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Effects of Transactional Analysis and Assertiveness Techniques on Social Withdrawal Among Secondary School Adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria

Pengaruh Teknik Analisis Transaksional dan Asertivitas dalam Mengurangi Perilaku Menarik Diri Secara Sosial pada Remaja Sekolah Menengah di Kwara State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social withdrawal is a psychosocial problem that may hinder adolescents' interpersonal, emotional, and academic development. Transactional Analysis Technique (TAT) and Assertiveness Technique (AST) are counselling approaches that may help adolescents develop more adaptive communication patterns, improve self-confidence, and reduce withdrawal from social interactions. **Objective:** This study aimed to examine the effects of Transactional Analysis Technique and Assertiveness Technique on social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria, as well as to investigate the effects of gender and self-efficacy on social withdrawal. **Methods:** The study employed a pre-test–post-test control group quasi-experimental design. The target population consisted of 1,002 students from three selected secondary schools. A sample of 60 mid-adolescent students, comprising 17 males and 43 females, was selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES) and the Social Withdrawal Scale (SWS), with reliability coefficients of 0.72 and 0.83, respectively. The data were analysed using Univariate Three-Way Analysis of Variance (UNIANOVA) at a 0.05 level of significance. **Results:** The findings revealed that Transactional Analysis Technique and Assertiveness Technique had a significant effect on reducing social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents ($F = 80.88$, $p < 0.05$). Gender had no significant effect on social withdrawal, indicating that male and female students responded similarly to the interventions. In contrast, self-efficacy had a significant effect on social withdrawal ($F = 13.71$, $p < 0.05$), with higher levels of self-efficacy associated with lower levels of social withdrawal. **Conclusion:** Transactional Analysis Technique and Assertiveness Technique were effective in reducing social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria. Self-efficacy also played an important role in reducing social withdrawal, whereas gender had no significant effect. Therefore, school counsellors are encouraged to incorporate transactional analysis and assertiveness techniques into counselling programmes to improve students' social interaction and self-efficacy.

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: *Penarikan diri sosial merupakan salah satu masalah psikososial yang dapat menghambat perkembangan interpersonal, emosional, dan akademik remaja. Transactional Analysis Technique (TAT) dan Assertiveness Technique (AST) dipandang sebagai*

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pendekatan konseling yang dapat membantu remaja membangun pola komunikasi yang lebih adaptif, meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, serta mengurangi kecenderungan menarik diri dari lingkungan sosial. ***Tujuan:*** *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh Transactional Analysis Technique dan Assertiveness Technique terhadap penarikan diri sosial pada remaja sekolah menengah di Kwara State, Nigeria, serta menguji pengaruh gender dan efikasi diri terhadap penarikan diri sosial.* ***Metode:*** *Penelitian menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen pre-test–post-test dengan kelompok kontrol. Populasi penelitian terdiri atas 1.002 siswa dari tiga sekolah menengah terpilih. Sampel berjumlah 60 siswa pada tahap pertengahan masa remaja, terdiri atas 17 siswa laki-laki dan 43 siswa perempuan, yang dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan Self-Efficacy Scale (SES) dan Social Withdrawal Scale (SWS), dengan koefisien reliabilitas masing-masing sebesar 0,72 dan 0,83. Data dianalisis menggunakan Univariate Three-Way Analysis of Variance (UNIANOVA) pada taraf signifikansi 0,05.* ***Hasil:*** *Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Transactional Analysis Technique dan Assertiveness Technique memberikan pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap penurunan penarikan diri sosial pada remaja sekolah menengah ($F = 80,88$; $p < 0,05$). Gender tidak menunjukkan pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap penarikan diri sosial, yang mengindikasikan bahwa siswa laki-laki dan perempuan memberikan respons yang relatif sama terhadap intervensi. Sebaliknya, efikasi diri menunjukkan pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap penarikan diri sosial ($F = 13,71$; $p < 0,05$), di mana tingkat efikasi diri yang lebih tinggi berkaitan dengan kecenderungan penarikan diri sosial yang lebih rendah.* ***Kesimpulan:*** *Transactional Analysis Technique dan Assertiveness Technique efektif dalam mengurangi penarikan diri sosial pada remaja sekolah menengah di Kwara State, Nigeria. Efikasi diri juga berperan penting dalam menurunkan kecenderungan penarikan diri sosial, sedangkan gender tidak menunjukkan pengaruh yang signifikan. Oleh karena itu, konselor sekolah disarankan untuk menerapkan kedua teknik tersebut dalam layanan bimbingan dan konseling untuk meningkatkan kemampuan interaksi sosial dan efikasi diri siswa.*

INTRODUCTION

Educators have long recognised the important role of school-based social activities in supporting students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. Participation in school clubs and societies, such as literary and debate societies, cultural groups, press teams, and sports organisations, provides adolescents with opportunities to develop communication competence, assertiveness, teamwork, self-confidence, and other interpersonal skills required for effective social functioning. Such activities are therefore regarded as important components of holistic adolescent development. However, the benefits of these activities may not be fully realised when students experience social withdrawal, which can substantially reduce their willingness and ability to participate in interpersonal and extracurricular activities.

