

## **The influence of travel agencies' corporate social responsibility actions on the purchase decision of lima vacationers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) involves a set of actions that companies apply to give back to society and the environment for carrying out an economic activity. In general, CSR actions are attractive to consumers and investors due to the growing demand for sustainable services; however, there is still a need to investigate this trend in the field of tourism, more specifically, in travel agencies. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to determine whether CSR actions influence the purchasing decisions of Lima vacationers in Peru through a mixed methodological approach that included in-depth interviews with travel agents and surveys of Lima vacationers. The study identified the CSR actions undertaken by travel agencies, determined the benefits of implementing CSR and established the importance of CSR actions for Lima vacationers. The main finding was that CSR practices influence the decision of Lima vacationers to buy tourism services and the amount of money they are willing to pay for them, which contradicts the opinion of travel agents, who underestimated its importance. It is suggested that travel agencies offer more participative CSR activities and improve their communication of their sustainable practices to gain their clients' trust and loyalty.

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Travel Agencies, Tourists, Purchase Decision, Peru.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined as the obligation of a company to comply with policies, make decisions, or carry out actions that favor the objectives and values of society. In addition, it is used as a strategy to achieve corporate goals while minimizing negative impacts on the environment, society and culture (Latif et al., 2020).

In the field of tourism, concerns about climate change and fair trade and disputes over human rights have increased the value placed on CSR, while recognizing its positive effects on the sustainability of companies (Carrillo et al., 2024). It has been identified that CSR actions generate loyalty in customers of tourism companies (Hassan Hosny & Sayed AbdelAziz, 2024) who seek to carry out activities with added value based on giving back to the communities and destinations they visit (Tuan et al., 2019). Therefore, CSR serves to improve the economic profits of tourism companies; however, this should not be the main reason why it is applied, since customers only value CSR when they perceive that the companies have a genuine desire to benefit their environment (Fatawu et al., 2025). Otherwise, the ethical and altruistic essence that gives value to this practice to customers is lost (Font & Lynes, 2018; Su et al., 2020).

The Peruvian tourism industry has grown rapidly and is generating significant impacts on its environment: on nature, such as energy consumption and air, soil and water pollution; and

on society, such as acculturation and infrastructure development (Sotomayor et al., 2021; Bernal et al., 2018). Thus, many companies have implemented CSR programs that aid the communities where they operate or apply actions to mitigate environmental impacts (Rivas et al., 2022). At the same time, the Peruvian government has been promoting community-based tourism in rural areas in the national and international market in the past few years (MINCETUR, 2019). However, little is known about the national vacationers' perception of travel agencies' CSR and the extent to which it influences their purchase decisions.

Thus, the general objective of this research was to determine the influence of CSR actions implemented by Peruvian travel agencies on the purchasing decisions of Lima vacationers. To this end, a mixed methodology was applied, consisting of a qualitative phase, in which travel agents were interviewed to find out their perspective on the application of CSR in Peru, and a quasi-experimental quantitative phase, in which Lima vacationers were surveyed to find out the importance they assign to CSR and then compare both results.

The article has the following structure. The literature review discusses the concept of CSR, its evolution, and the benefits derived from its application by travel agencies. The methodology section describes the research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative phases, including interviews, surveys, and data analysis methods. Results present the findings from both phases - qualitative insights from travel agents and quantitative data from tourists -highlighting perceptions and behaviors related to CSR's influence on purchasing decisions. Discussion analyzes the implications of the results, emphasizing the significance of CSR in influencing tourist behavior and suggesting recommendations for the sector's sustainable development.

Findings support that CSR actions implemented by travel agencies significantly influence the purchasing decision and willingness to pay Lima vacationers, even though travel agents believe these aspects are not relevant to customers. This highlights the importance of promoting and disseminating CSR practices in the tourism sector to enhance their positive impact on tourists' perceptions and behavior, and to promote a sustainable tourism development in Peru.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

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### **CSR IN THE TOURISM SECTOR**

CSR refers to the actions that promote social good, beyond the interests of the firm and what is required by law (Gul et al., 2020) and is considered an important strategy for firms due to the interest they generate in consumers and investors (Albuquerque et al., 2018). In the 1990s CSR manages to have a global reach, because companies began to worry about sustainable development. Later, when the Sustainable Development Goals consolidated, companies intensified their sustainable practices with a stronger commitment to society (Monsalve-Pelaez et al., 2023). Currently, CSR is used to create value in companies through policies and practices that promote competitiveness while improving their social and economic impact (Latapí et al., 2019).

