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Strategic ambidexterity and its role in achieving contemporary initiatives: an exploratory study of opinions of a sample of managers of travel and tourism companies in holy governorate of Kerbala-Iraq

Ahmed Hussein Ahmed[1], Ahmed Abdullah Amanah[1], Suadad Ali Abed Alabbas[1]
Business Management Department, Faculty of Administration & Economics, University of Kerbala

ABSTRACT

The research aim to explore influential role of strategic ambidexterity through its two contradictory dimensions (exploration and exploitation) as two strategies that contemporary organizations can adopt in light of achieving contemporary initiatives required by current environment, especially tourism sector in Iraq after the paralysis it suffered as a result of spread of Corona virus and impact of repercussions of this pandemic on various Both industrial and service sectors, as researchers targeted tourism companies in Karbala governorate, which are characterized by attracting tourists to various visitors for religious tourism and in return, it is a port for their roaming to other cities and countries through tourism companies that need to keep pace with surrounding environment of developments and changes based on adoption of the two strategies of ambidexterity in Facing those changes and responding to them, as well as their readiness for rapid developments in this sector, as the questionnaire was adopted as a main tool for collecting data on this study by presenting it to the executive directors of those companies with (40) respondents, and after conducting necessary statistical tests using SPSS program, it was found that there are a strong positive and significant correlation between study variables, as well as a significant effect For strategic ambidexterity across its two dimensions in achieving and promoting contemporary initiatives at corporate level, the study community

Keywords: Strategic Ambidexterity, Contemporary Initiatives, Exploration Strategy, Exploitation Strategy, Diversity Management.

Corresponding Author:

Ahmed Abdullah Amanah
Business Management Department, Faculty of Administration & Economics, University of Kerbala, Iraq
E-mail: ahmed.a@uokerbala.edu.iq

1. Introduction

Figure 1 depicts a hypothetical research model illustrating the dimensions of the investigated topic, which consists of two variables: the independent variable (Strategic Ambidexterity) consisting of: exploration strategy, exploitation strategy. The dependent variable is Contemporary Initiatives (diversity, foreign labor, employment contracts, outsourcing).

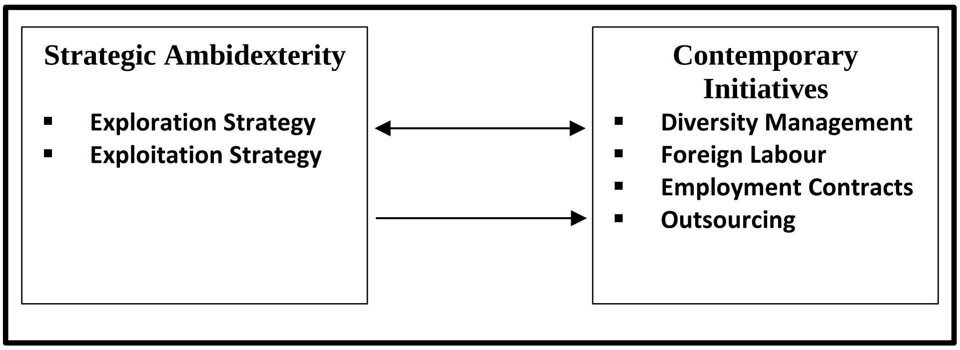

Figure 1. Research model

1.1. Research hypothesis

a) There is a positive and significant correlation between adoption of Strategic Ambidexterity and achievement of Contemporary Initiatives, and two sub-hypotheses have emerged from it:
- There is a positive and significant correlation between adoption of exploration strategy and achievement of contemporary initiatives.
- There is a positive and significant correlation between adoption of exploitation strategy and achievement of contemporary initiatives.

b) There is a positive and significant effected relationship for adopting Strategic Ambidexterity in achieving Contemporary Initiatives, and two sub-hypotheses have emerged from it:
- There is a positive and significant effected relationship to adopting exploration strategy in achieving contemporary initiatives.
- There is a positive and significant effected relationship to adopting exploitation strategy in achieving contemporary initiatives.

