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## Structured English Tutorials and English Competence among Women Persons Deprived of Liberty: A Mixed-Methods Study

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**Abstract.** Education within Philippine correctional facilities is underexamined, particularly regarding structured language instruction for women Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). This study evaluated the impact of the Education Behind Bars (EBB) tutorial program on English competence and personal growth among 44 women PDLs. Guided by Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2018) and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1991), a convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative pre-test and post-test assessments analyzed via paired-sample *t*-test (pre-test  $M=72.98$ ,  $SD=7.84$ ; post-test  $M=84.09$ ,  $SD=6.91$ ;  $t(43)=10.20$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d=1.54$ ) with qualitative thematic analysis of 13 in-depth interviews. Results indicated significant improvements in English competence, reflected in enhanced subject mastery and exam readiness, alongside gains in personal growth, including increased self-esteem and motivation for further education. Participants also provided actionable recommendations to strengthen the program, emphasizing educational opportunities (access to advanced learning and teacher availability), personal growth support (psychological counseling and life skills training), and reintegration support (family support programs and job placement assistance). These findings highlight the effectiveness of structured correctional education in improving both academic and psychosocial outcomes and offer practical guidance for program design, instructional support, learner feedback, and post-incarceration preparation. This study contributes to evidence-based approaches for enhancing educational provision among women PDLs in low-resource correctional contexts.

**Keywords:** correctional education; women persons deprived of liberty; English competence; structured tutorials; personal development.

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## 1. Introduction

Education remains a central component of correctional rehabilitation, supporting literacy, cognitive development, and social reintegration among incarcerated populations. Within correctional systems, Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) are individuals confined under judicial authority in custodial institutions. International evidence indicates that participation in prison education is associated with reduced recidivism, improved academic engagement, and stronger post-release adjustment, particularly when programs are sustained and adequately supported (Kakupa & Mulenga, 2021; Oganetse, 2025). More recent studies further reported that educational participation during incarceration strengthens self-regulation, motivation, and learning persistence, although outcomes vary across institutional contexts and program types (Korzh, 2021).

Among incarcerated populations, women PDL often engage in educational programs under conditions shaped by interrupted schooling, caregiving responsibilities, trauma exposure, and lower prior academic confidence. These factors frequently affect concentration, attendance, and willingness to engage in language-related tasks requiring repeated written and oral performance. UNESCO reported that women in custodial education face limited access to structured instruction, reduced learning continuity, and fewer opportunities for sustained academic participation compared with broader prison populations (Behan, 2021). Such barriers are particularly significant in English learning, as language competence requires guided practice, timely corrective feedback, and repeated participation. Recent research also highlights that structured support, and scaffolded tutorials are essential to foster sustained skill acquisition in adult learners with interrupted educational histories (Housel, 2020).

English competence is critical in correctional education because it supports literacy, written communication, comprehension, and eligibility for formal certification pathways. In custodial settings, proficiency in English determines learners' ability to complete equivalency requirements and participate in broader educational programs. However, previous studies show that English learning outcomes in prison settings are inconsistent when instruction is constrained by limited resources, irregular schedules, and interrupted tutorial delivery (Christoforou et al., 2024; Waskin & Mamonong, 2021). These challenges underscore the need for structured instructional support that addresses both skill development and learner motivation.

In the Philippines, educational inclusion for out-of-school youth and adults is pursued through the Department of Education Alternative Learning System (ALS), including implementation within selected correctional facilities. Although ALS expanded access to basic education for incarcerated learners, measurable subject-level outcomes remain insufficiently documented, particularly among women PDL. Reports from Philippine correctional education indicate that many learners struggle with foundational literacy and English competence, limiting success in accreditation and equivalency assessments (Lopez, 2019; Galang et al., 2023). Local implementation continues to face constraints such as limited classroom space, restricted schedules, rotating security procedures, and uneven

access to learning materials, all of which affect sustained instructional continuity (Temario & Ado, 2025).

To support ALS implementation in a custodial setting, Davao del Sur State College implemented the Education Behind Bars tutorial program as an extension initiative in a women's correctional facility. The program provided structured English tutorials focused on reading, writing, grammar, and oral communication aligned with ALS competencies. Sessions were conducted regularly over six months using contextualized instructional materials designed for adult learners in low-resource environments. Although the program aimed to improve English competence and support educational continuity, systematic evidence on measurable learning outcomes and learner experiences remained limited.

Existing Philippine studies on correctional education have largely focused on rehabilitation, employability, and reintegration outcomes (Nario-Lopez, 2020). Comparatively fewer studies have examined English competence as a measurable academic outcome among women PDLs, and very limited evidence has combined pre-test and post-test assessment with participant perceptions and program recommendations. This highlights three critical gaps: limited Philippine evidence on women PDL in correctional education, limited measurement of English competence using pre-test and post-test analysis, and limited integration of learner recommendations for program improvement. Addressing these gaps provides actionable insights to inform program design and instructional strategies.

This study examined the impact of the Education Behind Bars tutorial program on the English competence of women PDL enrolled in ALS. In this study, English competence refers to performance in grammar, reading, writing, and communication tasks measured through pre-test and post-test assessments, while personal development refers to participant-reported changes in confidence, motivation, and willingness to engage in learning activities. By integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, the study aims to inform tutorial improvement in similar low-resource correctional education contexts.

Specifically, this study is aimed at:

1. Describe the pre-test and post-test English competence of women PDL who participated in the Education Behind Bars tutorial program.
2. Examine whether the difference between pre-test and post-test English competence scores was statistically significant.
3. Explore participants' perception on the impact of the program on their English competence and personal growth.
4. Identify participant recommendations for improving program delivery and sustainability.

### **1.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored in Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory and Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, particularly the construct of self-efficacy. Transformative Learning Theory posits that meaningful learning occurs

when individuals critically examine prior assumptions and reinterpret experiences, leading to shifts in perspective, self-understanding, and future actions (Mezirow, 2018). In correctional education, this perspective is particularly relevant because learning extends beyond academic acquisition to influence how incarcerated learners interpret their identities, capabilities, and possibilities for personal growth.

