Development of a Scoring Key to Evaluate the Creative Story Writing Levels of Secondary School Seventh Grade Students[1]

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Abstract

In this study, it was aimed to develop a rubric to evaluate the creative story writing skill levels of seventh grade secondary school students. The research was designed in quantitative research method and survey model. In the research, convenience sampling technique was used and 270 students studying at the seventh grade level of secondary school were studied. In the process of creating the item pool of the research, 11 academicians, 8 teachers and 7 graduate students were consulted. In order to create an item pool, firstly, a literature review was conducted. The prepared item pool was presented to the field experts and the draft scale was applied to the sample group. As a result of the findings obtained, it was concluded that there was a high level of consistency between the evaluations made by different raters. The validity studies of the scale were conducted and it was determined that the content and criterion validity were appropriate. In order to determine the reliability of the scale items, Cronbach's Alpha value was determined. It was determined that the Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale with all sub-dimensions was above 0.7. Cohen's Kappa statistic (κ) was used to ensure internal consistency between raters ($p<.05$). As a result of the analyses, it was determined that there was almost perfect agreement in the items in the scale. Finally, Cohen's Kappa coefficient was determined to determine whether there was agreement between the raters, and a significant level of agreement was found between the raters of the scale. In addition, as a result of the results obtained from the expert opinions, it was decided that the rubric should consist of 6 dimensions and 24 items in total, namely "imagination", "originality", "different perspective", "content", "language and expression", "form", and five levels, namely "strongly agree", "agree", "partially agree", "disagree" and "strongly disagree".

Introduction

Today, the most problematic situation in interpersonal social relations, in the daily routines of family members, and in educational activities carried out with students in educational environments is the desire of individuals to achieve success without being productive, without labouring, without spending time and effort. Technological developments and rapid change in the information world feed this desire. Individuals can now access the information they want with a single "click" and solve many problems in seconds without spending time. This situation pushes individuals towards simplicity and makes information worthless.

The fact that today's children, who are moulded with ready-made knowledge and quickly get bored with actions that require a long process, have this point of view will cause them to be defined as "unqualified". In order for children to become individuals in accordance with the requirements of the age and to carry the qualities of the changing world on them, creative and productive thinking skills of individuals should be developed and it should be ensured that they use these skills effectively in the widest area.

Changes in every field have changed the meanings attributed to skill areas. The information about 21st century skills can be determined by taking into consideration the criteria of the personnel sought by the authorities in the employer sector or the success ranking of the countries in the internationally recognised exams at the PISA level. In the 21st century, individuals are expected to be individuals who have problem-solving skills, can cooperate, can use technological resources to access information, are open to new views and ideas, have high communication skills, can take responsibility, have self-confidence and self-control, have developed themselves in socio-cultural terms, have strong leadership skills, are productive, harmonious, and can think critically and creatively (Eryılmaz & Uluyol, 2015).

Creativity skill, which is in a very important position among these skill areas, which is the source of creating new inventions, enabling to perceive and make sense of life differently, is a skill that is accepted to be innate in every individual, but this skill area needs to be developed in order to be used in an integrated manner in all areas. Therefore, the biggest task in developing the creativity skills of students who spend most of their time at school falls on education programmes in general and language education programmes in particular.

In the literature, creative thinking skill has been attributed different meanings. Field experts define creative thinking as;

✓ A skill that varies from person to person and develops depending on the process,

✓ Being open to change and going beyond the current situation,

✓ It is a lifelong process,

✓ To be able to produce different solutions to existing problems,

✓ Making new connections between events,

✓ The ability to produce new products based on experience and experiences (Runco, 1996, Rıza, 2000, Craft, 2003, Senemoğlu, 2005, Özözer, 2008, Yenilmez & Yolcu, 2007).

Language education consists of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills known as comprehension and expression skills. Writing skill is the last and most difficult skill among these skill areas. Writing activities, which have both mental and physiological dimensions, are the types of activities that students resist the most. The reason for this is the dominant understanding of writing activities. Until recently, in writing activities, students were given a concept or a maxim and expected to produce a text on this concept, the teacher evaluated the resulting product and mostly did not give feedback to the student (Akkaya, 2011). In contrast to this situation, it is known that fun and creative writing activities that appeal to multiple sensory areas of students and stimulate their feelings of excitement break the existing prejudices against writing skills (Essex, 1996).

