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Ethnic cuisine ratings of consumers: a sample analysis of Konya ethnic Mevlevi kitchen dishes'

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Abstract

Mevlevi cuisine, which carries the traces of history in Konya in Turkey, is an ethnic type of cuisine that is identified with that region. It is known that with the opening of more restaurants in the concept of ethnic cuisine, there will be a positive interaction in the region in terms of gastronomic tourism. Purpose of the research: To evaluate the meals and drinks of ethnic cuisine by the guests who prefer ethnic restaurants, using the menu analysis method. Case study, one of the qualitative research models, was used in the research. The research sample consists of Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant, which tries to keep an ethnic culinary culture alive with the concept of Mevlevi cuisine in Turkey's Konya province and volunteered to participate in the research. The data collection phase of the research was carried out in the light of the interview, document review and information obtained with both the manager and the chef of this restaurant, which constitutes the sample of the research. As a result of the study, a total of 14 menu items selected from the menu were subjected to menu engineering analysis. After this analysis, a total of 6 products were included in the stars group, 4 products in the problem group, 3 products in the horses group and 1 product in the puzzles group. As a result of the research, it was suggested that the Mevlevi cuisine dishes, which are not liked by the guests who prefer ethnic dishes, should be removed from the menu and replaced with the ones with stronger taste.

Keywords Gastronomy, Ethnic cuisine, Ethnic Mevlevi cuisine, Menu analysis, Menu engineering analysis (model), Konya

Introduction

The roots of Turkish culinary culture date back to ancient history. Turkish cuisine, which has rich resources due to its spread over wide geographical areas, is among the largest cuisines of the world [1]. In Turkish cuisine, which is a rich cuisine, Turks have combined the eating and drinking habits from Central Asia with the rich culinary culture of Anatolia and caused the Turkish cuisine to become even richer [2]. Although each of the regional cuisines in the Turkish cuisine has its own characteristics, there is an increase in the frequency of preference thanks to its rich diversity. Konya cuisine, which is located in the Central Anatolia Region, has been home to many civilizations from history to the present due to its geographical location, and as a result of these interactions, it has been determined that a rich variety of Konya cuisine local dishes are formed [3].

It is thought that the Mevlevi cuisine is seen as a local cuisine in Konya and has a great importance in terms

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of ethnic cuisines, and it will make positive contributions to the region in economic terms. However, most of the studies in the literature emphasize the need to open more restaurants that reflect the Mevlevi cuisine culture. Although the Mevlevi cuisine in Konya has a deep-rooted history, it carries the traces of history in Konya from the thirteenth century to the present [4]. The rich variety of dishes that the Mevlevi cuisine culture has, the respect shown to the culinary profession and the different meanings attributed to food are remarkable features [5].

This study was carried out to determine the consumers' appreciation of the meals served in the Konya Mevlevi cuisine, which is an ethnic kitchen with a rich variety of dishes. In the study, it is aimed to determine which foods and beverages consumers especially like and consume from Konya Mevlevi cuisine, which is an ethnic cuisine, and which foods and beverages contribute to restaurant businesses. As a result of the study, the importance of ethnic cuisines in the tourism sector was emphasized through Konya Mevlevi cuisine and suggestions were made to increase the taste of Konya Mevlevi cuisine dishes by consumers.

Literature review

Konya and Konya cuisine

The city of Konya, located in the heart of Anatolian lands and located in the Central Anatolia Region, which is one of the seven regions of Turkey geographically, is located in high and flat areas in terms of altitude [6] (Figs. 1 and 2).

Being in the very center of Anatolia has allowed Konya to be given importance geographically and to have hosted many civilizations throughout history [10]. Hittite and Lydian civilizations in historical ages, then Persian rule in the sixth century before Christ, Alexander the Great in the fourth century before Christ, the Roman state in the second century before Christ and after Jesus In the fourth century, Byzantine domination showed itself in the city of Konya [11]. The conquest of Konya by the Seljuk State took place in 1071 [12]. After the collapse of the Seljuk State, the city of Konya, which came under the rule of the Karamanoğulları State, was conquered by the Ottoman State ruler Fatih Sultan Mehmed Han and turned into an Ottoman sanjak [13].