There are two types of motives for firms to apply CSR: intrinsic, or altruistic, and extrinsic, or selfish (Su et al., 2020). The first type seeks to contribute to society and the environment in an honest manner and without seeking economic benefit for the company as their main purpose. In contrast, extrinsic CSR seeks to generate benefits for the company, whether to its corporate image, or financially, with this being its sole motivation. Naturally, intrinsic motives are the most valued by consumers because they are perceived as authentic. Thus, companies must strive to communicate their CSR initiatives effectively and even invite their

clients to participate in them, if possible (Hassan Hosny & Sayed AbdelAziz, 2024; Kanaan, 2025).

At a macro level, the CSR of tourism companies has become a key strategy for achieving corporate sustainability while producing a positive social impact in the destinations where they operate, such as generating employment, purchasing local products from local suppliers, and treating workers fairly (Ibarnia et al., 2020). On the ecological side, there is a more conscious use of natural resources and interest in ecosystem conservation (Wang & Tiep-Le, 2022).

In the hospitality sector, companies carry out social activities such as health programs, family planning and family violence prevention campaigns, training, and providing job opportunities for adolescent mothers, among others (Sotomayor et al., 2021). Other hotels are more focused on pro-environmental actions such as tree planting, providing environmental education lectures, and giving donations for the protection of biodiversity (Makoondlall-Chadee & Bokhoree, 2024).

More specifically, in Peru, travel agencies reflect their CSR through actions like reforestation programs, fair payment to suppliers, rejection of child labor and philanthropic donations to non-profit organizations (Bernal et al., 2018). However, there are challenges that hinder the development of CSR in the Peruvian tourism sector; for instance, there is large number of informal companies that do not comply with the minimum legal requirements, and much less with CSR actions (Carrillo et al., 2024). Moreover, companies affirm that it takes time to build a strong relationship with communities to gain their trust and be able to work with them (Sotomayor et al., 2021).

#### **BENEFITS OF APPLYING CSR IN TRAVEL AGENCIES**

There are many benefits associated with the application of CSR in travel agencies. On the one hand, travel agencies seek to make a profit by attracting consumers who value CSR. They also enjoy a reduction in Income Tax and General Sales Tax (IGV) for the donations they make. Additionally, they perceive social benefits, such as an improved image and greater customer loyalty (Hassan Hosny & Sayed AbdelAziz, 2024). In fact, research shows that tourists perceive that companies that apply CSR offer an added value (Tuan et al., 2019), and this has a positive effect on their loyalty (Muflih, 2021).

Since tourists assign great importance to CSR, it influences their choice of a travel agency and the purchase of a particular service (Su et al., 2020). Many consumers may even experience psychological stress when making their decision, as they have a sense of responsibility to the community and want the chosen company to actively participate in favor of society and its environment (Han et al., 2020).

Therefore, it is argued that tourists are concerned about the benefits of CSR beyond the travel agencies. For this purpose, Gallegos et al. (2016) elaborated a model to assess the benefits of CSR in the Peruvian context, where three levels or dimensions were identified: local-social, individual and environmental. The local social benefits refer to the positive impact of a company over the quality of life of the surrounding communities and their contribution to their economic wellbeing. Individual benefits concern the personal benefits of the employees seen through their job satisfaction and work-family balance (Biedma-Ferrer et al., 2024). Environmental benefits refer to the companies' actions that contribute to the protection of their surrounding -natural or urban- environment.

Accordingly, Abdullah et al. (2023) sustain that travel agencies have contributed to the recovery of local economies after the pandemic because tourists, especially millennials, started to demand more sustainable travel experiences. This shift in demand encouraged travel agencies to establish green practices at all levels of the organization. The authors also claim that tourism companies need to establish partnerships with local governments and communities to build more sustainable and resilient tourism destinations that might be better prepared for future crises.