For female Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL), whose prior educational experiences are often shaped by interrupted schooling, marginalization, and confinement, participation in structured English tutorials may create opportunities for reflection, renewed purpose, and stronger engagement in learning activities. Within this study, improvements in English competence were interpreted not only as measurable academic outcomes but also as indicators of broader learning reconstruction supported by reflective educational experiences (Waskin & Mamonong, 2021).

Social Cognitive Theory, particularly Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, complements this perspective by explaining how learning achievements influence confidence in performing academic tasks (Bandura, 2014; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Self-efficacy develops through mastery experiences, guided practice, feedback, and repeated successful performance. In correctional learning environments, mastery of English competence tasks – such as grammar exercises, sentence construction, reading comprehension, and oral participation – may strengthen learners' confidence, persistence, and willingness to engage in future educational activities. The Education Behind Bars tutorial program was conceptualized as an instructional intervention in which structured English learning supported both competence development and self-efficacy formation. Through repeated tutorial participation, learners may gradually perceive themselves as capable of academic improvement despite prior educational disadvantages.

Together, these theories explain how structured instruction may generate both measurable and psychosocial outcomes in correctional settings. Transformative learning accounts for changes in learner perspective, motivation, and reflective engagement, while self-efficacy explains how successful performance reinforces confidence and sustained participation. These theoretical relationships guided the interpretation of quantitative changes in pre-test and post-test English competence as well as qualitative accounts of confidence, motivation, and learning participation reported by participants. Recent studies demonstrate that combining transformative and self-efficacy perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating structured learning interventions in adult correctional education (Maposa & Motilal, 2025; Youssef, 2025).

## 1.2 Conceptual Framework

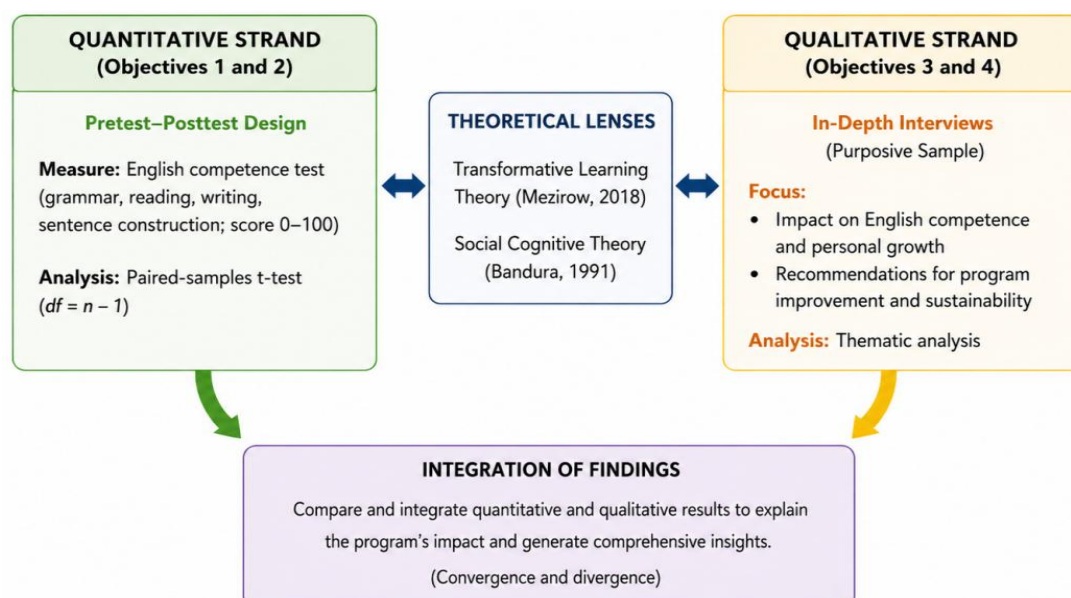


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the convergent parallel mixed-methods study

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual organization of the study using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. The quantitative strand addresses Aims 1 and 2 by examining pre-test and post-test English competence scores of women Persons Deprived of Liberty who participated in the Education Behind Bars tutorial program and determining whether score differences were statistically significant. The qualitative strand addresses Aims 3 and 4 through in-depth interviews exploring participants' perceptions of the program's impact on English competence and personal growth, together with their recommendations for improving program delivery and sustainability. Both strands were analyzed independently and integrated to generate a comprehensive interpretation of the academic, personal, and programmatic outcomes of the intervention.

## 1.3 Review of Related Literature

### 1.3.1 English Learning Outcomes in Correctional Education

Correctional education has consistently been associated with rehabilitation, literacy development, and improved institutional adjustment; however, outcomes vary significantly depending on instructional quality, program continuity, and institutional support (Zhang, 2023). Empirical evidence indicates that structured educational programs can improve reading, writing, and oral communication skills, contributing to measurable gains in English competence among incarcerated learners.

Hopkins (2022) found that guided English instruction led to significant improvement in grammar and reading comprehension, although irregular schedules and restricted participation due to institutional routines diminished these gains. Similarly, Galeshi and Bolin (2022) reported that literacy and language gains were stronger in consistently delivered programs, while brief or fragmented interventions produced only modest improvements. These mixed

findings underscore that English competence development in custodial settings depends not only on curriculum content but also on the consistency of instructional delivery, learner engagement, and sufficient access to teaching resources.

While international studies highlight potential gains, research also documents constraints affecting measurable English competence. For example, Leddo et al. (2023) observed that self-paced or modular learning formats were less effective in developing grammar and sentence construction skills compared with teacher-guided tutorials. Short program duration, inconsistent attendance, and limited corrective feedback frequently reduced achievement, highlighting the need for structured, sustained interventions. This variability indicates that the field debates the most effective modes of instruction, with the common conclusion that English competence gains require both repeated guided practice and supportive learning environments (Zhang, 2023).