Creative writing activities are based on the principle that students use all their sensory organs in the writing process. The more actively an individual participates in writing activities, the more dominant he/she is in every stage of the writing activity, the more he/she can look at events or facts from different points of view while writing a text, the more creative he/she is considered to be.

It can be said that creative writing studies emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first examples of these studies can be found in writing studies at Harvard University (Myers, 1993; Bishop, 1994). Creative thinking individuals are expected to produce original ideas in creative writing studies, to include unusual fictions, to use imagination effectively, and to produce different solutions to problems by establishing different intellectual connections.

In creative writing, individuals express their feelings and thoughts through various types of writing (stories, tales, poems, posters, etc.) (Kaya, 2013). According to Demir (2013), creative writing is the free transfer of all existing auditory, visual, verbal, symbolic stimuli through writing by reconstructing and creating new meaning relations between these stimuli. The act of writing alone contains creativity skills, but the creation of genres such as stories, tales and poems based on creative writing is considered as creative writing.

When it comes to creative writing products, the first thing that comes to mind is story texts. Because stories, being event-based texts and allowing for fictions that can be encountered in daily life, provide individuals with a wide range of movement. In history, stories have been the most frequently used texts in the education process (Becit & Coşkunserçe, 2023). Because story texts have a structure that educates the individual as well as providing a pleasant time and makes the individual think while entertaining. Stories are competent sources that are used both in developing listening skills, contributing

to writing skills and expanding the vocabulary of individuals. At the same time, the skill area that individuals use most actively in activating their imagination and creating creative story texts is writing skill (Güvey Aktay, 2020).

Creative writing studies are studies with a predominant intellectual aspect. Because creativity skill first develops in the mind and then turns into action. For this reason, there was a need for criteria regarding the characteristics of a creative writing to be accepted as creative. When the literature was analysed, no rubric for evaluating creative writing studies was found. In order to contribute to researchers working on this field, a rubric was developed to determine the level of creative story writing skills of seventh grade secondary school students.

Method

Research Model

In this study, the survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was preferred. The survey model is a research model that aims to explain an existing situation as it is and to reveal the current situation within its own conditions (Karasar, 2009).

Working Group

In this study, convenience sampling technique was preferred. The study group of the research consists of 270 students (139 female, 131 male) studying at the seventh grade level of secondary school.

Data Collection Process and Development of Data Collection Tools

In the study, an evaluation scale consisting of 6 dimensions, 24 items and 5 levels was developed in order to evaluate creative story writing skills by using the opinions of field experts. The qualifications of the experts whose opinions were consulted during the scale development phase are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Qualifications of the Experts Consulted
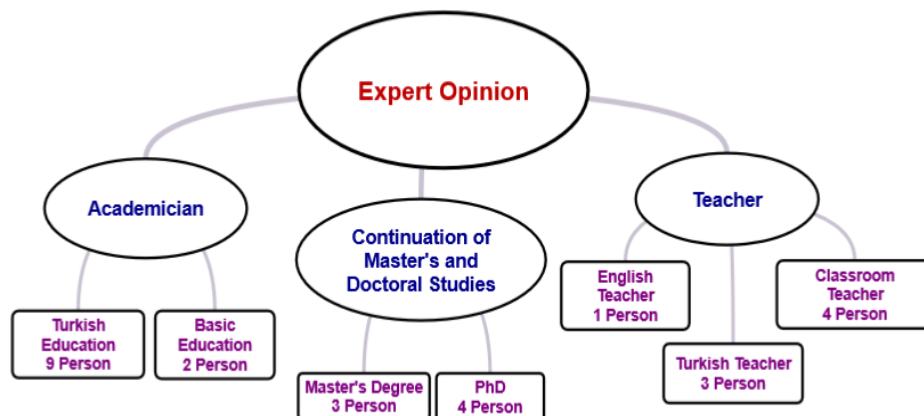
While developing the rubric developed in line with the opinions received from the experts, the following steps in the literature were followed (Karakoç, Dönmez; 2014):

- ✓ Needs Analysis,

- ✓ Literature Review,

- ✓ Creating a Pool of Substances,

- ✓ Submission of the Article Pool to Expert Opinion,

- ✓ Application of the Scale Shaped by Expert Opinion to the Draft Sample Group,

- ✓ Validity and Reliability Analyses and Finalisation of the Scale.

