



Research Article/ Inclusive Education

The Inclusive Education for the Visually Impaired Students in Nepal: Integrating Systematic Reforms for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

The inclusive education for the visually impaired students in Pokhara Metropolitan City, Nepal can be described as both successful and problematic. This study used a mixed-methods approach and incorporated the quantitative surveys of 50 respondents that included students, teachers, administrators, parents, community members, NGO representatives, and government officials. This methodological integration gave an

all-inclusive knowledge the term 'inclusive education' from different perspectives. The results of the surveys demonstrated the moderate accessibility to the learning materials and supportive teaching practice, but the substantial barriers in the infrastructure and the use of assistive technologies and extracurricular activities. Key informant interviews affirmed that there are policies, which are not strongly implemented for teacher trainings. Similarly, the resources are still scarce. The addition of focus group discussions provided an insight into the lived experiences of stigma, neglect, and slow progress and demanded a livelihood support in the families and more effective advocacy in the local area. Overall, the study showed that the inclusion of education in Pokhara Metropolitan City has to be a multi-layered undertaking. Effective inclusion is not limited to the policy frameworks, which relies on the practical investment in the available materials, infrastructure, and teacher capacity as well as community engagement to diminish stigma and facilitate a holistic involvement. Therefore, the inclusive education for the visually impaired students can shift towards a substantial and sustainable progress by integrating systemic reforms with the focus on the lived experiences.

KEYWORDS: Inclusive education, visually impaired students, accessibility, teacher training, policy implementation

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INTRODUCTION

'Education for all' has become a global priority, widely recognized as a fundamental right for sustainable development, but still students from the developing countries with visual impairments are facing various barriers in schools. However, the rights of many students with visual impairments in the developing countries are remaining partially realized. The Constitution of Nepal and different policies are giving an emphasis to inclusive schooling, facing the barriers on education (UNICEF ROSA, 2020). Although there are global commitments for inclusive education, the restrictions within schools are limiting their participation and achievement. In Nepal, very few schools are providing the equitable learning opportunities for the visually impaired students. This study examined a ground situation of the visually impaired students with a special reference to the issue of inclusive education as a part of Nepal's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) commitments. The poor infrastructure, lack of assistive devices, and training for teachers directly influence the quality education (Lamsal, 2013; Poudel & Subedi, 2024). The Blind Youth Association Nepal (2025) states that even available materials to teach the blind learners like Braille and audio materials are not sufficiently available and the society tends to support the exclusion. In addition, this study produced the insights into the challenges faced and the opportunities desired, drawn directly through the voices of the visually impaired students, which would contribute to the inclusive education practices to achieve the overall objectives of (SDG).

Despite all these constitutional and international undertakings, the actual reality of visually impaired students in Nepal is a challenge. These policies and rights are organized in a framework, and in most instances, schools lack the resources, infrastructure, and support

systems to implement these commitments. Consequently, many students still face these barriers in participation and achievement, which underscores the difference between the policy intentions and daily experiences in education.

Although Nepal has the sufficient guiding acts and policies in the inclusive education, the visually impaired students are facing various problems in the public schools (Poudel & Subedi, 2024). The limited teacher training programs, insufficient infrastructure, and inadequate assistive materials for those students in Pokhara Metropolitan City are the lacking issues (Lamsal, 2013). This situation creates a gap in learning, which directly affects their educational participation (Blind Youth Association Nepal [BYAN], 2025). To address this situation, the study collected the opinions from the multiple stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, community, government and non-government agencies, and generated the recommendations for the government agencies and policymakers to strengthen the inclusive education in Pokhara Metropolitan City.

To situate these issues in a wider academic context, there is a need to explore the previous studies on the inclusive education in Nepal and South Asia. Examining the previous studies helps to identify the recurring barriers and pointing out the aspects in which the limited progress has been achieved. This provides a basis through which one can appreciate the way this current study advances the previous knowledge in addition to filling the gaps in the localized evidence and stakeholder perspectives.