### *1.3.2 Women PDL and Gender-Specific Learning Barriers*

Women incarcerated in correctional facilities experience unique educational barriers that differ from those of male populations. Interrupted schooling, prior caregiving responsibilities, trauma histories, and lower academic confidence often limit engagement and persistence in learning activities, particularly in language-based tasks (Galeshi & Bolin, 2022; Korzh, 2021). Many women report reluctance to participate in oral exercises due to fear of judgment, embarrassment, or prior negative educational experiences, which can hinder development of English competence (Brubacher et al., 2023; Korzh, 2021). Emotional strain, restricted privacy, and institutional routines further constrain learning opportunities, resulting in uneven achievement even when instructional programs are available (Mafilika & Marongwe, 2024; Mbandlwa, 2024).

Despite these barriers, women learners often demonstrate strong motivation to engage in educational activities, linking learning to dignity, family responsibilities, and future reintegration prospects. Evidence from correctional education studies indicates that programs emphasizing emotionally safe classrooms, scaffolded participation, and repeated guided practice improve both English competence and personal growth outcomes among women PDL (Waskin & Manomong, 2021). These gender-specific findings highlight the importance of tailoring English instructional programs to address the particular challenges and strengths of women in custodial settings.

### *1.3.3 Tutorial-Based English Interventions in Custodial Settings*

Tutorial-based interventions in correctional education vary widely in structure, including teacher-led tutorials, peer-assisted learning, blended instruction combining guided sessions with modular work, and self-paced programs. Evidence suggests that teacher-led tutorials consistently produce stronger gains in measurable English competence, as they allow for immediate correction, guided explanations, and monitoring of learner progress (Galeshi & Bolin, 2022). Peer-assisted interventions enhance learner motivation and reduce anxiety but depend on peer skill levels and facilitation consistency. Blended instructional approaches increase access to learning materials but can produce uneven

outcomes if facilitation is irregular, while purely self-paced programs often result in modest or inconsistent gains in grammar, sentence construction, and comprehension (Ahmed, 2025; Hopkins, 2022; Makhambetova et al., 2021).

Studies also highlight the critical role of corrective feedback, repeated practice, and consistent scheduling in promoting English competence. Short tutorial durations, irregular attendance, and low-resource constraints frequently limit the magnitude of learning gains, indicating that structured tutorials alone are insufficient without sustained engagement and support (Mafilika & Marongwe, 2024). The literature thus demonstrates that the efficacy of tutorial-based interventions is contingent upon instructional design, facilitation quality, and alignment with learners' prior experiences and contextual realities.

#### *1.3.4 Personal Growth and its Measurement in Correctional Learning*

Beyond measurable academic outcomes, correctional education research increasingly emphasizes personal growth as an essential component of learning. Personal growth is typically operationalized as increases in confidence, self-efficacy, willingness to participate, persistence in completing tasks, and reflective engagement (Li et al., 2023; Mezirow, 2018). These psychosocial outcomes are generally measured through qualitative indicators, such as interviews, observation of classroom participation, and learner reflections, rather than standardized psychometric scales.

Christoforou et al. (2024) observed that repeated mastery experiences in guided literacy and English tasks led to improvements in learner confidence and engagement, while Hosoi and Tatsuno (2024) found enhanced self-expression and emotional regulation among participants reporting structured tutorial participation. Wang and Sun (2020) further linked repeated success in academic tasks to stronger self-efficacy, reinforcing learners' perception of their capabilities and motivation to continue learning. Nonetheless, these outcomes remain contextually bound; reported confidence does not always translate into long-term academic gains without sustained instructional support and reinforcement.

#### *1.3.5 Learner Voice, Program Improvement*

Incorporating learner feedback into program design has emerged as a crucial mechanism for enhancing relevance and efficacy in correctional education. Learners often identify operational barriers, such as limited instructional time, inadequate materials, fatigue, and institutional disruptions, that program administrators may overlook (Quinn, 2021; Buck et al., 2024). Studies indicate that participants' recommendations—ranging from expanded tutorial schedules to post-release educational continuity—can directly inform adjustments to instructional strategies, content, and support mechanisms, thereby enhancing both English competence and personal growth outcomes (Behan, 2021; Mahlangu, 2025).

Within the Philippine context, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) provides basic education in detention settings, yet research documenting measurable English competence remains limited. Most local studies have emphasized enrolment, attendance, or completion, rather than pre-test/post-test gains or

participant-reported outcomes (Labarrete & Tiopes, 2024; Sala et al., 2026). Furthermore, challenges such as limited classroom space, restricted schedules, rotating security procedures, and inconsistent access to learning materials constrain instructional continuity, highlighting the need for structured and sustained interventions tailored to women PDL (Addae, 2020).

### *1.3.6 Research Gap*

Synthesis of the reviewed literature reveals three specific gaps addressed by this study. First, evidence remains scarce regarding women PDL in the Philippines, particularly in relation to measurable English competence outcomes. Second, previous studies rarely combine pre-test and post-test assessment to document quantitative gains in English competence, limiting understanding of instructional impact. Third, participant recommendations are seldom integrated into program improvement strategies, which reduces responsiveness to learner needs. Addressing these gaps, the present study examines the association of structured English tutorials with measurable English competence and incorporates participant insights to inform sustainable program delivery in low-resource correctional education settings.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Design**

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, a specific mixed-methods approach in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same phase of the investigation, analyzed independently, and integrated during interpretation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the educational intervention under study. This design was selected because the objectives of the research required both numerical measurement of changes in English proficiency and detailed understanding of participants' educational experiences within the correctional learning environment. In the quantitative strand, the study measured changes in English proficiency through pre-test and post-test scores obtained before and after the implementation of the Education Behind Bars tutorial program. In the qualitative strand, semi-structured interviews explored participants' perceptions regarding learning gains, confidence development, personal transformation, and recommendations for improving the program.