Social withdrawal refers to a persistent tendency to avoid, minimise, or disengage from social interactions and interpersonal relationships. During adolescence, this behaviour deserves particular attention because this developmental period is characterised by substantial physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Adolescents increasingly depend on peer interactions, social acceptance, and interpersonal experiences to develop their identity and psychological well-being. Globally,

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adolescents constitute approximately 16% of the world's population, with about 1.3 billion individuals aged between 10 and 19 years (Parajuli & Prangthip, 2025). It has also been estimated that approximately 10–20% of adolescents experience mental health or neuropsychiatric problems (Patton et al., 2017). Adolescence is therefore considered a period of heightened psychological vulnerability during which many mental health difficulties emerge, including behaviours characterised by avoidance of social interaction and withdrawal from peers (Millet et al., 2023).

The consequences of social withdrawal may extend beyond reduced social participation. Previous studies have associated social isolation and withdrawal during adolescence with depressive symptoms, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, self-harm, and other psychological difficulties (Xu et al., 2022; Ahmed et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2024). Xu et al. (2022), for example, reported that social isolation during adolescence may be associated with a greater prevalence of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation than isolation experienced during adulthood. Social withdrawal may also hinder the development of interpersonal competence, making it difficult for adolescents to establish new friendships or maintain existing peer relationships.

A number of individual and contextual factors have been identified as contributing to adolescent social withdrawal. These include shyness, low self-worth, anxiety, fear of embarrassment, perceived peer judgement, discrimination, differences in academic ability, and difficulty initiating or maintaining social relationships (Maeda, 2016; Bosacki et al., 2020; Campisi et al., 2020; Perry et al., 2021). In the school environment, socially withdrawn adolescents may demonstrate reluctance to participate in group discussions, classroom activities, public presentations, sports, clubs, and other extracurricular programmes. Brennan and McElvaney (2020) observed that adolescents who exhibit social withdrawal frequently isolate themselves from school activities and often experience difficulty participating in classroom discussions and broader social interactions.

The prevalence and manifestation of social withdrawal may vary according to age, gender, and cultural context. Studies have reported that withdrawal-related behaviours are especially evident during early and middle adolescence, including among individuals between 10 and 14 years of age (Wu et al., 2020; Alsadoun et al., 2023). Bowker et al. (2019) also demonstrated that both the prevalence and psychosocial correlates of social withdrawal differ across cultures. Within the Nigerian context, concerns regarding social withdrawal remain particularly relevant because some students avoid school societies, presentations, and other interactive activities due to anxiety, fear of ridicule, embarrassment, or negative evaluation by peers (Nwankwo & Okoye, 2015; Oparaduru, 2017). Lasisi and Ahmed (2023) further reported gender differences in the occurrence of social withdrawal episodes among Nigerian adolescents, with 54% of female adolescents and 19.9% of male adolescents reported to have experienced such episodes. These findings underscore the need for effective school-based psychological interventions.

One psychological factor that may contribute to social withdrawal is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her ability to successfully perform behaviours required to achieve desired outcomes (Shafie et al., 2018). Adolescents with low self-efficacy may lack confidence in their ability to initiate conversations, express opinions, participate in group activities, or cope with negative social experiences. Consequently, they may become increasingly reluctant to engage in social situations. Conversely, adolescents with stronger self-efficacy may be more confident when approaching peers, participating in classroom activities, and managing interpersonal

challenges. Strengthening adolescents' self-efficacy may therefore be an important component of interventions designed to reduce social withdrawal.

Assertiveness Technique (AST) represents one counselling intervention that may be useful in addressing social withdrawal and low self-efficacy among adolescents. Assertiveness refers to the ability to express thoughts, feelings, needs, and opinions clearly and appropriately while respecting the rights of others (Alberti & Emmons, 2014). Assertive behaviour enables individuals to defend their legitimate interests without excessive anxiety, aggression, or submission (Speed et al., 2018). It is associated with confidence, appropriate self-expression, positive interpersonal relationships, and improved social functioning (Bajcar & Babel, 2018; Percival & Paulford, 2020). Makarevičs and Ilisko (2022) described assertiveness as the ability to act on the basis of self-respect while recognising the perspectives and rights of others. More recently, Jandhyala and Kumar (2024) emphasised that the ability to communicate thoughts, emotions, and viewpoints clearly and respectfully represents an essential interpersonal competency.