Globally, the inclusive education has emerged as a major theme in relation to the Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG-4), which emphasizes the quality education for all. But students with visual impairments in the developing countries like Nepal are facing various barriers as students are not getting equitable learning

opportunities in schools, although the constitutional and policy frameworks allow them (UNICEF ROSA, 2020). An access to education is not only a matter of human rights but also it is a mandatory requirement for the social involvement and sustainable development. Nepal's constitution on the rights of persons with disabilities provisioned in 2017 highlights the importance of inclusive education, yet the ground reality of visual impaired students is different, facing the gaps between the policy commitments and practice. This study examined how this inclusive education can be promoted for the visually impaired students of one public school of Pokhara Metropolitan City, Ward No. 12, following a thematic approach.

Many studies show that due to the lack of proper resources, including braille papers, screen readers, and audio materials, schools are unable to provide the accessible environments for the visual impaired students (Poudel & Subedi, 2024). Additionally, BYAN (2025) reported that most of the teachers do not adopt the accessible teaching materials such as braille, audio documents and larger paper prints, resulting in the difficult learning situation. Other studies also show that the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for the visually impaired students is very less, with the limited trained teachers on the digital accessibility (Shrestha, 2021; Niraula, 2024). Importantly, the recent regional study in Nepal, India, and Bangladesh has focused on the role of assistive technology. Karki et al. (2023) found that inclusive education cannot be achieved without its systemic reforms in the assistive technology provision.

The infrastructural barrier is another crucial challenge for the visual impaired students in schools, such as the improper classroom layouts, narrow entrances, and pathways always hinder students. According to Lamsal (2023), many

schools in Nepal are unable to provide the disable friendly infrastructure, facing the daily life challenges for the visual impaired students. Most of the schools often lack a tactile signage, easy classroom arrangements, and accessible building passage which directly limits their participation and mobility (Lamsal, 2013; Subedi, 2018). Similarly, the teacher training programs are limited in the public schools due to which the delivery to students may not be effective. Many educators do not have confidence in modifying the course contents to meet the students' requirements, and also have the rare opportunities for the professional development (Khadka, 2019; Sharma, 2020). In addition, G.C. (2024) emphasizes that a modification on the curriculum for those students are not properly practiced in schools. Another important point is the role of social attitudes and stigma, independent from infrastructure, material, and pedagogical obstacles. The attitudes of peers, teachers, and communities tend to exclude the disable people even when there are sufficient policies for inclusion (UNICEF ROSA, 2020; Niraula, 2024). So many negative perceptions are still existing in the community, which is restricting accessibility. Niraula (2024) further states that students with visual impairments usually face social exclusion and stigma everywhere. Therefore, the social attitude plays a very crucial role to build a barrier free environment in schools and outside the school.

While these studies provide a useful information about the barriers to education for the visually impaired students, they are often broad in scope and do not sufficiently address the specific aspects of individual schools as well as the perspectives of diverse stakeholders. This limitation highlights the need for research that integrates the policy analysis with the lived experiences of students, in order to understand inclusion in practice.

Taken together, the existing studies show that the visually impaired students are facing the multidimensional challenges in Nepal such as the technological, instructional, and social attitudes. Although there are sufficient supportive policies, the implementation gaps are existing due to which students are disadvantaged. Most of the prior research are done on the general barriers such as the infrastructure and resources constraints, with fewer are focusing on the specific school context, perspectives of communities, parents, NGOs, and government agencies, which are equally critical for the inclusive practices for sustainable development.

The purpose of this study was to examine how this inclusive education can be promoted for the visually impaired students, drawing on the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, community, government, and non-government agencies. To achieve this, the study was carried out at Amarsingh Secondary School in Pokhara Metropolitan City, Ward No. 12, where the students with visual impairments are enrolled. The study focused on these challenges by collecting their voices, regarding infrastructure, assistive technologies, and social stigma, as well as their ideas on how these improvements could be made. In doing so, the study contributed to the development of inclusive education as one of the pillars of sustainable development in Nepal.