## **METHODOLOGY**

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The methodological approach of this research is mixed, since it involves the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative phase was conducted first to recognize the CSR actions that travel agencies have implemented. Secondly, the quantitative phase showed the preferences of Lima vacationers in terms of their selection of travel services.

### **POPULATION, SAMPLE, SAMPLING**

The type of sampling for the qualitative phase was non-probabilistic and by reasons, since the participants were chosen according to the pre-determined characteristics of the sample. Travel agencies were selected from the districts of Miraflores, Cercado de Lima and San Isidro, which offer tourist packages to Lima vacationers, giving a total of 16 participants. For the quantitative phase, the sampling type was probabilistic and random (Hernández et al., 2014). The criteria for the quantitative phase were national vacationers residing in Metropolitan Lima, between 18 and 66 years old, who use agencies for their domestic trips. Considering the finite population formula, a total of 202 surveys were administered through Google Forms.

### **DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

During the qualitative phase, data was collected using face-to-face, semi-structured and in-depth interviews. A questionnaire was used to find out the travel agents' perspective on CSR and how these actions are implemented in their field. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and data were classified by themes.

In the quantitative phase, three questions were formulated to help us to understand the following subjects:

**Question 1:** Does CSR influence Lima vacationers' willingness to purchase a tour package from a travel agency?

The experiment technique was applied under the comparison of samples to evaluate the influence of CSR on the participants' willingness to purchase a tour package. For this purpose, participants were divided into two groups. Both groups received the description of a tour package that included the same services of transportation, accommodation, tours, and meals, for the same price, and the same number of days. However, one of the itineraries included detailed explanations about the CSR actions of the travel agency in a given excursion.

**Question 2:** Does travel agencies' CSR influence the amount of money that Lima vacationers are willing to pay for a tour package?

Participants were asked about the maximum amount of money that they would be willing to pay for a tour package that included activities that reflected the travel agencies' CSR.

**Question 3:** What is the perception of Lima vacationers about the benefits that derive from the application of CSR in travel agencies?

Drawing from Gallegos et al. (2016) model for the assessment of CSR benefits at the local-social, individual, and environmental levels, a survey consisting of 41 questions was applied to know the value they assign to the three types of benefits that derive from the CSR actions of travel agencies. The process of instrument validation, collection and processing of results lasted two months. Data was processed using the SPSS statistical software to find the mean, standard deviation, and standard error mean of the two groups. Additionally, a T-test was applied to corroborate a statistically significant difference between both groups.

## **RESULTS**

### **QUALITATIVE PHASE**

#### **Analysis of the purchasing behavior of Lima vacationers**

Services that Lima vacationers hire from travel agencies. Participants agree that Lima vacationers mainly purchase package tours with all services organized, followed by airline tickets, full days, flight check-in and travel insurance. A few state that Lima vacationers book excursions, tours, and museum tickets. However, they also agree that Lima vacationers usually prefer to buy tours at the destination.

Reasons why Lima vacationers hire a travel agency. Participants agree that one of the most important reasons why Lima vacationers hire them are the prices and promotions. However, they do not mind spending a little more to obtain better quality services. In addition, they prefer to hire a travel agency in person due to the distrust generated by online shopping. Other reasons for preference are the possibility of customization, continuous advice, the itinerary of the tour, the trajectory and support of the companies.

Advantages of hiring a travel agency for Lima vacationers. The main advantage is that the trip is organized by experts who offer customized options and, thus, saves them the time and stress involved in organizing the trip on their own. Also, participants consider their biggest advantage to be the exclusive offers and discounts. Other advantages were the security and confidence of having a physical point of immediate assistance, which reduces the risk of scams.

Choice of OTAs over conventional travel agencies. Most participants believe that Lima vacationers will continue to use traditional travel agencies, since they value face-to-face interaction with the travel agent. However, they recognize that after the COVID-19 pandemic, many vacationers have started to contract Online Travel Agencies (OTA), especially young people, who are more adept with technology, while older adults continue to opt for a face-to-face service.