Needs Analysis

Although it is known that creativity skill is basically an innate skill, it is a fact accepted by experts that it is a developable skill area. Every individual is born with a certain level of creativity skills. The conditions, the quality of the education received and the interpersonal relations in the social environment of the person can improve this creativity skill or cause a decrease in this skill. In today's conditions, the changes in the field of technology, which have a dizzying speed, have also affected the education sector. Children raised with this education seek the same speed in all fields. For this reason, they tend to stay away from actions where the ability to think is utilised for a long time. However, the basis of the existential process of the individual is based on productivity skills. Individuals maintain their place on the stage of existence to the extent that they can produce new products, knowledge, skills or ideas.

The researcher has completed his master's degree in the field of Turkish education and continues his doctoral education in the same field. She is currently actively working as a Turkish teacher and is in her seventh year in her profession. As an extension of the national exams being implemented in the country, she has observed that students tend to solve multiple-choice questions, and she has found that they are very reluctant in writing studies. Especially in their answers to the questions based on generating new and original ideas, she found that they either did not express any opinions or preferred expressions that were repetitive of each other's opinions. This situation reduces the quality of the results obtained from international exams.

Writing skill is the most effective way of expressing thoughts and making them permanent. Creative writing skill, which is based on putting forward and concretising an original and new thought, should be one of the most basic activities of language education and Turkish language teaching. For this purpose, the researcher has searched for methods on how children can acquire creative thinking and creative writing skills. The researcher has started an intellectual process about which dimensions

creative writing skills should have and which characteristics of a writing can be accepted as creative writing.

Literature Review

A literature review on creative writing was conducted by the researcher. As a result of the review, national and international publications were analysed. As a result of this review:

✓   National and international articles on creativity skills,

✓   At national level; 1926, 1930, 1936, 1936, 1948, 1968, 1981, 2015 and 2018 teaching programmes,

✓   Papers published at national level, including creativity skills,

✓   Books on creativity skills published at national and international level,

✓   Master's and doctoral theses on creativity and creative writing were analysed.

Creating an Article Pool

As a result of the literature review, item pools related to the subject, creativity and creative writing skills were created. The statements in the item pool were classified by two researchers who are experts in their fields as 8 dimensions and 21 items in 5-point Likert type. Care was taken to ensure that the dimensions and items were simple and comprehensible and that a statement contained a single judgement.

Submission of the Article Pool to Expert Opinion

After the preparation of the draft scale, the scale was submitted to expert opinion. The experts commented on the necessity of the items, whether they clearly explain what is intended to be explained, and the originality of the expressions. As a result of the opinions received from the experts, some of the items were removed, some items were merged, new items were added and 6 dimensions, 30 items, 5-point Likert type were prepared to be applied to the draft sample group. Thus, the content and face validity of the scale was ensured with the expert opinions.

There are 6 dimensions in the scale: imagination (18), originality (22), different perspective (18), content (21), language and expression (13) and form (8). The maximum score that the student can get from these dimensions is 100 points and the minimum score is 20 points. Even a student who gets the lowest score from the items in all dimensions does not get 0 points.

In determining the levels in the scoring key, 2 academicians who are experts in the field of measurement were consulted and the levels were determined as strongly agree (5), agree (4), partially agree (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1).

Application of the Scale Shaped by Expert Opinion to the Draft Sample Group

In line with the expert opinion, an application was made to determine the validity and reliability level of the evaluation scale, which was finalised to be applied to the draft sample group.

The students in the study group were asked to write a free themed story text. While creating the story texts, no subject limitation was imposed on the students, and they were asked to complete the story texts under the control of the teacher during 2 lesson hours (40+40 minutes). The story texts obtained from the students were scored with the scoring key developed by the researcher.