2. Literature review

2.1. Strategic ambidexterity

The idea of dexterity was initially established in preliminary research by Duncan (1976), and its function is based on two learning strategies: exploration and exploitation. Exploration can be defined as “things that take on terms such as research, volatility, risk, experiment, competition, flexibility, discovery, and innovation” [1, 2]. This suggests that exploration is the process of looking for new possibilities and information from the outside world [3]. Because of its emphasis on bringing about profound change through improving the organization's capacity to respond rapidly to shifting market conditions [4, 5]. March [1] explained that exploitation includes things like “improvement, selection, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, achievement.” Exploitation represents the recruitment and refinement of the internal knowledge of the organization [3]. As a result, according to [4], businesses that aim for a high level of exploitation and exploration should eventually outperform rivals that overemphasis one strategy. According to the [1] perspective of organizational learning, he finds the balance between exploration and exploitation difficult due to some modern factors such as velocity, environmental changes, innovation as well as ambiguity in choice, organizational memory and overlap of systems. While he and Wong (2004:493) see that Strategic Ambidexterity is a means to achieve both exploitation and exploration at the same time. Gibson and Birkinshaw [6] have pointed out that Strategic Ambidexterity is the mutual effect of a system's ability to coordinate and adaptability that can be simultaneously deployed across the entire business unit depending on the organization's behavioral ability to successfully accomplish this task. As for (Fu et al, 2016: 1), he explained the concept of strategic dexterity as the efficiency of the organization through its ability to explore and exploit its internal and external resources simultaneously to meet daily business needs, as well as to adapt to future market changes. It includes long-term success by improving and expanding existing processes and technologies [7, 8]. Because exploration and exploitation involve different educational and organizational models that require different and inconsistent organizational structures and processes, this is what makes their implementation difficult [9].

The two Dimensions of Ambidexterity - Exploratory versus Exploitative Activities: The management of Ambidexterity aims to strike the right balance between exploration and exploitation [6]. Tushman and O'Reilly [10] explained that by achieving this balance, exploitative and exploratory tasks are organized into different innovation streams. With a review of the researchers’ writings, we noticed that there was no agreement on the dimensions of Strategic Ambidexterity [11], but most agreed on two dimensions of Strategic Ambidexterity, namely

Exploration Strategy: Tushman et al. [12] indicated that exploration tends to be more difficult for organizations that focus on innovation and tacit knowledge. Exploration involves the investment of organisational resources to gain new information in the form of skills, processes, and capacities. This procedure is marked by experience, danger, and creativity. Because companies always need to learn about new processes, products, and technologies to be competitive, it is crucial to link exploration skills to organisational success [13] where this can be done through exploration activities, which include the capabilities of organizations in the field of research and development, alliance building and patenting. It is clear that the exploratory strategy has the focus of the organization on "entering new areas of the product market" [14].

Exploitation strategy: According to [3], the term "exploitation" refers to the use and improvement of current knowledge. Due to the scarcity of the organizations' resources and the existence of administrative constraints, exploitation and exploration were considered as alternatives. In order to increase economic growth based on knowledge and learning, and to emphasize cost reduction by benefiting from the exploitation of economies of scale. It includes the effects of expanding the ways of transferring and retaining knowledge as necessary to solve problems [15]. The organization focuses on improving the efficiency of its products and services and presenting them in a way that satisfies its current customers and generates additional revenue to increase purchases [4]. Exploration and exploitation are a continuum that goes from exploration to exploitation and vice versa according to the demands of organisations. Exploration happens when a company initially explores with a new technology, and when it does so often, it builds exploitative measurements and gains a deeper understanding of that information. Exploration evolves into exploitation and adaptation of the surroundings to achieve optimal performance[12]. Organizations employ exploration to gather new information and produce goods for consumers and developing markets, according to [16]. Organizations utilise exploitation to capitalise on existing expertise and extend their present goods in their existing markets.