Konya cuisine: it reflects the taste of Anatolia not only with its food, but also with its culinary culture, table setting, cooking methods, kitchen tools, kitchen architecture and service arrangements. In Konya, which has developed a unique cuisine and food culture, food means showing the skills of women and offering the most delicious, fresh and beautiful food to the guests. The race to "do the best", especially for the guests, is considered one of the biggest factors in the development of Konya cuisine [14].

Fig. 1 Map of Turkey [7]. Turkey is located in a position that connects the continents of Asia and Europe. It is Turkey's largest province in terms of surface area and the seventh most populous city [8]

Fig. 2 Map of Konya [9]. Konya plain is surrounded by rivers and mountains. The part where the city of Konya is located today is the region called Konya Lake [8, 9]

The arrival of Mevlana in Konya, the Mevlevi madrasah being in Konya, the transformation of the Mevlevi cuisine into an ethnic cuisine with its dishes and table rituals have also revived the gastronomic tourism in the city of Konya today (Fig. 3). This situation has contributed to the fact that the restaurants serving in the city of Konya include the ethnic cuisine, Mevlevi cuisine and drinks in their menus, and even the establishment of the Mevlevi Ethnic Restaurant.

Fig. 3 Mevlana Museum and Mevlevi Lodge, Konya/Turkey [15]. The Mevlana Museum started life as the dervish lodge (Tekke) of the Mevlevi order, better known as the whirling dervishes. It houses the mausoleum of Jalal ad-Din Muhammed Rumi (Turkish: Celaleddin-i Rumi), a Persian Sufi mystic [16]

Ethnic cuisine

Culture is an ethnically-specific set of values that inform aspirations and expectations for a socio-economic success [17]. Culinary culture reflects the different characteristics of many civilizations in the world [18]. Although ethnic cuisine culture has an important place among cultural attractions, it is a type of cuisine that has been formed due to economic, cultural variables and historical reasons, especially the local dishes of a particular region are identified with that region, loved and consumed by the people, and being superior to other dishes [19]. Ethnic restaurants are restaurants where dishes from a certain region are served [20]. Especially today, the fact that there are many restaurants in order to provide socialization and the number of ethnic restaurants in this restaurant variety gradually increases, this restaurant type has a significant importance [21].

Looking at the history of ethnic cuisine, it is known that ethnic restaurants have experienced a significant growth in the food and beverage service industry, especially in the last two decades. Ethnic restaurants not only serve as places to eat but also function as "cultural ambassadors" communicating foreign food and culture to local customers. In many ethnic restaurants, their owners have roots in the original culture. Ethnic themes born from these roots are a natural result of their heritage, creating a unique and strong identity for the restaurant to differentiate itself from its competitors, as well as creating a center of attraction for customers seeking a different dining experience. For many local customers, ethnic restaurants may be their only contact with foreign cultures, so authentic food and atmosphere can be at the core of expectations for ethnic restaurants. Therefore, authenticity becomes an important concept for the ethnic restaurant industry [22].

Ethnic restaurants offer food and cultural experiences different from those of the host country. Considering America in the world, the cuisines of countries such as Italian, Mexican, Chinese, Indian and Korean are ethnic cuisines that have been in the American market for a long time. The customer profile that prefers ethnic restaurants is well-educated and urban people with a healthy diet, interest in food safety, and above-average income. But some studies states that consumers consume some ethnic cuisines because they are safer than others. For example, consumers question sanitation methods when they are not familiar with certain ethnic foods or preparation methods, and in this case, such perceptions affect the patronage of ethnic restaurants and thus their success [23].

Mevlevi cuisine

In the understanding of Mevlevi, the kitchen had the feature of being an important place. By using the adjective "şerif", which means honorable, its name in the lodge became "Matbah-ı Şerif" [5] (Fig. 4).

Matbah-ı Şerif in Mevlevi is known as the place where people cook and mature in the heart of science and

Fig. 4 Matbah-ı Şerif in Mevlevi Museum [6]. Matbah-ı Şerif in Mevlevi was important to see this kitchen as a place of education, to respect the cookery profession and to pay attention to the ingredients of the food. It is the most valuable part of Mevlevi. Although the main function of the matbah is cooking and the place where the cooked food is consumed, this area is the place where the Mevlevi candidates, called "Can", received the most training during the 1001-day ordeal [24]

ingenuity, and it was important to see this kitchen as a place of education, to respect the cookery profession and to pay attention to the ingredients of the food [25, 26].