Validity and Reliability Analyses and Finalisation of the Scale

The steps followed to ensure the validity and reliability of the scale are as follows:

Validation Process:

Content Validity

Determining whether the quality to be measured by the evaluation scale is measured exactly or not is very important in terms of content validity. The evaluation scale is considered qualified to the extent that it serves the purpose. In particular, field experts who have studies on creative writing, academicians who have a career in the field of Turkish and classroom education, researchers who continue their master's and doctoral studies in the field of Turkish and classroom education, Turkish and classroom teachers have presented opinions that the scale serves the purpose. In this way, the content validity of the scale was found to be high.

Criterion Validity (Conformity and Prediction)

The views on the qualities that a creative writer should have in previous studies on creative writing (Torrance, 1962; Kale, 1994; Karakuş, 2001; Brookes & Marshall, 2004; Temizkan, 2010; Demir, 2011; Kırmızı, 2011; Orhon, 2014; Susar Kırmızı, 2015; Saluk & Pilav, 2018) support the dimensions and items in the scale. It was determined that the items in the scale have high convergent validity due to the similarity with previous studies.

The items in the scale were applied to the draft sample group and the story texts obtained from the students were scored by different raters. The fact that the scores given by the raters to the activity sheets were similar reveals that the scale can accurately measure the quality to be measured in the future. Thus, the predictive validity of the scale was found to be high.

The Reliability Process:

- Care was taken to ensure that the items included in the draft scale and submitted to expert opinion were clear and understandable. In line with the opinions received from the experts, the items that were not clear enough were corrected, the items that were found to measure more than one skill

were divided into two separate items, and the reliability level of the scale was increased by removing the items that were not thought to fully measure the skill to be measured.

- The fact that the items in the scale were formed in line with the expert opinion at all levels from basic education level to graduate education level increased the reliability of the scale.

- The fact that the evaluation level of the items in the scale was determined as 5 levels increased the sensitivity of the scale, thus contributing to the reliability of the scale.

- In order for the statistical procedures to be performed on the measurement tool to be carried out with parametric measurements, the data obtained from both raters must show a normal distribution. The kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the researcher scores were determined based on the normality test results on SPSS. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), data with skewness and kurtosis values between +1.5 and -1.5, and according to George and Mallery (2010), data with skewness and kurtosis values between +2.0 and -2.0 show normal distribution. In the study, it was determined that the data obtained from both researchers (skewness= -,059 kurtosis= -1,282) showed normal distribution.

- In order to determine the reliability of the scale items, Cronbach's Alpha value was determined. According to Büyüköztürk (2011), if the Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale items is above 0.7, the scale is considered reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale with all its sub-dimensions (,968) imagination (,953), originality (,884), different point of view (,863), content (,934), language and expression (,911), form (,727) was found to be above 0.7. Thus, it was determined that the scale was reliable.

- Cohen's Kappa statistic (κ) was used to ensure internal consistency between raters (p<.05). The results of this statistic are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Inter-rater Agreement

Categories	Kappa Statistic Value (κ)	P
Stimulating the imagination	,73	,000
Fantastic elements	,73	,000
Example out of daily life	,79	,000
World of emotion and thought	,78	,000
The element of curiosity	,77	,000
Element of humour	,70	,000
Original ideas	,81	,000
Divergent thinking	,70	,000
Alternative solutions	,70	,000
Consistent writing	,83	,000
Impressive connections	,78	,000
The sequence-node-solution plan	,84	,000
Effective end	,87	,000
Original characters	,82	,000
Effective spaces	,79	,000
Fluent narration	,76	,000
Clear and understandable expression	,88	,000
Simple and sincere style	,78	,000

Images	,86	,000
Symbols	,81	,000
Effective use of language	,81	,000
Page layout	,77	,000
Punctuation	,82	,000
Spelling	,81	,000

According to Landis and Koch (1977), it is considered that there is a significant level of agreement between raters with kapa values of .70 and above. As a result of the analyses, it was found that there was a significant level of agreement in the items of stimulating the imagination, fantastic elements, examples out of daily life, world of emotion and thought, element of curiosity, element of humour, divergent thinking, alternative solutions, impressive connections, effective places, fluent expression, simple and sincere style, page layout; almost perfect harmony in the items of original ideas, coherent writing, series-node-solution plan, effective ending, original characters, clear and comprehensible expression, images, symbols, effective use of language, punctuation and spelling.