The choice of convergent parallel design was guided by both methodological and contextual considerations. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2023), convergent mixed-methods designs are particularly appropriate when researchers seek to compare measurable outcomes with participant narratives in order to validate findings through different forms of evidence. In correctional education research, where academic outcomes may be influenced by psychosocial and institutional conditions, reliance on a single methodological strand may not sufficiently explain how learning occurs. The simultaneous collection of both datasets also addressed the practical limitations of conducting research within a correctional facility where access to participants is regulated and time bound. Quantitative and qualitative findings were analyzed separately and merged during interpretation through direct comparison of score changes and thematic

findings. This integration allowed statistical improvements in English proficiency to be interpreted alongside participants' reported experiences of motivation, self-confidence, and personal growth. Creswell and Plano Clark (2023) note that such integration strengthens explanatory depth because neither numerical outcomes nor narrative evidence alone can fully explain educational change in socially complex settings. Although convergent designs require equal attention to both strands to avoid methodological imbalance, this study maintained equal weight by aligning each research objective with a corresponding instrument and analytical procedure.

## **2.2 Population and Sample**

The quantitative component of the study involved forty-four female Persons Deprived of Liberty enrolled in the Alternative Learning System under the Education Behind Bars tutorial program. All forty-four participants were included through complete enumeration sampling. Complete enumeration was selected because the accessible population was small, institutionally bounded, and educationally homogeneous within the correctional facility. Including the entire population minimized sampling error and ensured that all enrolled learners were represented in the assessment of English proficiency before and after the intervention. Novosel (2023) explained that complete enumeration is appropriate when the total population is manageable and when full participation strengthens internal validity by eliminating selection variability.

Participants were included in the quantitative strand if they were officially enrolled in the Alternative Learning System, actively participating in the Education Behind Bars English tutorial program, had attended at least eighty percent of scheduled tutorial sessions, and completed both pre-test and post-test assessments. Participants who were absent during either assessment period or who were transferred during the intervention period were excluded from comparative score analysis. While complete enumeration strengthened the validity of findings within the correctional facility, the results remain context-specific and should not be generalized beyond similar institutional settings.

For the qualitative component, thirteen participants were selected through purposive sampling. Selection was guided by voluntary participation, completion of the tutorial cycle, and representation of varied academic performance levels based on post-test results. Participants were deliberately chosen from higher-performing, moderately performing, and lower-performing score groups to capture diverse educational experiences and perceptions of the tutorial program. This approach follows the principle of maximum variation purposive sampling, which is recommended when researchers seek to identify common themes across participants with different performance profiles (Novosel, 2023). The purposive selection strengthened internal credibility by ensuring that interview data reflected a range of responses to educational intervention rather than a single performance category.

### **2.3 Data Collection**

Data collection followed parallel quantitative and qualitative procedures consistent with the convergent mixed-methods design. For the quantitative component, pre-test assessment was administered before the beginning of the tutorial intervention, while post-test assessment was conducted after six months of instruction. Both assessments took place within the designated learning area inside the correctional facility under standardized supervised conditions. Identical instructions, testing duration, and seating arrangements were maintained during both administrations to minimize environmental variation and reduce procedural bias.

The intervention consisted of a structured six-month English tutorial program implemented through the Education Behind Bars initiative of Davao del Sur State College. Instruction was conducted twice weekly, with each session lasting approximately ninety minutes. Tutorials were facilitated by faculty volunteers and education students under faculty supervision. Instructional content focused on competencies prescribed in the Alternative Learning System curriculum, particularly grammar, parts of speech, sentence construction, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and functional written expression. Printed instructional materials were used because digital learning resources were restricted within the correctional facility. Worksheets, guided drills, contextual sentence exercises, and simplified reading passages were prepared and reviewed prior to use in accordance with institutional regulations governing educational materials inside detention settings.

For the qualitative component, semi-structured interviews were conducted individually after completion of the post-test phase. Interviews were held in a designated private area approved by correctional authorities in order to maintain confidentiality and reduce peer influence on responses. Each interview lasted approximately twenty to thirty minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent. Interview questions focused on participants' perceptions of changes in English proficiency, confidence in communication, personal meaning attached to educational participation, barriers encountered during learning, and suggestions for strengthening the tutorial program. Because research in correctional settings involves potential coercion concerns, participants were clearly informed that interview participation was voluntary and would not affect their educational participation or institutional standing.

### **2.4 Research Instruments**

To measure the English competence of women Persons Deprived of Liberty, a teacher-made test was administered before and after the six-month tutorial program. The instrument focused on English grammar competencies taught during the tutorial period, particularly parts of speech and their application in sentence construction. Test items were designed to reflect instructional content delivered during the Education Behind Bars English tutorials and were aligned with competencies commonly emphasized in the Department of Education Alternative Learning System curriculum for adult learners.

The test consisted of structured items requiring participants to identify correct grammatical forms, complete sentences, and apply grammar rules in short written responses. A total score of 100 points was used to allow direct comparison between pre-test and post-test performance. Because the assessment included both recognition-based and short written response items, scores reflected not only grammar recall but also participants' ability to apply language rules in simple written contexts.

For descriptive interpretation, mean scores were examined using performance descriptions based on observed competence within the assessed grammar tasks. Scores in the lower range indicated limited consistency in grammar application, while higher scores reflected stronger ability to apply grammar rules accurately across test items. This descriptive interpretation was used to explain score patterns without imposing rigid standardized classifications, which is appropriate for teacher-made assessments used in context-specific educational interventions.

Content validity of the instrument was established through review by English instructors involved in the tutorial program to ensure alignment between test content and the grammar competencies taught during instruction. Reliability was supported through consistency of item structure across the pre-test and post-test administrations, allowing meaningful comparison of participant performance across the two assessment periods, consistent with guidance for educational test development in intervention-based studies (Taherdoost & Madanchian, 2024).

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions exploring participants' perceptions of the tutorial program, perceived changes in English learning, confidence, motivation, and recommendations for program improvement. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility in probing individual experiences while maintaining consistency in core topics across participants, which is appropriate when exploring shared educational experiences in context-sensitive settings (Galleta, 2022).

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed to describe English proficiency levels before and after participation in the tutorial program. Because the same participants were measured twice, a paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether differences between pre-test and post-test scores were statistically significant. Mishra et al. (2019) explain that the paired-samples t-test is appropriate for evaluating intervention effects when repeated measures are obtained from the same participants.