#### **Analysis of stakeholders' knowledge of CSR**

Definition of CSR. The majority (12 out of 16) of participants were familiar with the term CSR and defined it as actions that go beyond obtaining economic benefits and contribute to the environment in which they operate. In their opinion, companies should be involved in activities that generate a positive impact and promote economic development. Even

allocating financial resources for community and environmental activities is considered an integral part of this commitment. The other 4 agents were not familiar with the term CSR.

Importance of CSR. All participants agree that CSR is of great importance because of its positive impact on local communities and the environment. In addition, they emphasize that CSR contributes to improving the company's reputation and image, which can attract more clients and foster their loyalty, and, because of that, generate economic profits.

Awareness of CSR actions. All interviewees are aware of CSR actions such as recycling, volunteer programs for cleaning beaches and streets, donations to shelters and asylums, support for soup kitchens, help for disabled or orphaned children, and experiential tourism that contributes to local communities.

Acknowledgement of CSR actions carried out by the company. Most participants confirmed that their agencies carry out CSR activities such as volunteering to clean beaches, donating to shelters for abandoned mothers, animal shelters and orphanages, and organizing events for Christmas and Children's Day. In addition, some companies offer experiential tourism activities, which promote economic development in the destination, enriches the tourists' experience and strengthens the relationship with the community through fair payment. Two participants indicated that their workplaces do not apply any CSR actions that they are aware of.

Explanation of why travel agencies engage in CSR. Participants mentioned that the companies apply CSR out of a desire to become social references and generate positive publicity. In addition, CSR contributes to the socioeconomic development of local communities and allows them to differentiate themselves from the competition, thus building customer loyalty and positioning themselves in the market. However, they believe that the dissemination of these actions through social networks casts doubt on their intentions, so they emphasize that CSR should be monitored to ensure that it benefits everyone.

Facilitation of the implementation of CSR in Peruvian travel agencies. Participants recognize that the implementation of CSR in the Peruvian tourism sector faces challenges such as lack of awareness of its importance, bureaucratic obstacles, and lack of government support. In addition, the limited financial resources prevent companies from implementing CSR initiatives.

Lima vacationers' appreciation for travel agencies that apply CSR. The majority of participants claimed that CSR actions were neither important nor interesting for Lima vacationers, and that they would not determine their choice of tourist service. For example, they indicated that a Lima vacationer would be indifferent to whether the agency has an agreement with native communities or whether it plants trees for reforestation, since there is no awareness of the importance of these actions. Only a few believe that CSR could be positively valued by clients.

#### **QUANTITATIVE PHASE**

The number of valid responses for questions on gender, age range and educational level was 202, with no missing responses. Regarding gender, 43.6% (n=88) of the respondents were male and 56.4% (n=144) were female. In terms of age, the majority were between 46 and 66 years old (52%). The educational level of most participants corresponds to completed university studies (37.1%), followed by those with a master's degree (29.2%).



### CSR influence on Lima vacationers' willingness to purchase a tour package from a travel agency

Two proposals for tours to Cusco were designed with the same transportation services, lodging, tours and food included, the same price and the same number of days. The only difference between the two was that one contained a rural community-based tourism activity and detailed the CSR actions and the benefits it would generate for society and the environment. The sample that received the proposal with CSR activities showed a mean of 8.29 in their willingness to purchase the tourism package, while the sample that received the proposal without CSR activities was lower, with a mean of 7.39 (Table 1). It is affirmed that at the population level there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups. A T-test for difference of averages of independent samples with different variances was performed ( $F=10.126$ ;  $P\text{-value}=0.000$ ), concluding that the presence of CSR activities in a package influences Lima vacationers' willingness to buy it ( $T=4.141$ ;  $P\text{-value}=0.000$ ).