The person responsible for the Matbah-ı Şerif kitchen is known as Ateşbaz-ı Veli "Aşçı Dede", and he is known as the person who set his heart on Mevlevi, guides and trains dervishes besides his cooking. Under the command of Aşçı Dede, there are people who serve in 18 different departments in the convent. These are given as follows: Kazancı Dede, Halife Dede, Dışarı Meydancı, Çamaşırcı, Abrizci (su döken), Şerbetçi, Bulaşıkçı, Dolapçı, Pazarcı, Somatçı, İçeri Meydancı, İçeri Kandilci, Tahmisçi, Yatakçı, Dışarı Kandilci, Süpürgeci, Cerağcı and Ayakçı [27, 28] (Fig. 5).

Eating in Mevlevi is not only an eating and drinking activity, but also formed around certain rituals. It is known that meals are sanctified and tables accompanied by prayers are set, especially by showing them as a complementary element of worship [5, 29]. The dishes belonging to this cuisine, which has a rich food and culinary culture, generally use grain, legumes and mutton [4]. The preparation of the pilaf called "Lokma" consisting of meat, onions, chickpeas, coriander and peanuts and eating it around certain rituals reflects the original culture of Mevlevi cuisine at that time. It is also known that the spices used in the content of the dishes are mentioned in the works of Mevlâna [5, 30].

The consumption of soups in Mevlevi cuisine is quite high. It is known that Tutmaç and Tarhana soup were especially cooked by Ateşbaz-ı Veli for Mevlâna and these two soups are found in Mevlâna's works [31]. The use of spices such as cumin, black pepper, sumac and cinnamon, as well as molasses, especially in meat dishes, shows that the sweet–sour harmony is formed in the Mevlevi cuisine. The Kabak Kalyesi dish is an example of this [30]. Vegetables are also used in Mevlevi cuisine. Pastries made from various vegetables, vegetable dishes served alongside kebabs or meat dishes, and even okra consumed fresh or dried with plenty of lemon are examples of this use. The tradition of making halvah and ashura from desserts, their serving as a treat in special meetings and rituals, and the consumption of sherbets, which are of great importance, are seen in Mevlevi cuisine.

The act of eating and drinking in Mevlevi cuisine is formed around a certain table order and rules. It is emphasized that the prayers and gulbanks are at every stage from the cooking to the consumption of the food, starting and ending the meal with salt, respecting the cook, and the "eat less, sleep less and talk less" discipline, and that the food is not only for the material stomach, but the necessity of reaching the real spiritual saturation [5].

Ethnic characteristics of Mevlevi cuisine

Considering the local cuisines in terms of gastronomic tourism, local foods and beverages belonging to the region attract the attention of many tourists and shape their preferences. As a result of these preferences, local cuisines become an important gain on the economy of the local people [32]. Mevlevi cuisine has survived to the present day since the thirteenth century, and it continues to be kept alive especially in Konya [3].

As a result of the study, in which the use of the regional cuisine of Konya, which is shown as an example, as a tourism product and its evaluation by the local people, was investigated, it was determined that the local cuisine is important for the promotion of Konya, increases the recognition of cultural values and contributes positively to the economy. In the research, it has been suggested that the local government and non-governmental organizations should carry out the necessary studies in terms of the evaluation of local dishes. It is thought that the promotion of local foods in Konya will increase with the festivals, events and tours organized by tour companies. Ertas et al. [4] as a result of the study investigating

Fig. 5 The people and daily affairs in Matbah-ı Şerif [6]. Matbah-ı Şerif in Mevlevi is known as the place where people cook and mature in the heart of science and ingenuity. Matbâh for the Mevlevi means "the place where people are cooked". Therefore, there is no noise, no loud talking, no laughing in Matbah. Even when passing in front of the door of the printing house, as an expression of respect for the printing house, salutes are made [24]

the revival of Mevlevi cuisine in gastronomy tourism in Konya, it has been determined that there are no restaurants in Konya that fully reflect the Mevlevi cuisine culture and dishes. In the research, it was emphasized that the necessary sanctions and studies should be made and the necessity of promoting the Mevlevi cuisine culture more. Ceylan and Yaman [5] in the study examining the Mevlevi cuisine, it is thought that this cuisine type will make positive contributions to the gastronomic tourism of Konya, depending on the increase in the ethnic and themed restaurants, which have attracted attention especially in the recent period, with the opening of more restaurants reflecting the Mevlevi cuisine in Konya.