Therefore, this study was guided by three research questions, that investigated the possibility of promoting the inclusive education to the visually impaired students in Pokhara Metropolitan City to support sustainable development, in which the barriers that hinder the inclusion in general education system, identifying the potential ways of improving accessibility and strengthening the inclusive education practices. At the same time, these practices addressed this gap by generating the

localized evidences from the diverse stakeholders to obtain the SDG-4 goal and provide the actionable recommendations for governments, non-government organizations and policymakers.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach to collect opinions from the multiple stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, communities, government, and non-government organizations. The research design was a descriptive exploratory case study that explores the multiple stakeholders' experience in depth.

The study was conducted at Amarsingh Secondary School situated in Pokhara Metropolitan City, Ward No. 12, where students with visual impairments are enrolled. The primary data were collected directly from the multiple stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, community, government, and non-government agencies through the surveys, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and classroom observations. The secondary data were obtained from the school reports, records, and published documents related to the inclusive education.

Multiple stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, communities, government, and non-government organizations are the population of the research. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure the respondents represented the different grades and experiences. A total of 50 respondents participated in the survey. The structured questionnaires in the accessible formats (including Braille) were used to collect the quantitative data. The semi-structured interviews and FGDs were conducted with the concerned stakeholders. The classroom and school environment observations were carried out to assess the physical and instructional accessibility.

Thematic analysis for the qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative data were used. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and accessible formats such as Braille, audio, and large prints. A formal approval was obtained from the school administration prior to the data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the responses on the survey of open-ended questionnaire and closed-ended questionnaire were presented and highlighted in the result section. These results were interpreted, analyzed, and discussed in the discussion section.

Results

This section includes the results obtained from the visually impaired students for the accessible materials, school environment, teaching support, inclusion with peers, and inclusion needs with Key Informant Interviews (KII) and FGD.

Accessible Materials

This section shows the results obtained from the survey questionnaire with the visually impaired students regarding the accessibility of learning materials (braille, audio, and large print).

Table 1
Student Ratings on Accessibility of Learning Materials

Ratings	Frequency	Percent
3	6	30
4	13	65
5	1	5
Total	20	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows that out of 20 respondents, the majority (65%) agreed the availability of accessible materials as “good” (score 4), while 30% reported

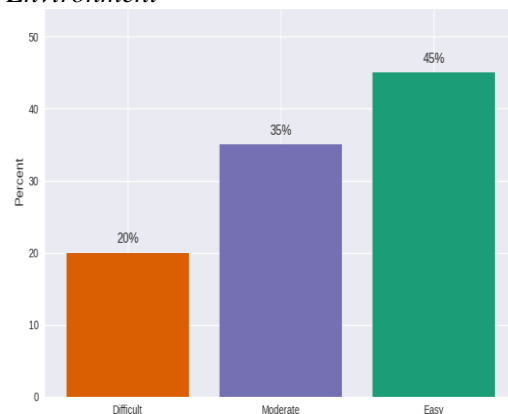
moderate access (score 3). These responses indicate that although some resources such as braille and audio materials are present, they are not enough to ensure independent learning for all students.

This reflects the systemic shortages of accessible materials in schools, as noted by BYAN (2025); Paudel and Subedi (2024), and Karki et al. (2023). This leads to restrict the independent learning, which ultimately increases dependency on teachers and peers.

School Environment

This section presents the responses obtained from the survey questionnaires regarding the situation of school environment for the visually impaired students. Figure 1 illustrates that out of 20 respondents, nearly half (45%) perceived the environment as easy (score 4), while 35% reported the moderate accessibility (score 3). Four students (20%) rated the environment as difficult (score 2). This shows that the accessibility of school environment is inconsistent. Almost half of the students find the environment manageable while a significant proportion (20%) face serious difficulty.

Figure 1
Students' perception on Ease of School Environment



Source: Field Survey, 2025

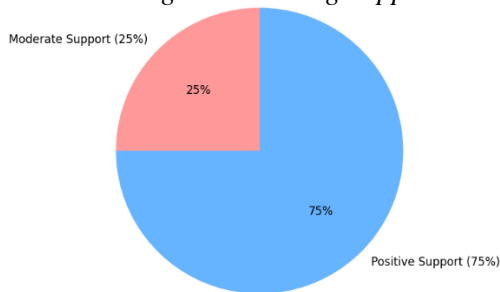
This indicates that accessibility of school environment is uneven. Nearly half

of the students can cope with the environment, and a considerable number of students experience serious problems. This implies that the infrastructural barriers such as the narrow pathways, lack of tactile signage, and improper classroom layouts remain the major obstacles for inclusion.