As a result of all these statistical data and expert opinions, it can be said that the scale prepared is a valid and reliable scale.

Analysing the Data

In order to determine the validity and reliability of the scale items determined as a result of expert opinion, literature data and needs analysis, story texts were written by seventh grade secondary school students and these story texts were scored by different raters through the scale. In order to perform statistical operations on the scores, kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the data were determined. When it was determined that the data were normally distributed, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated to determine whether the scale items were consistent within themselves and whether they measured the feature to be measured.

Finally, Cohen's Kappa coefficient was determined to determine whether there was agreement between the raters, and a significant level of agreement was found between the scale raters.

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

In this study, an evaluation scale was developed to measure the creative story writing skills of seventh grade secondary school students. Many variables have an effect on the data obtained in education, especially in the field of social sciences. Naturally, this situation makes it difficult to measure the studies from an objective point of view. However, it should not be forgotten that in order to bring about a behavioural change in education, to carry the existing competence to a higher level, and to eliminate the existing missing learning, a measurement-evaluation process is mandatory.

Measurement in education is the process of determining the current situation through various scales. In other words, measurement is the variables obtained as a result of observation (Güler, 2011). Evaluation is the process of reaching a conclusion as a result of the measurement. Without measurement

and evaluation steps, educational activity turns into a vicious circle. Because the practices in education and the measurement tools developed should be subjected to measurement and evaluation so that incomplete or incorrect learning can be prevented (Özçelik, 2010). At the same time, evaluation is the element that shows continuity and improves educational activities (Yılmaz, 2009). For this reason, measurement and evaluation process is vital in educational activities.

Writing is the most recently developed and the most difficult skill area to acquire. For this reason, it is an area where students have many prejudices. It is interpreted as a very complicated skill area by students and adults for reasons such as requiring coordination of body and mind, employing creativity skills in producing original products, and prioritising both speed and quality. This situation makes the studies on writing skills even more valuable.

When the literature is examined, scale development studies on how to evaluate a creative writing (Cheung, Tse, & Tsang, 2001), evaluation factor on writing skill and creative writing skill (Coleman, 1981; Vaezi & Rezaei; 2019) or evaluation of another factor (Taylor & Hoedt, 1966; Beydermir, 2010; Maden & Durukan, 2010; Temizkan, 2011; Kırmızı & Beydemir, 2012; Demir, 2013; Sever, 2013 Kasap, 2019; Akbaba, 2020), and the basic qualities of creativity and creative writing skills (Bishop & Starkey, 2006).

In the measurement tool developed within the scope of the research, there are six dimensions in total: "imagination", "originality", "different perspective", "content", "language and expression" and "form". Thirty items were included depending on these dimensions. The scale was finalised as a total of twenty-four items by removing the items that were not functional from the scale. While determining these dimensions and sub-items that are thought to be present in a creative story, previous creative writing scale studies, master's and doctoral theses written in this field, book studies on creative writing, expert academics and teachers' opinions actively working in the field were taken into consideration. As a result of all these justifications, the reasons for the inclusion of these dimensions will be detailed.

In order to talk about a creative story, it is undoubtedly necessary to produce a product in which imagination is used effectively. In the literature, there are numerous examples of writing that address an existing situation (Simpson, 1922; Rugg, 1963; Çankaya, Yeşilyurt, Yörük, Şanlı, 2012; Küçükali & Akbaş, 2017; Liao & Gendler, 2019; Ünveren, 2020). However, producing a new and unprecedented product is an extension of being able to use imagination actively. The boundaries of the world of imagination are quite wide. Blending the elements of this unlimited world in a story text will make that text distinctive from other genres.

The concept of "originality" is defined in the dictionary as "originality, which is distinguished from similar ones in terms of its qualities, has its own unique qualities, original" (Ayverdi & Topaloğlu, 2007:835). In later studies in different fields, it was used with expressions such as innovation, creativity and similarity (Demirtaş, Gedik, Gedik, & Avdan, 2023). In today's world where every product is

obtained with a single button and even this single button brings along information theft, producing products free from copies is characterised by originality skill. Because the concept of originality basically means "not being found in others, being original". Originality also requires the individual to bear the consequences of his/her own actions. An individual is authentic to the extent that he/she can bear the consequences of his/her actions (Sheldon et al., 1997). For this reason, when talking about a creative story, the concept of originality should be mentioned immediately afterwards. Otherwise, all of the products put forward will be considered as copies of one another.