Method

Study areas

In the menu engineering method, which is one of the menu analysis methods, it is aimed to reduce the negative elements in the menu and create a positive structure throughout the menu, and the application is made by evaluating each menu item in the menu according to profitability and popularity [33, 34]. Menu analysis is used to create evaluation and planning for each menu item from the menu of the enterprise, and it provides the opportunity to make a decision about the foods to be removed or added from the menu [35].

Case study, one of the qualitative research models, was used in the research. The case study model is the systematic conduct and analysis of a research about one or more organizations, groups or communities over a period of time [36]. In the study, observation, interview and document analysis were used together, and the simultaneous use of these three qualitative data collection methods exemplifies the phenomenon of "data diversity" [37].

Study design and sampling techniques

The universe of the research: while creating restaurants that host Mevlevi cuisine, which is an ethnic cuisine concept, the sample is represented by the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant with Mevlevi cuisine concept, which volunteered to participate in the research.

Availability of data and materials

The data collection phase of the study was carried out in the light of the interview, document review and information obtained with the chef of the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih Restaurant, which constitutes the sample of the research. Since Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih Restaurant is the only restaurant serving Mevlevi dishes in Konya, the center of Mevlevi, only this restaurant was chosen as the sample of the research.

The interview form applied in previous similar studies was used to collect the data obtained within the scope of the research [39]. As a document review, the sales reports in the previous periods of the business were examined, a semi-structured interview form was used during the interview and information was obtained about the Ethnic Mevlevi cuisine dishes and beverages, which are most preferred by the guests who prefer Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih Restaurant (Fig. 6).

Data analysis

With the case study chosen as the method in the research, the menu planning process of the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant was learned, the kitchen chef was interviewed and a document review was made. As a result of these, a total of 14 foods selected from the menu were analyzed with the Menu Engineering model, which is one of the menu analysis techniques. Before the analysis, the selling price of 14 foods selected from the menu, the cost of one portion and the number of covers sold in 1 month were learned. Other information was also obtained by using analysis formulas and as a result of these, the classes of 14 foods were determined.

Fig. 6 Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih Restaurant [38]. Established in 2011 in Konya, the restaurant serves ethnic Mevlevi cuisine. Operating in the province of Konya in Turkey and Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant, which means "Table" and "Whatever is in it" inspired by Mevlâna, although Çatalhöyük contains the well-known tastes of Central Asian, Seljuk, Mevlevi, Ottoman and Konya cuisines, only dishes belonging to the Mevlevi cuisine, which is an ethnic cuisine, are included in the scope of the research [38]

Results and Discussions

Food and beverage businesses want to serve with different concepts in order to be superior to their competitors in the current market and to ensure continuity. The concept of "ethnic cuisine", which has been popular especially recently, is becoming an important concept for both consumers and businesses. In particular, the identification of the foods of a particular region with that region, the fact that they are loved and consumed by the public, and that these foods are offered in restaurants and contribute to that region economically, are the explanations for the concept of "ethnic cuisine" and emphasize its importance.

Mevlevi cuisine, which carries the traces of history and has an important place in Konya, can be considered as an ethnic cuisine type in Konya. As a result of the literature review, the researches on this subject emphasized that the number of restaurants with Mevlevi cuisine concept should be more in Konya. As a result, it has been determined that both the recognition of Konya and the Mevlevi cuisine will attract attention from other regions.