Prior to inferential testing, assumptions for paired comparison were examined by checking normality of difference scores and identifying possible extreme outliers. In addition to statistical significance testing, effect size using Cohen's *d* and

ninety-five percent confidence intervals were computed to determine the practical magnitude of observed score changes.

Qualitative interview data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, reviewed repeatedly, and coded manually to identify significant statements relevant to learning experiences, confidence development, and perceived educational value. Codes were grouped into broader thematic categories through repeated comparison across transcripts. The analysis followed the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021), beginning with familiarization, followed by initial coding, theme generation, theme refinement, and interpretive synthesis. Trustworthiness was strengthened through repeated transcript review, maintenance of coding notes, and peer checking of thematic categories to ensure consistency in interpretation.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred during final interpretation through side-by-side comparison. Statistical evidence of improved English proficiency was examined together with participants' narratives concerning confidence, motivation, and personal transformation in order to determine whether measurable academic gains were supported by lived educational experiences.

## **2.6 Ethical Considerations**

This study adhered to ethical principles governing research involving human participants, with particular attention to the vulnerabilities associated with correctional settings. Ethical approval was secured from the institutional research review body prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study before written consent was obtained. Because incarcerated participants may perceive institutional pressure, special emphasis was placed on clarifying that refusal to participate would not affect educational privileges, tutorial participation, or correctional status.

Confidentiality was protected by removing identifying information from test records, interview transcripts, and analytical documents. Interviews were conducted privately without the presence of correctional personnel in order to minimize response pressure. Participants were informed that they could discontinue the interview at any point without consequence. Audio recordings and digital transcripts were stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher and were used solely for academic purposes.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Pre-Test and Post-Test English Competence of Women PDL Who Participated in the Education Behind Bars Tutorial Program**

The quantitative phase examined changes in English competence among the 44 women Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) who participated in the Education Behind Bars tutorial program. English competence was assessed through a researcher-administered test aligned with Alternative Learning System instructional competencies covering grammar, reading comprehension, writing, and sentence construction. Scores were aggregated into a composite scale with a

maximum possible score of 100, where higher values indicated more strongly demonstrated English competence across the assessed domains.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for pre-test and post-test scores. The mean pre-test score was 72.98 (SD = 7.84), while the post-test mean increased to 84.09 (SD = 6.91), yielding a mean difference of 11.11 points. This descriptive increase indicates that participants generally obtained higher scores after completing the six-month tutorial cycle. Although the design does not permit causal attribution because no control group was used, the observed score pattern suggests that English competence improved during the program period.

**Table 1: Pre-test and post-test English competence of women persons deprived of liberty (n = 44)**

Assessment	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	SD	Mean Difference
Pre-test	72.98	58	86	7.84	-
Post-test	84.09	69	95	6.91	11.11

The distribution indicates that improvement occurred across participants rather than being driven only by high-performing individuals, as reflected by the narrowing of score variability in the post-test. The lower post-test standard deviation suggests greater clustering of scores around higher competence levels, indicating that participants with initially weaker competence also showed measurable gains.

In ALS instructional interpretation, pre-test scores reflected developing competence with frequent grammatical inaccuracies, limited sentence elaboration, and reduced comprehension precision, whereas post-test scores corresponded more closely to functional competence, particularly in sentence formation and reading response accuracy. This means that score gains were not only numerical increases but also reflected improved ability to complete structured English tasks expected within the ALS learning framework.

Comparable findings have been reported in correctional education studies where repeated guided practice improved literacy-related competence over time. Recent prison education research indicates that structured language instruction often produces strongest gains in grammar and controlled writing tasks because these domains benefit directly from repetitive correction and supervised practice (Galang et al., 2023; Waskin & Mamonong, 2021). However, prior studies also note that improvements may vary depending on attendance regularity, instructional continuity, and environmental interruptions, all of which remain relevant in custodial settings (Aseltine & Cantora, 2020; Galeshi & Bolin, 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, the observed descriptive improvement may be understood through mastery-based learning processes associated with Bandura (1991), where repeated successful task completion contributes to strengthened learner efficacy. In this study, the increase in competence scores suggests that

repeated guided exercises may have allowed participants to internalize correction patterns and progressively attempt more accurate responses. Nevertheless, score improvement should be interpreted cautiously because test familiarity and repeated exposure may also contribute to higher post-test performance.

### 3.2 Statistical Examination of Differences in English Competence Scores

To examine whether the observed difference between pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant, a paired-samples t-test was performed. Table 2 presents the inferential statistics, including standard deviation of differences, degrees of freedom, confidence interval, and effect size.

**Table 2: Inferential statistics for pre-test and post-test English competence scores**

Variable	Mean Difference	SD Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	Cohen's <i>d</i>
English Competence	11.11	7.23	10.20	43	<.001	8.91 to 13.31	1.54

The paired-samples t-test yielded  $t(43) = 10.20$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the observed difference between pre-test and post-test scores was statistically unlikely to have occurred under random variation alone within this sample. The 95% confidence interval indicates that the true mean increase in English competence in this group likely falls between 8.91 and 13.31 points.

The effect size (Cohen's  $d = 1.54$ ) indicates a large magnitude of change according to conventional interpretation, suggesting that the observed difference is not only statistically detectable but also practically substantial within the context of the participants assessed. However, because the study did not include a comparison group, the result should not be interpreted as proof that the program alone produced the improvement. Practice effects, repeated exposure to test structure, and institutional learning experiences outside formal tutorial sessions may also have contributed to score increases (Galang, 2023; Waskin & Mamonong, 2021).