Teaching Support

This section highlights the level of teaching support provided to the visually impaired students. Figure 2 explains that out of 20 respondents, three-quarter (75%) rated teaching support positively (score 4), while one quarter (25%) reported only the moderate support (score 3). No students rated the teaching support as excellent (score 5).

Figure 2
Student Ratings on Teaching Support



Source: Field Survey, 2025

This finding suggests that many teachers are helpful though there are some limitations in the quality of assistance. Students are thankful to the teachers' efforts but still face several challenges in accessing the teaching materials and instructions and yet they experience the difficulties when it comes to access to the teaching materials and instructions. This aligns with the previous study (Khadka, 2019; Sharma, 2020), which has indicated that most of the teachers in Nepal lack the specialized training in inclusive pedagogy.

Inclusion with Peers

The results summarize from the survey questionnaires regarding the

inclusion of visually impaired students with their peers. Table 2 shows that, out of 20 respondents, three-quarters (75%) rated peer inclusion positively (score 4), four students (20%) reported moderate inclusion (score 3), and only one student (5%) reported it excellent (score 5). These findings suggest that most of the students feel accepted by their peers and good peer relationship, showing their progress in social inclusion. However, 20% students still experience a partial exclusion with peers, which supports Subedi (2022), who found that the occasional exclusions are facing by students in the group work and extracurricular settings.

Table 2
Students Ratings on Peer Inclusion

Ratings	Frequency	Percent
3	4	20
4	15	75
5	1	5
Total	20	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The above result shows that most of the students feel moderately included, with smaller percentage having a strong peer support. This implies that the peer relationships exist although not entirely and there are some gaps in the social interaction and acceptance. These trends are consistent with the previous literature (Adhikari, 2021; Gautam, 2022), according to which the visually impaired students tend to experience a problem in establishing the equal friendship due to limited awareness and sensitivity among some peers.

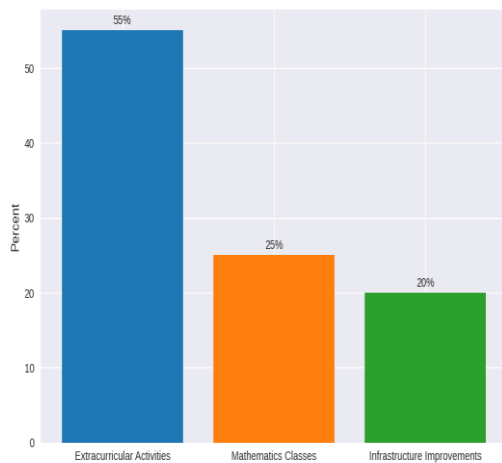
Inclusion Needs

This section presents the results obtained from the open-ended survey responses with the visually impaired students regarding the specific inclusion needs. Figure 3 illustrates how students perceived the need of inclusion in the school environment. Overall, more than half of the respondents highlighted the

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significance of being involved in the extracurricular activities as one of the crucial aspects in promoting inclusion (55%). About a quarter (25%) had emphasized the better mathematics classes which is necessary, but 20% mentioned some improvements in the infrastructure as critical to achieving an equitable access.

Figure 3
Students Perception on Inclusion Needs



Source: Field Survey, 2025

The findings indicate that there are still the unmet inclusion needs within schools. Although there are some improvements to make the accessible materials and peer support, some significant gaps remain in the areas such

as the infrastructural adjustments, specialized teaching strategies, and awareness among the classmates.

These results show that the inclusion is partial and unequal, and needs a stronger institutional commitment. The similar findings have been made in the previous study (Thapa, 2022; Koirala, 2023), who note that unless the proper planning and resources are provided, the inclusion efforts become symbolic rather than transformative.