Assertiveness training may consequently help socially withdrawn adolescents develop greater confidence in expressing themselves and participating in interpersonal situations. By learning how to initiate communication, communicate needs, respond to criticism, manage social anxiety, and protect personal boundaries, adolescents may become more willing to engage with peers and participate in school-based social activities. Previous Nigerian studies have indicated that assertiveness-based interventions can reduce socially withdrawn behaviours among students (Famolu, 2018; Anyamene & Nwosu, 2019; Ofole & Onyebigwa, 2019; Hassan et al., 2025). These findings suggest that AST may be a useful intervention for enhancing social competence and reducing maladaptive withdrawal behaviour among secondary school students.

Another counselling approach relevant to adolescent interpersonal functioning is Transactional Analysis Technique (TAT). Transactional Analysis is a psychological approach that examines communication and interpersonal transactions through different ego states, commonly conceptualised as Parent, Adult, and Child. Through the analysis of these interpersonal exchanges, individuals are encouraged to identify recurring patterns of communication, understand how these patterns influence relationships, and develop more adaptive ways of interacting with others. TAT therefore provides a systematic framework for understanding communication between individuals, in which a transactional stimulus initiates an interpersonal exchange and a transactional response follows from the recipient (Parray & Kumar, 2022; Hashimoto et al., 2024).

Transactional Analysis has been associated with increased self-awareness, improved communication, personal development, conflict resolution, and modification of undesirable behaviours among adolescents (Alkasir et al., 2017). It may also help adolescents identify problematic communication patterns, strengthen their confidence in interpersonal situations, and establish healthier relationships with peers. These outcomes are particularly relevant to socially withdrawn adolescents who may experience difficulties initiating communication or interpreting interpersonal exchanges. Cania et al. (2024) suggested that Transactional Analysis can complement assertiveness development by strengthening communication skills required for effective social interaction. Similarly, Ofole and Onyebigwa (2019) emphasised that successful interpersonal engagement depends substantially on the development of appropriate communication skills.

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Although educational counsellors and psychologists in Nigeria have applied various behavioural and counselling interventions to address social withdrawal, available studies appear to have examined Transactional Analysis and Assertiveness Techniques largely as separate interventions. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the comparative or simultaneous application of these two counselling techniques in addressing social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents in Kwara State. Furthermore, the extent to which gender and self-efficacy may influence adolescents' responses to these interventions has not been sufficiently established within this context. This represents an important empirical gap because understanding the role of these variables may improve the design and implementation of school-based counselling programmes.

Against this background, the present study investigated the effects of Transactional Analysis Technique and Assertiveness Technique on social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the main effects of the two counselling techniques on social withdrawal and assessed the influence of gender and self-efficacy on social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents. The study was expected to provide empirical evidence that could assist school counsellors, educational psychologists, teachers, and other stakeholders in developing more effective interventions for adolescents who experience difficulties in social participation and interpersonal relationships.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a pretest-posttest, control group quasi-experimental design set within a 3 x 2 x 3 factorial matrix, in which transactional analysis and assertiveness techniques were compared against a control condition to examine their effects on social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents in Kwara State, alongside the moderating effects of gender and self-efficacy. The target population comprised 1,002 mid-adolescent students (13-16 years) drawn from three secondary schools in the Kwara Central Senatorial District of Kwara State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 20 adolescents who scored highest on the Social Withdrawal Scale (113-148) from each of the three schools across three local government areas, yielding a total sample of 60 participants (17 male, 43 female). Two instruments were used for data collection: the 37-item Social Withdrawal Scale (SWS) developed by García and Ochotorena (2016), with a Cronbach's alpha of .83, comprising a reverse-items factor $\alpha = .63$ and a positive-items factor $\alpha = .83$; and the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES), with a reliability coefficient of .72. Participants completed both scales before treatment as a pre-test; the experimental groups then received the transactional analysis and assertiveness technique interventions respectively, while the control group received a placebo technique, after which the scales were re-administered as a post-test. The data obtained were analysed using Univariate Three-Way Analysis of Variance (UNIANOVA) to test the three research hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ho_1: There is no significant effect of transactional analysis and assertiveness techniques on social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents in Kwara State.