2.2. Contemporary initiatives

We will review the ideas that have been reached by authors and researchers about contemporary initiatives, as follows:

Diversity Management: The Society for Human Resource Management (2014) defined diversity as “the collective mixture of differences and similarities and it includes individual and organizational characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, and behaviors” [17].As individuals differ among themselves according to the different ways they perform, for example, gender, race, age, gender, religion, disability, and social status, and based on the existing idea that all differences between groups and individuals within the organization must be accepted and recognized, and represent a means for equal employment opportunities [18].Organizations recognise that people differ, and that these variations, if handled appropriately, will allow them to execute their jobs more efficiently and effectively. It does not concentrate exclusively on concerns of discrimination, but rather on recognising individual distinctions. Diversity management is a concept that captures the benefits that can be gained from differences. It differs from equal opportunity, which works to enact anti-discrimination legislation, and assumes the necessity to include all individuals in the organization and is often based on affirmative action [19]. Dessler argues that managing diversity maximizes the potential benefits of diversity and reduces potential barriers. However, mandatory measures can ensure a cohesive and prosperous society. Diversity management also depends on taking steps that encourage employees to work productively together [20]. According to Madera et al, organizations' investments in diversity management programs have increased over the past two decade [21].

Foreign labour: Most of the employees are 'local' and the good reason is that it is difficult to bring in workers from abroad, so the use of locals may be necessary. According to the laws of some countries such as the United States, employers must hire American workers before foreign workers [22], but organizations may be forced to hire foreign workers because the less attractive sectors caused a high demand for workers who could not be satisfied from Before the local workforce, and thus foreign labor is relied upon. According to (Ismail et al, 2017: 176), the justification for using labour is to meet the labour deficit in the local labour market, particularly in industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and services. It might be a temporary solution. It should be mentioned that the salaries given to foreign employees are much lower than those paid to natives. Foreign labour adds favourably to the rise in demand, notwithstanding the comparatively low salaries. High-skilled foreign employees may contribute considerably to production, but low-skilled foreign workers may struggle with adaptation and need additional assistance [23]. Observations indicate that foreign employees in various nations experience issues and challenges with licence registration, compensation calculation, and the construction of suitable working conditions by employers. In addition to hard work hours and social protection in the industrial industry. Under these conditions, establishing contacts between nations and building the legal groundwork for such interactions becomes more crucial. According to [24], the cost outside is crucial for "recruiting local employees." According to estimates by Agilent Technologies, it costs almost three times the expat's yearly wage to maintain them overseas for one year. However, when Agilent engaged an outside business to manage its expatriate programme, it discovered that the expenditures were far greater. Then Agilent reduced the number of expatriates it sent abroad. However, the cost may also work in reverse. Difficulties in attracting management trainees to work in relatively low-paying hospitality jobs in the United States are causing some hotel chains to hire people from abroad to fill vacancies. Finally, the host country government and citizens may view multinational corporations as valid if they are using local management talents [20].

Employment Contracts: In 2008, the growing adoption of dangerous employment contracts was caused by economic crisis and market instability. Because of this economic downturn, many companies were struggling to recover from it and this led to an increase in the use of precarious employment contracts such as overtime, informal work, hourly contract work, agency work, part-time work, etc. In [25], among the most common forms of employment is the use of fixed-term (temporary) employment contracts that differ from standard type. This sort of work has become a prominent element of the labour market in several European Union member states (EU). In 2014, more than 15% of the working population in Europe had temporary contracts. However, the proportion might be far greater (Maricaa,2018:154). According to Stone [26], the primary purpose of these contracts is to give flexibility for the employer to recruit employees as required, as well as flexibility for workers, such as students and women with families, who want a flexible employment to participate in other activities. As with , in addition to the added flexibility this particular sort of work relationship offers, the individual (temporary) employment contract is crucial to the method that employer corporations decide to apply in order to save costs. Employers choose this option because it is less expensive and more enticing than standard employment contracts due to more flexible laws and reduced expenses associated with ending fixed-term contracts. (Maricaa,2018:155) Employers may violate labor laws in their countries by not issuing written contracts for social tax evasion even though it is officially required [27]. To ensure the contractor's rights, the individual employment contract must include clauses such as the duration, place of work, type of work, job duties, the criteria for evaluating the employee's professional activity applicable to the employer, working conditions, working hours, annual leave, wages, and conditions for granting the notice period [28].

