teachers and parents is necessary to foster a reciprocal relationship to build students' character in accordance with shared hopes, namely, creating a generation with character. *Character formation* is a long and continuous process starting as early as possible. The character formation process involves interactions between internal and external factors that build students' attitudes and values. Internal factors are meant to be parents and/or family, while external factors are meant to be schools.

Conclusion

The research results show that the collaboration between teachers and parents in instilling the value of moderation manifests in the structural role teachers play in curriculum implementation in ECE institutions. Meanwhile, parents play a cultural role in the family institution with reinforcement from their respective home environments. Meanwhile, the collaboration support between teachers and parents is realised in various forms in every early childhood activity carried out by educational institutions. The contribution of this research can strengthen the development of teacher and parents collaboration patterns. The current era demands collaboration between various parties so that the process of instilling moderate character in early childhood can create an advanced, intelligent and tolerant generation.

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Competing interests

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publication. The author has disclosed those interests fully and has implemented an approved plan for managing any potential conflicts arising from their involvement. The terms of these funding arrangements have been reviewed and approved by the affiliated University in accordance with its policy on objectivity in research.

Authors' contributions

M.S.Y. contributes to conceptualisation, firm analysis and investigation. H.P. contributed to methodology, writing, validation and review. B.S. contributed to data curation, resources and visualisation.

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Data availability

Data sharing does not apply to this article because no new data was generated or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. The article does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

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