Table 1: Main Effect of Treatments on Social Withdrawal among Secondary School Adolescents

Dependent Variable: Social Withdrawal

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
TATs and ASTs	2154.307	2	1077.153	80.875	.000	.786
Error	586.024	44	13.319			

Table 1 shows the outcome of hypothesis one. From the table, the F-calculated value was 80.88, and the significance level was 0.00 at the 0.05 level. The significance level (0.00) was less than 0.05 (F.cal. = 80.88, p. < 0.05). Therefore, hypothesis one was hereby rejected. Thus, there was a significant main effect of TAT and AST on social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents. The Eta value was .79, indicating that TAT and AST explained about 78.6% of the variation in the reduction of social withdrawal among adolescent students.

Ho_2: There is no significant effect of gender on social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents in Kwara State.

Table 2: Main Effects of Gender on Social Withdrawal among Secondary School Adolescents

Dependent Variable: Social Withdrawal

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Gender	68.924	1	68.924	5.175	.028	.183
Error	586.024	44	13.319			

Table 2 showed that the F-calculated value was 5.18 and the significance level was 0.03 at the 0.05 significance level. The significance level (0.028) was greater than 0.05 (F.cal =5.18, p. >0.05). Therefore, null hypothesis two was not rejected. This implies that there was no significant main effect of gender on social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents. The Eta value is .18. This implies that gender explained about 18.3% of the variation in the reduction among adolescent students.

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Ho_3: There is no significant main effect of Self-Efficacy on Social Withdrawal among adolescents.

Table 3: Main Effect of Self-efficacy on Social Withdrawal among Secondary School Adolescents

Dependent Variable:	Social Withdrawal					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.	Eta
Self-Efficacy	365.124	2	182.562	13.707	.000	.107
Error	586.024	44	13.319			

Table 3 showed that the F-calculated value was 13.71, with a significance level of 0.000 at the 0.05 significance level. The significance level (.000) was less than 0.05 (F.cal.= 13.71, p.<0.05). Therefore, hypothesis three was hereby rejected. Hence, there was a significant main effect of self-efficacy on social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents. The Eta value for self-efficacy was .107, indicating that self-efficacy explained only about 10.7% of the variation in the reduction of social withdrawal among adolescent students.

Discussion of Findings

The study showed a significant overall effect of Transactional Analysis Techniques (TAT) and Assertiveness Techniques (AST) on social withdrawal among adolescent students in Kwara State. The research demonstrated a statistically significant primary impact of treatments, specifically TAT and AST, on reducing social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents. Consequently, the utilisation of the TAT and AST simultaneously has significantly decreased social withdrawal among adolescents. The study found that researchers' TAT and AST had a profound effect in reducing social withdrawal among adolescent students. The outcomes revealed that TAT and AST effectively mitigated social withdrawal among participants in the intervention groups, reducing it from high to low levels. This outcome was attributed to the efficacy of combining Transactional Analysis Techniques (TAT) and Assertiveness Techniques (AST) in enhancing self-efficacy, instilling a sense of worth, and enabling participants to tackle social obstacles head-on. This trend was further evident in the mean scores, with participants in the AST achieving a score of 46.33, surpassing the total mean score of 45.02 attained by participants in the TAT. The AST exhibited a more significant and robust impact in reducing social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents than transactional analysis. Supporting this finding, the pairwise comparison of mean differences indicated that the AST (experimental group 2) had a mean difference of -16.60. In contrast, the transactional analysis group (experimental group 1) had a mean difference of -17.90. In contrast, the control group had an estimated marginal mean of 17.90. These results suggested an inverse relationship between AST and social

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withdrawal, with TAT closely following in reducing social withdrawal. Conversely, an increase in the placebo technique is linked to an escalation in students' social withdrawal.

Prior to the interventions, adolescents exhibited significant social withdrawal. However, following the utilisation of TAT and AST, the students successfully overcame challenges associated with social withdrawal, such as shyness, unsociability, and low mood, resulting in a notable decrease in social withdrawal issues. The researcher's implementation of counselling sessions demonstrated courage and unwavering dedication to enhancing students' participation in school social activities. Furthermore, the researcher's collaboration with key stakeholders in the school, including school counsellors, school administrators and teachers, further highlighted the researcher's comprehensive approach to addressing social withdrawal among adolescents. This partnership has played a crucial role in diminishing social withdrawal behaviours and fostering confidence among adolescent students. Therefore, AST's effectiveness in reducing social withdrawal surpasses that of TAT. This highlighted the importance of AST, which helped adolescents describe, express, specify, and expect cordial interpersonal relationships with other students. It also facilitates students' repetition of a clear message and acknowledgement of others' views without agreeing with them. Furthermore, AST equipped adolescents to remain neutral and unemotional in social contexts and to ask questions to clarify grey areas in relationships (Yosep et al., 2024; Balogh-Pecsi et al., 2024). This outcome aligned with the research of Yusuf and Rusmana (2016), Saberinia and Niknejadi (2019), Sundah (2020), Torkaman et al. (2020), and Parray and Kumar (2022), which demonstrated the efficacy of both TAT and AST in alleviating social withdrawal among adolescents. Consequently, participants in the AST group experienced a greater decrease in social withdrawal and an increase in self-efficacy compared to those in the TAT group.