**Table 1 – Group Statistics Hypothesis 1**

Question	Type of survey	N°	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
How willing would you be to acquire the tour shown in this image?	Survey with CSR	100	8.2900	1.15728	0.11573
	Survey without CSR	102	7.3922	1.85172	0.18335

**Source:** Own elaboration

### Influence of travel agencies' CSR on the amount of money that Lima vacationers are willing to pay for a tour package

Lima vacationers were asked about the maximum price they would be willing to pay for the tour offered (Table 2). The average price that respondents who were offered the Cusco tour option with CSR activities were willing to pay was S/.3,316.58 and the average price that people exposed to the tour without CSR activities were willing to pay was S/.2,764.22. In other words, there was a difference of an additional S/.552.36 that they would be willing to pay for CSR activities. To corroborate a significant difference at the population level between the two groups, a T-test of difference of mean of independent samples with equal variances ( $F=0.346$ ;  $P\text{-value}=0.557$ ) was carried out, concluding that Lima vacationers are willing to pay more for a package that includes CSR activities ( $T=4.867$ ;  $P\text{-value}=0.000$ ).

**Table 2 – Group Statistics Hypothesis 2**

Question	Type of survey	N°	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
What is the maximum price you would be willing to pay (in soles), for this 7-day and 6-night tour?	Survey with CSR	100	8.2900	1.15728	0.11573
	Survey without CSR	102	7.3922	1.85172	0.18335

**Source:** Own elaboration

### Perception of Lima vacationers about the level of benefits that derive from the application of CSR in travel agencies

A 41-question survey, adapted from the proposal of Gallegos et al. (2016), was applied to measure the extent (high, medium or low) to which Lima vacationers value the benefits that derive from CSR applied in Peruvian travel agencies, considering three types of benefits: local-social, individual and environmental. The Likert scale was used with 4 response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Alpha Cronbach of the data set was 0.924, calculated on the 41 items that make up the measurement instrument, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Results show that most respondents (75.7%) mainly value the local-social benefits, while individual (44.6-53%) and environmental (47-48%) benefits are valued at a medium-high level (Table 3).

**Table 3** – Perception of Lima vacationers about the level of benefits that derive from the application of CSR in travel agencies

CSR benefits classification			
Level	Local-social	Individual	Environmental
High	75.7%	53%	48%
Medium	22.8%	44.6%	47%
Low	1.5%	2.5%	5%

**Source:** Own elaboration

To summarize the results, at a 5% significance level, there is sufficient statistical evidence to affirm that the average willingness to purchase a tour is different depending on the companies' CSR. That is, citizens are more willing to purchase a tour if it includes CSR activities. Also, it can be asserted that the average amount tourists are willing to pay for a tour is different (higher) when CSR is applied and communicated than when it is not. Additionally, statistical evidence supports that respondents value the local-social benefits of CSR over the individual and environmental.

## DISCUSSION

### QUALITATIVE PHASE

CSR provides various benefits for both travel agencies and their clients. Tourists value CSR actions because they add value to the travel experience (Tuan et al., 2019). However, the authenticity of CSR actions is crucial, because if tourists perceive these initiatives to have merely commercial purposes, they will distrust the travel agency for only having extrinsic motives (Hassan Hosny & Sayed AbdelAziz, 2024; Su et al., 2020).

Studies support that CSR can function as a differentiation strategy among travel agencies and that consumers choose travel agencies that support communities or the environment (Condori Chura et al., 2025). Nevertheless, travel agents interviewed for this study stated that CSR actions do not influence tourists' choice, as much as other factors, such as the price-quality ratio, security at the time of purchase, and the option to customize the trip according to their requirements. At the same time, they sense that younger vacationers are more informed on the subject due to the ease of access to information available through the internet, which is in line with Abdullah et al. (2023).

Travel agents also state that it would be beneficial for their workplaces to implement CSR actions, such as an improvement in the company's image, but they recognize that this



decision is beyond their control because it depends on their managers. Furthermore, travel agents claim that it is difficult to undertake CSR actions in Peru because it requires a significant investment of resources for implementation, training, and certification. This is consistent with Sotomayor et al. (2021) who found that it takes time for tourism firms to build trust with local communities due to cultural barriers, hindering the process of implementation of CSR initiatives.