Outsourcing: Outsourcing [29] is a critical component of contemporary company and one of the most common methods of optimising resources in a variety of areas. Henry Ford, one of the founding fathers of outsourcing, was the first to realise that no business could be self-sufficient. Consequently, it is simple to delegate specific duties to firms that specialise in certain sorts of operations. Today, it is a strategic option that few businesses can ignore. Currently, the predominant trend in outsourcing is toward smaller, more strategic transactions - those that represent firms' strategy for achieving their goals and objectives. Customers create long-term savings by concentrating on process efficiency indicators as a whole. It provides service providers with the industry insights, geographic diversity, technical innovations, and high-value skills required to enter new markets and capitalise on opportunities. It is of great interest to management to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to outsourcing's success [30]. As corporations aim to decrease costs and specialise in a few of key areas, outsourcing has become a strategic need. In the past, outsourcing was a means for major organisations to accomplish their objectives. Today, small and medium-sized organizations also outsource various company functions to decrease expenses, generate income, and improve the satisfaction of owners and managers via the achievement of predetermined goals. When the expenses of internal operations are more than the price of purchasing items and services from the market, organisations elect to outsource. When outsourcing performs essentially the same activities better, faster, and at a lower cost, we refer to traditional outsourcing. When organisations stop focusing solely on transferring additional activities and consider the possibility of increasing revenue, we refer to outsourcing in the area of strategies. Long-term collaboration is regarded to be one of the keys to effective outsourcing in this case, since it is closely tied to the primary business of the implementing firm [31]. Since outsourcing is reliant on contracts, we should consult contractual exchange theories, notably transaction cost economics, to construct a set of qualities that may be applicable to outsourcing. According to transaction cost economics, asset specificity and unpredictability affect management strategies. Consequently, we identify three major characteristics of an outsourcing project: job complexity, supplier uncertainty, and performance ambiguity. Task complexity involves ideas of asset specificity, supplier uncertainty relates to perceptions of inadequate knowledge about suppliers' motives and capabilities, and performance ambiguity stems from the absence of measurable criteria for measuring task results [32].

3. Method

To fulfil the requirements of the current research and to explain the nature of the relationship between Strategic Ambidexterity and Contemporary Initiatives in the companies under study, (12) paragraphs were developed to measure the independent variable Strategic Ambidexterity, utilising the theoretical framework Wang & Hackett, and another (2016) scale obtained a reliability through Cronbach's alpha of ($\alpha = 0.77$). And (32) paragraphs, were developed to measure Contemporary Initiatives using the theoretical framework (Al-Quraishi) the scale obtained a reliability through Cronbach's alpha of ($\alpha = 0.83$), which is acceptable in administrative sciences. The scores are larger than 0.7, suggesting that the internal consistency of this study's research instrument is strong. Using the Five Point-Likert gradient, this was accomplished.

3.1. Community and sample research

The research was applied to a group of executives of travel and tourism companies in the holy governorate of Karbala, Iraq, and these companies were selected according to the criterion of obtaining an agency approved by airlines and owning supporting facilities (hotels or restaurants), which is a main focus in the current research topic, and the number of companies reached Licensed and operating in the governorate, according to its latest statistics, 96 companies, and they represent the current research community. Consequently, the acceptable sample size for this community is (43), and following the distribution procedure, (40) questionnaires eligible for statistical analysis were collected at a rate of 93%. Table (1) shows the demographic characteristics of the target sample members, as it shows that the number of respondents in terms of gender was (29) males and (11) female, and this indicates the diversity and homogeneity of the research sample. In terms of educational qualifications, the number of respondents who obtained Postgraduate (4), (13) obtained a Higher Diploma, (18) obtained a bachelor's degree, and (5) obtained a diploma, and this indicates the extent to which the sample was able to realize and understand Questionnaire questions and answer them correctly and not randomly. In terms of years of work in the tourism sector, the number of respondents whose period ranges from (1-3) (8) respondents, (4-6) (7) respondents, (7-9) (10) respondents, and (10-12) (11) respondents, and (13-15) (4) respondents, and this indicates the level of accumulated experiences of the sample, which enables them to truly benefit from the research outputs and add them to the sustainability of their tourism work in the governorate, enabling them to gain more customers than the rest of the emerging competing companies. secondary school