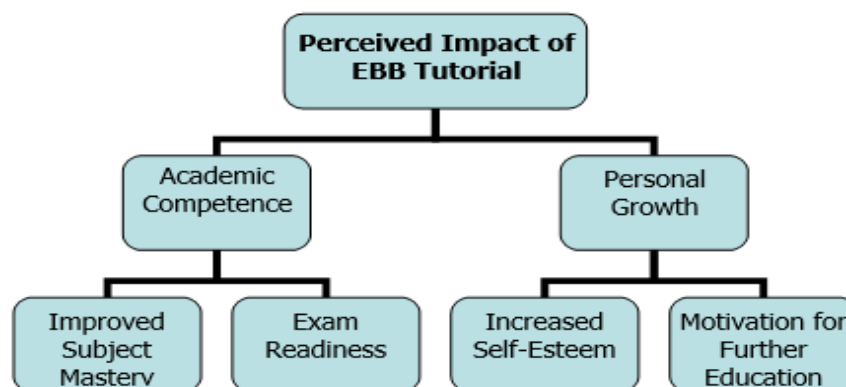
This finding nevertheless aligns with recent correctional education literature showing that sustained guided tutorials often correspond with measurable gains in English competence, particularly in controlled language tasks where learners repeatedly practice correction patterns (Casingal & Guino, 2025; Waskin & Mamonong, 2021). Similar studies report that grammar and sentence construction improve most when instruction is structured and feedback is immediate, although gains in broader writing competence may require longer intervention periods (Bacacao, 2025; Behan, 2021).

Theoretically, the magnitude of change extends beyond simple score increase because large effect sizes in instructional contexts often suggest accumulation of repeated successful learning episodes. Yet the present findings also raise an important theoretical nuance: self-efficacy may strengthen not only because learners improve but because improvement becomes visible to them through score comparison, thereby reinforcing future task engagement (Wang & Sun, 2020).

A limitation of this interpretation is that prison-based learning conditions may produce uneven instructional exposure due to attendance disruptions, security interruptions, and fatigue. Therefore, while the statistical result is strong, it remains context-bound and should not be generalized beyond similar low-resource custodial environments.

### 3.3 Perceived Impact of the EBB Tutorial Program on English Competence and Personal Growth

The qualitative findings indicated that participation in the Education Behind Bars (EBB) tutorial program significantly influenced women PDL in both English competence and personal growth. These two themes reflect the dual nature of learning in correctional education, encompassing measurable academic skills as well as psychosocial development. Figure 1 illustrates the thematic representation of participants' perceptions, showing how engagement with the tutorials contributed to improvements in English competence and personal growth. The findings align with Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2018), which emphasizes perspective shifts and critical reflection, and with Bandura's (1991) concept of self-efficacy, highlighting how repeated mastery experiences enhance confidence in academic tasks.



**Figure 2: Thematic representation of perceived impact of the EBB tutorial program on English competence and personal growth**

#### 3.3.1. English Competence

Participants consistently reported improvements in understanding English grammar, sentence construction, and reading comprehension. One participant shared, "I now know how to write correct sentences, and I can understand reading passages much better than before" (P3). Another noted, "The tutorials helped me remember grammar rules I had forgotten, and I feel more confident when answering exam questions" (P7). These statements demonstrate that structured instruction and guided practice helped learners internalize key concepts and develop practical application skills, echoing findings by Galeshi and Bolin (2022), who reported that consistent, focused instruction in correctional settings leads to measurable academic gains.

Participants also emphasized that the EBB program enhanced their readiness for Alternative Learning System (ALS) examinations. P12 observed, *“The practice exercises in the tutorials prepared me for the exam questions and helped me manage my time better.”* Similarly, P5 remarked, *“I am less anxious during tests now because I understand what to expect.”* These experiences indicate that the program reduced exam-related anxiety and increased confidence, consistent with Silver et al. (2020), who highlighted that structured correctional education strengthens both cognitive skills and learner self-efficacy. Improvements in English competence were therefore not only academic but also instrumental in supporting learners’ belief in their ability to succeed in assessments.

### 3.3.2 Personal Growth

Beyond academic competence, participants described the EBB tutorials as contributing to their personal growth. Increased self-esteem emerged as a prominent outcome. Participant P1 explained, *“I feel proud when I can write a paragraph correctly; it shows me I am capable of learning even here.”* P8 added, *“Completing the exercises makes me believe I can achieve more in school and in life.”* These reflections demonstrate that mastery experiences reinforced participants’ confidence and sense of self-worth, confirming Bandura’s (1991) notion that successful task performance strengthens self-efficacy and encourages ongoing engagement.

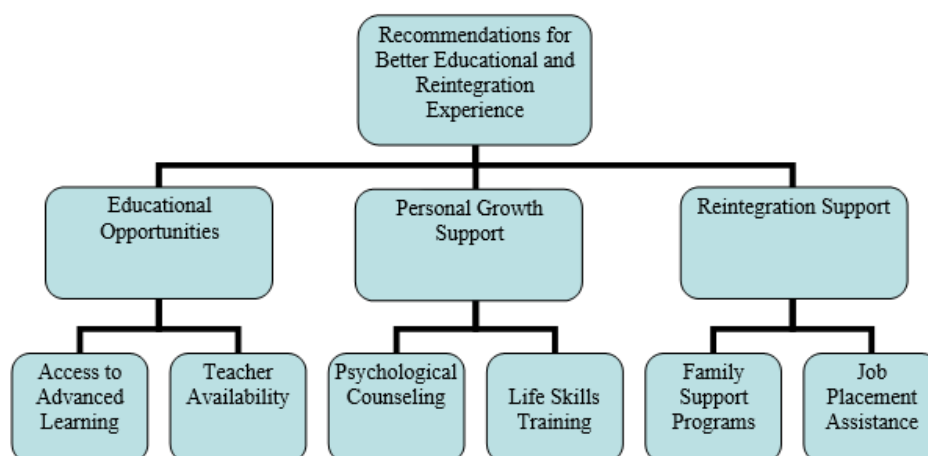
Motivation for further education was also highlighted as a significant aspect of personal growth. Participant P9 stated, *“I want to finish high school and maybe attend vocational training or enroll in college in the future; the tutorials showed me that learning is possible.”* Participant P14 echoed this sentiment, *“Being able to understand English better makes me want to study more and explore other subjects.”* These accounts illustrate that engagement in structured correctional education can instill a desire for continued learning, aligning with Addae (2020) and Silver et al. (2020), who reported that educational interventions in custodial settings can inspire lifelong learning attitudes and reinforce post-release educational aspirations.