KII with Teachers, Administrators, NGOs, Government Officials

This section summarizes the insights from teachers, administrators, NGO representatives, and government officials regarding the inclusive education for the visually impaired students in Pokhara Metropolitan City. The interviews explored the perceptions of inclusion, barriers, policy effectiveness, needed improvements, and recommendations.

Table 3 outlines that most informants (teachers and administrator) described an inclusion as weak, while NGOs and government officials acknowledged the ongoing efforts. While the limited resources were the most common barrier, alongside the low technology use and lack of coordination. The policies exist but they

Table 3
Summary of Key Informant Interview Responses

Respondent (KII)	Situation of Inclusion	Barriers	Policies Effective	Needed Improvements	Recommendations
Teacher (G1)	Weak for VI students	Limited resources	Weakly implemented	Use of assistive technology	More resources
Teacher (G2)	Weak for VI students	Low tech use	Weakly implemented	Infrastructure	Trainings for parents
Administrator	Weak for VI students	Limited resources	Weakly implemented	Stronger monitoring	More resources
NGOs	NGOs support inclusion	Lack of coordination	NGO programs partly effective	Teacher trainings	Coordination with government
Govt.	Govt. promoting inclusion	Limited resources	Weakly implemented	Teacher trainings	Policy enforcement

Source: Field Survey, 2025

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are weakly implemented, with NGOs partly effective in filling some gaps. The teacher training was the most frequently mentioned improvement, followed by infrastructure, monitoring, and assistive technology. Informants emphasized more resources, stronger policy enforcement, coordination between government and NGOs, and parent training. Overall, the KIIs highlight that while the awareness and policy frameworks exist, the practical implementation remains weak. The stakeholders agree that strengthening the resources, teacher capacity, and coordination mechanisms are essential for advancing this inclusive education for the visually impaired students in Pokhara Metropolitan City.

FGD with Parents, Community Members, Teachers and Students

Table 4 highlights that the participants perceived an inclusion as slow and challenging, with the lived experiences marked by inadequate infrastructure, limited reading materials, and persistent social stigma. The community support was described as minimal, with the peers

sometimes neglecting the visually impaired students. The suggested improvements focused on the accessible learning resources, infrastructure, and awareness campaigns. Recommendations extended beyond schools, expectations of government support, livelihood programs for families, stronger advocacy, and opportunities for extracurricular participation.

Overall, the results indicate that students have the moderate learning material availability as well as good support provided by their teachers in Pokhara Metropolitan City, a number of significant barriers exist in the infrastructure, assistive technologies, and extracurricular participation. The stakeholders continually reported some gaps in the policy implementation, limited teacher training, and persistent social stigma associated with disabilities. Therefore, these findings suggest that the practices of inclusive education for the disabled children is still partial, waiting systemic reforms, resource investment, and stronger community engagement to align with the commitments of SDG-4.

Table 4
Summary of FGD Responses

FGD Group	Experiences	Difficulties	Community Support	Needed Improvements	Suggestions
Parents (G1)	Slow progress in inclusion	Inadequate reading materials	Peers often neglect	More accessible learning resources	Need livelihood programs for mothers and families
Parents (G2)	Slow progress in inclusion	Inadequate infrastructure	Minimal community support	More accessible infrastructure	More care and attention in class
Community	Community somehow aware of inclusion	Social stigma, lack of awareness	Minimal community support	Awareness campaigns	Stronger local advocacy
Teachers	Highlight many challenges	Inadequate reading materials	Minimal community support	More accessible learning resources	More government support and resources
Students	Difficult lived experiences	Inadequate infrastructure	Peers often neglect	More accessible learning resources	Participation in extracurricular activities

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Discussion

The results of this study illustrate that the inclusion of visually impaired learners in Pokhara Metropolitan City is on its way, though it is still not full. The student surveys were moderate regarding their access to the learning resources and facilitating the teaching activities, but nothing was rated as excellent. This is in line with the previous research that has pointed to the enduring infrastructural and resource constraints in the Nepali schools (Lamsal, 2013; Subedi, 2018). The weak policy implementation, insufficient assistive technologies, and poor infrastructure were all consistently observed in the surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Even though the peer inclusion was the overall positive and the community support was reported to be limited, the extracurricular participation has become one of the unmet needs.