#### **QUANTITATIVE PHASE**

Literature shows that CSR actions strongly influence consumers loyalty (Muflih, 2021). This statement was confirmed by analyzing the data obtained in the experiment, in which two tour options were presented, one with a detailed explanation of a CSR activity and one without it. The results showed that there is a significant influence on the average willingness to purchase Lima vacationers when CSR activities are included in the tour package and that they are willing to pay more for it.

Thus, based on Sharma and Kumar's (2024) findings that support the positive influence of CSR activities on perceived value, it can be inferred that Lima vacationers perceive higher value in tour packages that include CSR activities. However, this finding could be examined in depth through a qualitative study, to discover the reasons that lead to that choice.

Moreover, results show that Lima vacationers value the local-social, individual, and environmental benefits to carrying out CSR actions, and that the local-social benefits are the most important among them. This is consistent with the national tourism offer that is trying to boost community-based tourism in rural areas (MINCETUR, 2019). Therefore, if travel agencies wish to attract new tourists or increase brand loyalty among their current clients, they need to communicate their CSR initiatives more effectively and transparently by means of social media (Hassan Hosny & Sayed AbdelAziz, 2024; Kanaan, 2025), emphasizing activities that reflect their local-social impact, such as the visits to local communities for experiential tourism.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

CSR is a practice that is carried out in all economic sectors to give back to the environment for the impact generated by their work. The tourism sector is no exception, since it also seeks to compensate for society and the environment for the impacts it generates. In the past few years, after the pandemic, the demand for sustainable tourism services has increased, however, CSR still needs to be studied from the point of view of vacationers who hire travel agencies, a topic that is still unknown in the Peruvian context. Therefore, the present study applied a mixed methodology that included interviews with travel agents in the city of Lima and surveys of Lima vacationers, to determine the influence of CSR actions on their decision to purchase services.

In the qualitative phase, the travel agents stated that Lima vacationers are not influenced by CSR actions when deciding whether to hire a travel agency, since other factors, such as price-quality ratio, customization and security, are more important for them. However, they sense that the younger clients might be interested in CSR and that it should be implemented as company policy. In contrast, the quantitative phase of the study confirmed that CSR actions do influence Lima vacationers' willingness to buy a tourist package and the price that they are willing to pay for it.

Most of the travel agencies carry out CSR activities such as donations, volunteering and the promotion of experiential tourism in collaboration with local communities. However, other companies have not yet implemented these practices, which represent an opportunity for

improvement and expansion of CSR. Travel agents recognize some of the potential benefits derived from CSR, such as the improvement of the company's image, positive publicity, contribution to the socio-economic development of communities and differentiation from the competition. However, they also warned that the implementation of these actions should be monitored to ensure benefits for the companies and for the environment. Furthermore, literature supports that CSR must be communicated effectively and with transparency if companies wish to attract new tourists or reinforce loyalty among current clients.

The implementation of CSR practices in the Peruvian tourism sector faces challenges such as the lack of awareness of its importance, the lack of government support, the financial limitations of companies and the cultural barriers that delay the process of gaining the communities' trust. It is therefore recommended that CSR is promoted at the business and social level, so that more people are aware of its potential benefits and tourists take it into consideration when purchasing services. It is also recommended that research on CSR in travel agencies be promoted, focusing on the specific benefits (local-social, individual and environmental) that travel agencies generate, and in this way reveal the firms' intrinsic motives over the extrinsic ones. Moreover, those achievements should be publicly recognized by government institutions to motivate more travel agencies to make CSR an essential part of their business philosophy.

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### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS (CREDIT)**

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Conceptualization, LSGL, XHFE; methodology, LSGL, XHFE; formal analysis, XHFE, WV; investigation, LSGL, XHFE, WV; data curation, XHFE; writing—original draft preparation, LSGL, XHFE; writing—review and editing, LSGL, BC, WV; supervision, BC, WV; funding acquisition, BC.

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### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### **DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

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Data supporting the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request.

### **ETHICS STATEMENT**

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Participants in this study agreed to participate voluntarily by signing the consent letter after receiving the description of the project.

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