Overall, the EBB tutorial program contributed to both cognitive and psychosocial development. Participants’ narratives indicate that improvements in English competence were accompanied by increased confidence, motivation, and positive self-perception. These findings complement the quantitative gains observed in pre-test and post-test English scores, highlighting the multidimensional impact of structured tutorials in correctional education. The results illustrate that educational interventions can simultaneously improve measurable academic outcomes and enhance personal empowerment, consistent with the theoretical frameworks of Transformative Learning and Social Cognitive Theory (Connell et al., 2023; Silver et al., 2020).

## 3.4 Participants’ Recommendations for Strengthening the EBB Tutorial Program

The qualitative findings revealed that women PDLs provided insightful and actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing the Education Behind Bars (EBB) tutorial program. These reflections demonstrate learners’ critical engagement with their educational experiences, consistent with Transformative

Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2018), which posits that reflection on experience drives perspective transformation, and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1991), which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy and agency in learning. Thematic analysis identified three primary themes: educational opportunities, personal growth support, and reintegration support, each encompassing specific sub-themes (Figure 2). These recommendations highlight participants' capacity to identify meaningful improvements while reflecting on both academic and psychosocial aspects of their learning.



**Figure 3: Thematic representation of participants' recommendations for strengthening EBB Program**

#### 3.4.1 Educational Opportunities

Participants consistently emphasized the need to expand and enhance educational opportunities within the EBB program. Two sub-themes emerged: access to advanced learning, and teacher availability. Several participants suggested that the program should include higher-level courses and supplementary resources to strengthen English competence and prepare them for ALS assessments. Participant P3 stated, "If we can have more advanced lessons and worksheets, we can understand English better and feel ready for tests." P7 added, "Sometimes we need more challenging exercises to really improve, not just basic lessons."

Teacher availability was another critical concern, as learners highlighted that consistent access to qualified instructors is essential for effective learning. P12 explained, "Having teachers available every day or every week would help us ask questions and practice more, so we can learn faster." These insights align with recent studies emphasizing that sustained instructional support and access to qualified educators significantly improve learning outcomes in correctional education (Korz, 2021). By addressing these areas, participants believed the program could better support English competence development and academic confidence.

#### 3.4.2 Personal Growth Support

The second theme focused on strengthening support for personal growth, with sub-themes including psychological counseling and life skills training. Participants highlighted that while the English tutorials enhanced knowledge and

confidence, emotional and motivational support is essential for sustained engagement. P5 noted, *"Sometimes we feel nervous or doubt ourselves, and having someone to guide or listen to us helps a lot."* Similarly, P10 shared, *"Learning English is easier when we also learn how to manage our feelings and stay motivated."* The participants emphasized the importance of structured counseling and life skills training to address stress, self-doubt, and emotional challenges, which directly impact learning outcomes. These recommendations are supported by Korzh (2021), who argues that correctional education is most effective when academic instruction is paired with psychosocial support. Implementing such measures can strengthen self-efficacy, improve emotional resilience, and sustain motivation for continued learning.

#### *3.4.3 Reintegration Support*

The third theme highlighted the necessity of structured reintegration support, with sub-themes focusing on family support programs and job placement assistance. Participants emphasized that preparation for post-incarceration life is a crucial extension of educational programs. P9 stated, *"It would help if we learned how to go back to our families and adjust to life outside, while using what we learned in class."* P13 added, *"Knowing how to find a job after release or get help from the program would make learning more meaningful."* Participants' recommendations reflect an understanding that academic gains alone are insufficient without mechanisms to translate learning into practical opportunities, consistent with Connell et al. (2023) and Korzh (2021), who highlight the importance of bridging in-prison education with real-world reintegration. Structured reintegration support can provide actionable guidance for family reconciliation, career readiness, and post-release adjustment, increasing the long-term relevance and sustainability of the program.

Overall, the recommendations offered by participants reflect critical reflection, self-efficacy, and learner agency. By identifying practical improvements in educational opportunities, personal growth support, and reintegration assistance, women PDLs provide a clear roadmap for enhancing the EBB program. These insights not only strengthen English competence and psychosocial well-being but also ensure that the program addresses both immediate academic needs and long-term reintegration goals. Implementing these recommendations, while considering institutional and logistical constraints, could significantly improve the program's effectiveness and sustainability in correctional education settings.

### **3.4 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings**

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a strong and multidimensional understanding of the impact of the Education Behind Bars (EBB) tutorial program on women Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). To present a consolidated view of the results, Table 3 presents a joint display integrating quantitative outcomes and qualitative themes, highlighting areas of convergence, expansion, and divergence across the key domains of English competence, personal growth, and program recommendations.

The quantitative results demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in English competence, indicating substantial gains in learners' academic performance. This finding is strongly supported by qualitative data, in which participants consistently reported enhanced understanding of grammar, sentence construction, reading comprehension, and examination readiness. The alignment between objective test results and participants lived experiences confirms the effectiveness of structured tutorials, guided practice, and feedback mechanisms in improving both actual and perceived competence. This convergence strengthens the validity of the findings and is consistent with recent studies emphasizing that sustained instructional support in correctional settings leads to measurable academic gains (Buck et al., 2024). Moreover, these results reflect the principle of self-efficacy, wherein the repeated experience of mastery reinforces learners' confidence in their academic abilities.