Interpreting the world differently, handling events from a different perspective is the basis of all inventions. Individuals with a different perspective start life one step earlier. Undoubtedly, this also applies to a creative story. Individuals who have some ability in writing can produce quality story products. However, in order to talk about a creative story, a different perspective is needed.

The recorded form of communication or the subject of all kinds of written and verbal elements can be described as "content" (Gül & Nizam, 2021). In creative story texts, content is as important as thought structure. Because the content element is the main criterion that reveals whether a text is a story or not. In a creative story, unusual content elements and the way these elements are interpreted are very important. The author who creates a creative story conveys his/her observations, thoughts and emotional movements through the filter of his/her original fictional world. For this reason, content is an indispensable element in a creative story as in every story.

The writer who wants to create a creative story should use the language effectively in order to convey what he wants to tell to the reader. Otherwise, what he/she designs in his/her thought world will remain an empty endeavour. In the dictionary, style means "the way followed, the style adopted". In language and literature, style is the way of expressing one's own feelings, thoughts and excitement, the way of using language. In this respect, the field of interest of stylistics is to examine the formal-individual characteristics of the author in the use of grammar and syntax rules while using language material (Durmuş, 2012). Literary texts reflect the literary features of the language in which they are written (Karabulut, 2012). Although it does not play as effective a role in a creative story as other dimensions and sub-items, the ability to use language is one of the most basic qualities that a creative story writer should carry.

According to some researchers, the element of "form" is one of the main obstacles to creativity. There are two main views on this issue. Researchers who adopt the first view argue that formal elements restrict the author in creative products, while researchers who adopt the second view argue that formal elements should not be neglected even if a creative product is produced. As a matter of fact, Attila İlhan refused to use punctuation marks in his poems on the grounds that they overshadowed his creativity, and he wrote and published his poems without using punctuation marks. Although it cannot be the basic principle in creative story writing skills, it is considered important to write the story legibly and in

accordance with the rules of the language in order to arouse desire in the reader. For this reason, the element of "form" is accepted as one of the qualities of the creative story.

The definitions of creativity, which is an abstract concept, started to be given historically with Guilford's studies (Guilford, 1956). According to Torrance, creativity consists of processes such as the capacity to find gaps in thoughts or processes, to produce various solutions to problems, to develop new ideas and to make new connections between ideas (Torrance, 1966). Creativity skill, whose different aspect is discovered with each new study, is a skill area that needs to be carefully emphasised.

Academics, teachers, doctorate and master's degree researchers, who are experts in their fields, expressed their opinions on the study. As a result of these opinions, they stated that the scale items serve the purpose and that the items are presented in a clear and understandable manner. They also stated that each item measures a single characteristic.

When the previous studies on creative writing were analysed, it was revealed that the items of the scale were similar to the qualities in these studies. Likewise, the fact that two raters gave similar scores to the group to which the scale was applied reveals that the scale is valid.

Policy Implications

In the field of social sciences, especially in creative writing studies where the world of thought is brought to the forefront, evaluation criteria are a big problem. Because there is no consensus on which aspect of the products put forward by individuals will be considered creative or qualified. With this study, it is aimed to provide unity in evaluating the creative story texts created by the students. Similarly, criteria to be used in the evaluation of other text types can be determined by considering the criteria in this study.

This study was limited to the seventh grade level. Similar criterion development studies can be conducted at other grade levels in order to evaluate the texts created by students. Creative story writing skill has an important place especially in the field of language education. For this reason, similar scale development studies should be carried out in other fields.

The study was designed by considering all details in order to guide other researchers in the field of scale development. This study is expected to guide researchers in scale development studies to be conducted in other fields.

Conflict of Interest

Disclosure statement: The authors whose names are listed below declared the following details of affiliation or involvement in an organization or entity with a financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles. In case of any plagiarism, the authors take responsibility for the necessary sanctions.

Credit Author Statement

Author 1: Conceptualization and Methodology, Validation, Supervision . *Author 2*: Writing-Original draft preparation, Visualization, Investigation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

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