This was supported by KIIs, which made teachers, administrators, NGOs and government officials recognize the existence of policies but which are poorly enforced. They highlighted a demand of resources, improved coordination, and frequent teacher training. The systemic weaknesses were also highlighted through the KIIs. Teachers and administrators admitted the lack of training, which is in line with the results of Khadka (2019) who concluded that teachers' readiness to inclusive pedagogy remains limited. The FGDs provided the benefit of having the lived experiences of stigmatization, neglect, and lack of participation in the extracurricular activities. The challenges faced by the parents and the community pointed out the livelihood issues and advocated that the inclusion should not be confined to the classroom, but it should also include the context of the wider social and economic realities of the society. This echoes the point made by Dhungana (2006) that the social vulnerability and absence of support compromises disability in Nepal. Blind Youth Association Nepal

(2025) also highlighted that the issue of accessibility and inclusion should refer to the family and community empowerment, rather than the classroom participation only.

The social context should be examined through a multidimensional approach. The respondents of the community demonstrated the presence of stigma and neglect as the major obstacles that should not be overlooked, and the parents emphasized the need to support the livelihood and create awareness. This is in line with what Dhungana (2006) says and further reinforces the notion that the inclusive education should not be limited to the classroom only but it should also involve in empowering the families and communities. Their inability to address these social aspects means that the reforms in education will be shallow and short-lived.

Collectively, the lack of results leads to a conclusion that there is a necessity of a multi-dimensional approach. The available materials and infrastructure should be invested in, but it is also necessary to educate teachers, raise awareness among parents, and advocate within the community. According to Sharma (2020), inclusive pedagogy needs a structural support and attitudinal change, which was confirmed by the positive peer relationships, witnessed in this research. Nevertheless, these attitudes are likely to be subverted by the structural barriers unless the systemic reinforcement is implemented.

This study has implications related to the practice, policy, and engagement of the community. To practice, schools have to give priority to the disable friendly infrastructure, ICT integration, and extracurricular inclusion (Shrestha, 2021). In the case of policy, it needs more systematic monitoring, resource, and stakeholder coordination (Koirala, 2022). Stigma can be minimized by some awareness campaigns and livelihood

support programs at the community level in order to encourage a comprehensive, holistic inclusion (Blind Youth Association Nepal, 2025). The inclusive education in Pokhara Metropolitan City can transform their partial advancement into a significant and sustainable inclusion by addressing in the systemic gaps and lived experiences.

In general, this study proves that the inclusive education can never be realized when the efforts are not isolated. It requires a meaningful cooperation among school-communities-NGOs-government agencies, as well as an attitude change to minimize the stigma and encourage a true engagement. Through the inclusive education of students with visual impairments in Pokhara Metropolitan City, there exist some gaps in the system and the lived experiences can be bridged to partially mobilize on the path of meaningful and sustainable inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that the inclusive education of the visually impaired students in Pokhara Metropolitan City is progressing, yet it is still incomplete and skewed. In the surveys, interviews, and FGDs, the same results were always obtained with the limited resources, lack of infrastructure, poor policy implementation, and lack of teacher training being pointed out as the most acute issues. Simultaneously, the area of teaching support and peer inclusion had the positive changes recorded, indicating that the attitude and awareness are slowly moving towards the inclusive education. The overlapping of students' views, stakeholder views, and community views bring out the fact that the real inclusion needs more than the policy frameworks. It requires a pragmatic investment in the available materials and infrastructures, long-term capacity building of teachers and parents, and better coordination

between the government and NGOs. There is also the community voices that highlighted the need to have the extracurricular involvement, support livelihoods of families, and local advocacy, a reminder that an inclusion is not only in the classroom. On the whole, the study proves that the inclusive education is a complex process that should involve the academic, social, and infrastructural levels. Using both systemic gaps as well as lived experiences, Pokhara Metropolitan City can shift to the partial progress to the meaningful and sustainable inclusion of visually impaired students.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest. This research was conducted independently without financial, political, or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence the study's findings or interpretations.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is my original work.

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