**Table 3: Integrated Results of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings**

Objective	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings	Integration (Convergence/Divergence and Interpretation)
1 & 2: English Competence	Significant increase in pre/post-test scores (M = 62.4 → 78.6, $p < .001$ , Cohen's $d = 2.25$ )	Participants reported improved grammar, sentence construction, reading comprehension, and exam readiness. Example: <i>"I finally understand how to write correct sentences and feel ready for the ALS test"</i> (P12).	Convergence: Quantitative gains strongly align with participants' reported improvements in language skills and test preparedness. This confirms that structured tutorials promote both measurable academic achievement and perceived competence; supports Bandura's concept of self-efficacy through mastery experiences.
3: Personal Growth	Not measured quantitatively	Participants described increased self-esteem, motivation, and willingness to pursue further education. Example: <i>"Learning English makes me feel I can continue studying even after release"</i> (P07).	Expansion (Qualitative Dominance): While not captured quantitatively, qualitative findings reveal significant psychosocial development. This extends the impact of the program beyond cognitive gains, supporting Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2018).
4: Program Recommendations	Not applicable	Participants recommended improved access to advanced learning, consistent teacher availability, psychosocial support, and reintegration assistance. Example: <i>"We need more time with teachers and guidance to prepare for life after release"</i> (P15).	Divergence: Quantitative results suggest strong program effectiveness in academic terms; however, qualitative data reveal unmet needs in instructional depth, emotional support, and reintegration preparation. This indicates that cognitive gains alone are insufficient for holistic empowerment; highlights gaps not captured by test scores and underscores the importance of learner-informed program development.

In addition to these convergent findings, the qualitative results expand the interpretation of program impact by revealing important psychosocial outcomes that were not captured in the quantitative measures. Participants described increased self-esteem, stronger motivation to pursue further education, and a growing sense of personal agency. These outcomes demonstrate that the EBB tutorial program facilitates not only cognitive development but also meaningful personal transformation. Such findings are consistent with recent literature highlighting the role of correctional education in fostering identity development and future orientation among incarcerated learners (Korzh, 2021; Silver et al., 2020). The absence of corresponding quantitative indicators suggests that the full impact of the program extends beyond what can be measured through standardized assessments, underscoring the value of qualitative insights in capturing the depth of learner experiences.

Despite the strong evidence of effectiveness, the integration also reveals a notable divergence between the quantitative and qualitative strands. While statistical results indicate high levels of success in improving English competence, participants identified persistent gaps in instructional depth and support systems. These include the need for more advanced learning opportunities, consistent teacher availability, psychological counseling, life skills training, and structured reintegration support. This divergence highlights that improvements in academic performance do not fully capture the complexity of learners' needs within custodial environments. It further suggests that cognitive gains alone are insufficient to ensure holistic development and post-release readiness. This finding aligns with recent studies advocating for integrated correctional education models that combine academic instruction with psychosocial and reintegration support (Addae, 2020; Quinn, 2021). Rather than contradicting the quantitative results, this divergence complements them by identifying critical dimensions of program effectiveness that remain unmeasured.

Taken together, the integrated findings lead to a central meta-inference: the EBB tutorial program is highly effective in enhancing English competence and fostering initial psychosocial development; however, its current design does not fully address the broader developmental and reintegration needs of learners. While the program successfully promotes academic achievement and strengthens self-efficacy, its long-term impact can be significantly enhanced through the inclusion of comprehensive support mechanisms. This synthesis underscores the importance of evaluating correctional education programs not only in terms of cognitive outcomes but also in relation to their capacity to support holistic learner transformation and sustainable reintegration.

Overall, the integration demonstrates that the EBB tutorial program produces meaningful academic and personal outcomes while also revealing areas for strategic improvement. Expanding the program to include advanced instructional resources, consistent access to educators, psychosocial support services, and reintegration planning would strengthen its overall effectiveness and sustainability. Such a multidimensional approach aligns with contemporary perspectives on correctional education, which emphasize the integration of

cognitive and non-cognitive development as essential for long-term rehabilitation and social reintegration (Korz, 2021; Youssef, 2025).

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study found that participation in the Education Behind Bars tutorial program was associated with improved English competence among women Persons Deprived of Liberty, as reflected in higher post-test scores and the statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test results. The quantitative findings indicate measurable gains in English competence following sustained exposure to structured tutorials, particularly in grammar, sentence construction, and reading-related tasks.

The qualitative findings further showed that these academic gains were accompanied by perceived improvements in subject mastery, examination readiness, increased self-esteem, and motivation for further education. Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence indicates that structured tutorials contributed not only to measurable academic development but also to personal growth and stronger engagement in learning. Participants also identified areas for strengthening the program, particularly through expanded educational opportunities, personal development support, and reintegration-oriented assistance. These findings suggest that structured correctional education may support both competence development and learner agency when implemented consistently within custodial learning environments.

#### **5. Implications, Limitations, Policy Recommendations, and Future Research**

The findings indicate that structured and sustained English tutorials are associated with measurable improvements in academic performance among women Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). Quantitative results showed a mean increase of 11.11 points in English competence (pre-test  $M = 72.98$ ,  $SD = 7.84$ ; post-test  $M = 84.09$ ,  $SD = 6.91$ ;  $t(43) = 10.20$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.54$ ), while qualitative data highlighted increased confidence, motivation, and engagement in learning. These outcomes suggest that carefully designed correctional education programs may support skill development and self-efficacy, although causal claims are limited due to the one-group pre/post-test design. The qualitative findings also revealed areas not captured quantitatively, including participants' need for advanced courses, consistent teacher availability, counseling, life skills training, and reintegration guidance, indicating that cognitive gains alone do not ensure holistic educational empowerment.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved a single women's facility, limiting generalizability. Pre/post measures reflected immediate learning gains without capturing long-term retention, skill application post-release, or psychosocial outcomes beyond incarceration. Factors such as practice effects, test familiarity, attendance disruptions, and institutional interruptions may have influenced results. Divergence between quantitative and qualitative findings emphasizes the importance of learner perspectives in identifying additional program needs that extend beyond measurable test scores.

Policy recommendations include formal integration of structured, theory-informed English tutorials with clear learning objectives, deployment of trained instructors skilled in adult and remedial education, and provision of learner-centered support such as feedback mechanisms and supplemental resources. Complementary services including counseling, life skills sessions, and structured guidance for post-release employment and family reintegration are recommended. Consistent allocation of funding for instructional materials, monitoring, and program improvement is essential to sustain quality and effectiveness. Future research may employ multi-site sampling, longitudinal designs, post-release follow-ups, and validated psychosocial measures to assess the durability of academic gains, personal growth, and reintegration outcomes. Evaluating variations in curriculum design, instructor expertise, and program intensity can further guide evidence-based improvements in correctional education.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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