Table 1. Demographic Information of Respondents

Characteristics	**Frequencies**	**Percentage**
Gender		
Male	**29**	**72.5%**
Female	**11**	**27.5%**
Age		
< 25	**6**	**15 %**
25-34	**8**	**20%**
35-44	**15**	**37.5%**
45-54	**11**	**27.5%**
Education		
Board	**5**	**12.5%**
Bachelor's	**18**	**45%**
Higher Diploma	**13**	**32.5 %**
Postgraduate	**4**	**10 %**
Years of Work		
(1-3)	**8**	**20%**
(4-6)	**7**	**17.5%**
(7-9)	**10**	**25%**
(10-12)	**11**	**27.5%**
(13-15)	**4**	**10%**

4. Result and discussion

4.1. Statistical description

The findings of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are shown in Table (2). The mean and standard deviation values for Exploration Strategy, Exploitation Strategy, Strategic Ambidexterity, and Contemporary Initiatives are M= 4.00, SD= 1.125, M= 3.86, SD= 1.221, M= 3.93, SD= 1.173, and M= 4.00, SD= 1.095, respectively. This indicates the homogeneity of the answers and the awareness of the sample members of these variables and the extent to which their dimensions can be adopted at the level of the companies of the study community.

4.2. Testing hypothesis of correlation and discussing the results

In this section, we will attempt to quantify the degree to which the independent variable (Strategic Ambidexterity) and its dimensions are correlated with the dependent variable (Other Competencies) (Contemporary Initiatives). Testing the primary initial hypothesis (there is a significant correlation between Strategic Ambidexterity and Contemporary Initiatives at the macro and sub-level). This paragraph was based on a major hypothesis from which many sub-hypotheses were derived; these hypotheses will be examined using the Pearson matrix presented in Table (2) and as follows:

Table 2. Mean, standard deviations, and correlations between variables

Spearman's Correlation	M	SD	Exploration Strategy	Exploitation Strategy	Strategic Ambidexterity	Contemporary Initiatives
Exploration Strategy	4.00	1.125	1	.767**	.884**	.898**
Exploitation Strategy	3.86	1.221	.767**	1	.931**	.774**
Strategic Ambidexterity	3.93	1.173	.884**	.931**	1	.901**
Contemporary Initiatives	4.00	1.095	.898**	.774**	.901**	1
**. Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).						n = 40

Table 2 shows that Strategic Ambidexterity and Contemporary Initiatives have a positive statistically significant association at a level of significance of 1%, as shown by the value of the simple correlation coefficient between them (.901) thus this finding confirms that there is a link, which is the first primary premise. There is a correlation between the major study variables, which suggests that anytime Strategic Ambidexterity is developed, this strengthens current endeavors. The first primary hypothesis is supported by the following two sub-hypotheses:

After linking the paragraphs pertaining to the two variables and calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient, the correlation coefficients appeared to support the first sub-hypothesis (there is a significant correlation between the exploration strategy dimension and contemporary initiatives) at the level of significance shown in the table, which indicates that there is a positive statistically significant correlation. At the 1% significance level between the exploratory strategy dimension and modern projects if the simple correlation coefficient between them is (.898). According to this connection, the more eagerness there is to embrace the exploratory approach, the more this contributes to the ongoing improvement of current projects.

This is the second sub-hypothesis (there is a significant correlation relationship between the dimension of the exploitation strategy and contemporary initiatives) The data in Table 2 indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected, as there is a direct correlation with moral significance between the dimension of the exploitation strategy and contemporary initiatives, based on the value of the simple correlation coefficient between them (.774), and this relationship indicates that the exploitation strategy in question plays an important role in promoting contemporary initiatives.

4.3. Test hypothesis of effect and discussing the results

This paragraph seeks to quantify the impact of the independent variable (Strategic Ambidexterity) on the dependent variable (contemporary initiatives). The second primary hypothesis (there is a considerable influence of Strategic Ambidexterity in Contemporary Initiatives at the macro and sub-level) is being tested. Examining the findings in Table 3, we see that the Strategic Ambidexterity variable had a substantial influence on (current initiatives), as the computed (F) value was (6.7654), which is larger than the threshold at the level($P \leq 0.05$). The value of the parameter (α) for this criterion was (0.277), whereas the value of the parameter (β) was (100). (0.943). Consequently, the equation of the regression model is as follows:

Contemporary Initiatives = (0.277) + (0.943) Strategic Ambidexterity.