The menu is defined as a tool that can be used for both marketing and strategic purposes on behalf of food and beverage businesses, and within this framework, menu analysis is also seen as an important issue [40]. Menu analysis is used to evaluate the application quality of the menu formed in food and beverage businesses and to re-plan the menu [41]. Menu engineering model, which is one of the menu analysis techniques, is a system made as a result of calculating the difference between the selling price of a certain menu item and its variable cost over the contribution margin [42]. The main purpose of this model is to reduce the negative items throughout the menu and to create a completely positive structure [34].

In the research, as a result of the information obtained from the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant and the interviews, a total of 14 foods were selected from the menu and these foods were subjected to Menu Engineering analysis. After the analysis, 6 foods were in the Stars group, 4 foods were in the Problematics group, 1 food was in the Puzzles group, and 3 foods were in the Horses group (Table 1).

As a result of the analysis, out of a total of 14 menu items, stars represent 42.8%, problematics 28.5%, horses 21.4% and puzzles 7.1%. As a result of menu engineering efforts, ethnic Mevlevi cuisine dishes are grouped as follows:

Star group

As a result of the analysis, it belongs to the Mevlevi cuisine, which is an ethnic cuisine on the menus main courses; Pan Kebab, Meat with Figs and Meat with Mountain Plums took place in the star group (Fig. 7).

Table 1 Menu engineering analysis of 14 menu ıtems selected from the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant menu

Menu Item	Sale price	Material cost	Contribution margin	Number of covers sold	Total contribution	Profitability	Admiration	Class
Tutmaç soup	39	25	14	43	602	Low	Low	Problematics
Pan kebab	83	54	29	82	2378	High	High	Stras
Meat with Figs	86	56	30	95	2850	High	High	Stars
Meat with Mountain Plums	75	48	27	70	1890	High	High	Stars
Hassaten lokma	67	44	23	90	2070	High	High	Stars
Fihi Ma Fih	70	46	24	111	2664	High	High	Stars
Bulgur dish	60	39	21	55	1155	High	High	Stars
Almond Halva	40	26	14	75	1050	Low	High	Horses
Quince with Molasses	40	26	14	8	112	Low	Low	Problematics
Rose Sherbet	30	20	10	88	880	Low	High	Horses
Sikencübin	30	20	10	119	1190	Low	High	Horses
Tamarind	30	20	10	42	420	Low	Low	Problematics
Sukur Squeeze	43	27	16	46	736	Low	Low	Problematics
Lamb Shank	120	77	43	48,33	2064	High	Low	Puzzles
Total				**972**	**20.061**			
n = 14	Average contribution: 20.061/972 = **20,63**	Admiration ındex: 972/14 *0.70 = **48,6**						

The result (in bold) is important in determining the liking levels of ethnic dishes

Fig. 7 The ethnic Mevlevi cuisine star group dishes [43] (meat with Figs, Pan Kebab, Meat with Mountain Plums)

As a result of the analysis, it belongs to the Mevlevi cuisine, which is an ethnic cuisine on the menus other dishes; Hassaten Lokma, Fihi Ma Fih and Bulgur Dish took place in the star group (Fig. 8).

Products in the star group represent 42.8% of a total of 14 menu items (Figs. 8 and 9). The stars represent products with both popularity and high contribution. From a business point of view, it is desirable to have a lot of star-class products throughout the menu. At the same time, the products in this group should be tested for price flexibility by increasing their sales prices [44, 45].

In terms of the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant, the products in the star group are both highly appreciated by the consumers and have a high contribution margin. The restaurant operator considers always keeping these products on the menu and positioning them where they will attract the attention of the consumers.

Problem group

As a result of the analysis, it belongs to the Mevlevi cuisine, which is an ethnic cuisine on the menu; Tutmaç Soup, Quince with Molasses, Tamarind and Sukur Squeeze were in the problem group (Fig. 9).

The products in the problem group represent 28.6% of the total 14 menu items. Problematic products are products that are low in terms of both likability and contribution margin. As a result of their work on menu engineering, Dursun and Sormaz (2022), in the light of the data obtained from the restaurant selected as the sample, in the analysis made on a total of 11 menu items, 2 products were included in the problematic group, which constituted 18.2% of the 11 menu items [39]. As a result of the study, it has been determined that the restaurant is considering removing these products from the menu, but will keep them in stock for a while according to the customers' requests.