The study showed no significant effect of gender on social withdrawal among students. There was no statistically significant effect of gender on social withdrawal among senior secondary school adolescents. The students' gender did not significantly affect social withdrawal, suggesting that both male and female students responded similarly to interventions. This result indicated a 18.3% impact of gender on social withdrawal occurrences, as the concern was prevalent in both male and female students. These results agree with the findings of Agormedah et al. (2024), who showed no significant gender differences in subjective withdrawal between males and females. Therefore, interventions targeting the reduction of social withdrawal must consider the gender differences. This is supported by mean scores of 49.65 for males and 52.57 for females, suggesting that the TAT and AST were more effective in reducing social withdrawal among female adolescent students. This study's findings are not supported by Oguguo et al. (2021), who show that the technique was slightly more effective for male students than for female students. This disparity clearly favours female participants, as they exhibited a greater reduction in social withdrawal compared to their male counterparts. The influence of gender on social withdrawal among participants is a topic of interest. This research suggests that boys tend to exhibit more social withdrawal than girls. In contrast, girls are less likely to experience social withdrawal due to social and relational factors, such as peer relationships. Further analysis of the mean difference values revealed a significant difference between males and females, as supported by pairwise comparisons of mean differences between male and female participants. This shows a significant discrepancy, with a mean difference of -2.93 for males and 2.93 for females in social withdrawal. This underscores the importance of gender in episodes of

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social withdrawal. This result is in line with earlier research by Ruijne et al. (2022), Viannen et al. (2021), Hamami and Widyatno (2019), Henning-Smith et al. (2019) and Baptista et al. (2017), which indicated a gender effect on social withdrawal. However, Oparaduru (2017), Lin et al. (2020), and Hassan et al. (2025) found no significant gender effects on social withdrawal in students. Gender differences in social withdrawal can be attributed to various factors, including Socialisation and gender roles, hormonal and neurobiological differences, coping mechanisms and stress response, and cultural and societal expectations. In agreement with this result, Al-Ghazali et al. (2024) showed that students with social withdrawal indicators, such as intellectual disabilities, tended to imitate the social interaction behaviour of the opposite gender. Hence, understanding the influence of gender on social withdrawal can help tailor interventions and support strategies to address the unique needs of individuals based on their gender. It can be deduced that gender accounts for 18.3% of the variance in the reduction of social withdrawal among adolescent students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the three research hypotheses, the study concluded that transactional analysis and assertiveness techniques significantly decreased social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents in Kwara State, with assertiveness techniques exerting a marginally stronger effect than transactional analysis. Gender did not significantly affect social withdrawal, indicating that male and female adolescents responded similarly to both interventions, while higher self-efficacy was consistently associated with a meaningful reduction in social withdrawal. Taken together, these findings affirm that social withdrawal among adolescents is not a fixed trait but a modifiable behaviour that responds meaningfully to structured counselling interventions, and they position transactional analysis and assertiveness techniques as valuable, evidence-based tools for school counsellors seeking to strengthen adolescents' social confidence and self-efficacy.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the study recommends that:

1. School counsellors should adopt transactional analysis and assertiveness techniques as standard interventions for reducing social withdrawal among secondary school adolescents in Kwara State;
2. Schools should organise weekly counselling sessions using these techniques for both male and female adolescents; and
3. Counsellors should collaborate with school management to organise motivational talks that build students' self-efficacy as a complementary strategy for reducing social withdrawal.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Generative AI, if used, was limited to language editing and improving manuscript readability. All scientific content, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions remain the full responsibility of the authors.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to this study or its publication.

Author Contributions

Taiye Hassan Ahmed contributed to conceptualisation, methodology, analysis, and manuscript preparation. Abdulmutalib Opeyemi Adio contributed to data collection, methodology, and manuscript review. Adekola Kamil Lasisi contributed to supervision, validation, interpretation of results, and manuscript revision. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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