This means that a change of the amount of one unit in the Strategic Ambidexterity causes a change of (0.943) in (contemporary initiatives), and that the independent variable (Strategic Ambidexterity) explains its value (69.27%) of the changes in the adopted variable (contemporary initiatives), as the value of Interpretation coefficient ($\mathbf{R}^2 = 0.6927$), which means that (30.73%) of the changes in the dependent variable are due to other variables that were not included in the current model, and this indicates the fulfillment of the second main hypothesis at the overall level.

Table 3. Effected relationships between Strategic Ambidexterity & Contemporary Initiatives

Indications	F	D.F	P-value	R^2	α	β	Contemporary Initiatives
Strategic Ambidexterity	6.7654	1	0.0174	0.6927	0.277	0.943	

At the sub-dimension level, the results are as follows: The first sub-hypothesis (there is a statistically significant effect connection for the exploratory strategy component in current projects) is supported by the data. Table (4) demonstrates the effect of the dimensions of Strategic Ambidexterity on contemporary initiatives, as the exploration strategy achieved a significant effect on contemporary initiatives, as the calculated (F) value was (8.5407), which is greater than the tabular at the level ($P \leq 0.05$), and the value of The parameter (α) for this requirement is (0.542), whereas the value of (β) is (0.542). (0.891). Consequently, the equation of the regression model is as follows:

Contemporary Initiatives = (0.542) + (0.891) Exploration Strategy.

This means that a change of one unit in the dimension of the exploration strategy causes a change of (0.891) in (contemporary initiatives), and that the exploration strategy explains (74%) of the changes in contemporary initiatives, as the value of the coefficient of determination is ($\mathbf{R^2}$ = 0.74). As for the remaining percentage (26%) of the changes occurring in the dependent variable, it is due to other variables that were not included in the current model, and this indicates the fulfillment of the first sub-hypothesis.

The second sub-hypothesis (there is a statistically significant impact relationship for the dimension of the exploitation strategy in contemporary initiatives). Table (4) shows exploitation strategy dimension a significant effect in (contemporary initiatives), as the calculated (F) value was (6.3747) greater than the tabular value at the level ($P \leq 0.05$), with a value (α) equal to (0.976), while the value of (β) (0.783), and thus the equation of the regression model is in the following form:

Contemporary Initiatives = (0.976) + (0.783) Exploitation Strategy.

This means that a change of one unit in the dimension of the exploitation strategy results in a change of (0.783) in (contemporary initiatives), given that the dimension of the exploitation strategy explains (67.9%) of the changes in the approved variable (contemporary initiatives) based on the value of (R^2) , and the remaining 32.1% of the changes in the dependent variable are attributable to factors that were not included in the model, indicating that the second sub-hypothesis is supported.

Table 4. Effected relationships Strategic Ambidexterity dimensions in contemporary initiatives

Indications	F	D.F	P-value	R^2	α	β	Contemporary Initiatives
Exploration Strategy	8.5407	1	0.0136	0.740	0.542	0.891	
Exploitation Strategy	6.3747	1	0.0181	0.679	0.976	0.783	

5. Conclusion

The results of the statistical analysis through the use of the SPSS program showed a strong positive and significant correlation between the independent variable strategic proficiency and the dependent variable contemporary initiatives, and thus the first hypothesis of the study was proven at the macro level, as well as the two sub-hypothesis of the correlation between the exploration and exploitation strategies in promoting initiatives. Contemporary, as their relationship was positive and moral, which indicates the high consistency between the variables and dimensions of the study. In addition to the presence of a significant impact of strategic Ambidexterity through its two dimensions (exploration and exploitation strategy) in achieving and promoting contemporary initiatives and the study community companies should adopt these two strategies in order to achieve benefit from contemporary initiatives and sustain their performance in light of a changing work environment and what the needs and desires of customers that are characterized by change impose with the necessity of Quick response and fulfillment. As this research contributes to providing evidence about the positive relationship and the positive impact of adopting the approach of strategic Ambidexterity in promoting the achievement of contemporary initiatives in an important sector such as the Iraqi tourism sector, which resumed its activity after the demise of the repercussions of the Corona pandemic worldwide, on the one hand, which is one of the tributaries of financing the government budget On the other hand, through the fees imposed on the work of these companies.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest, and all of the authors agree to publish this paper under academic ethics.

Author contributions
All the authors contributed equally to the manuscript.

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