Horses group

After the meeting with the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant operator, it was concluded that the necessary plans would be made about the products in the problematic group that emerged after the menu engineering analysis. Almond Halva, Rose Sherbet and Sirkencübin were in the group of horses (Fig. 10).

Products in the horsepower group represent 21.4% of the total 14 menu items. Horses are products that are low in terms of profitability and high in terms of likability.

Fig. 8 The ethnic Mevlevi cuisine star group dishes [43] (Hassaten Lokma, Fihi Ma Fih Soup, Bulgur Dish)

Fig. 9 The ethnic Mevlevi cuisine problem group dishes [43] (Tutmaç soup, Quince with Molasses, Tamarind, Sukur squeeze)

Fig. 10 The ethnic Mevlevi Cuisine Horses Group Dishes [42] (Almond halva, Rose Sherbet, Sirkencübin)

As a result of the menu engineering analysis study conducted by İyitoğlu and Tetik (2017) on a luxury restaurant, 15 out of a total of 30 menu items were included in the horsepower group [46]. It constitutes 50.0% of 30 menu items. In the study, it was determined that it was thought that an increase in the prices of the products in this group should be made. The restaurant operator Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih also stated that necessary studies will be done on the prices of the products in this group.

Puzzles group

Lamb Shank dish is in the Puzzles group. The products in the puzzles group represent 7.1% of the 14 menu items in total (Fig. 11).

Puzzles are products that are high in contribution but low in likability. Food and beverage businesses want to attract the products in this group to the stars group. The positioning of the products in this group in the menu should be done again [47].

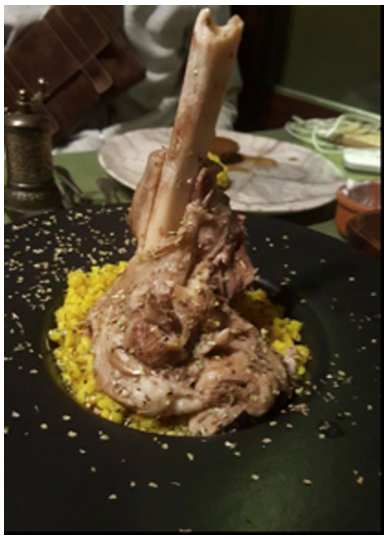

Fig. 11 The ethnic Mevlevi cuisine puzzles group dishes [43] (Lamb Shank)

Conclusion and suggestions

As a result of the meeting with the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant operator, he stated that the Lamb Shank dish in this group would be reviewed and necessary plans would be made. From the point of view of consumers, it has been determined that especially the products in the main meal group are concentrated in the stars group, that consumers like these foods more, show demand and in this case contribute to the business. It is thought that changes in the presentation of sherbets or necessary increases or decreases in prices will ensure the transition of products in this group to stars.

In the research, as a result of the menu engineering analysis made on a total of 14 menu items selected from the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fih restaurant menu, various suggestions to be made both to the business and to the field are as follows:

- More studies should be carried out on this subject in order to eliminate the deficiency seen in the literature, especially in the menus of restaurants that give concepts on behalf of ethnic cuisine, in their studies on analysis and planning.
- Food and beverage businesses are required to work on menu planning at certain intervals. As a result, they will have the advantage of being able to see their own situation. For menu engineering analysis of businesses, it may be recommended to get support from consultancy firms specialized in this field or from food engineers. There are state institutions or private enterprises providing this service in Turkey. Menu engineers or food engineers working in these businesses produce the right policies for businesses with their menu analysis.
- Necessary training and information should be given to the employees of food and beverage businesses on menu planning and menu analysis.
- As a result of the information obtained from the Somatçı Fihi Ma Fihi restaurant, the analysis made and the meeting with the operator, the restaurant operator, should inform the other personnel about this issue, make the necessary plans throughout the menu after the analysis, and provide incentives for this menu engineering analysis to be made at regular intervals in order to see their own situation.

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ÜS contributed to conceptualization, methodology, writing—review & editing, and project administration. KD contributed to conceptualization, methodology, and writing—original draft. NO contributed to methodology, formal analysis, and data curation.

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Availability of data and materials
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Declarations

Competing interests
The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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