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## Analysis of rebranding strategies in companies experiencing crisis

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the impact of rebranding strategies on brand image and company performance in organizations facing crises. In a dynamic and competitive business environment, rebranding is understood as a strategic transformation process that goes beyond changes in logos or brand names and encompasses the renewal of the company's vision, mission, values, and brand communication. This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method targeting consumers aware of the company's rebranding process after the crisis. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, with data collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire. The results indicate that rebranding strategies positively and significantly affect company performance. Brand image plays a dominant role in strengthening positive consumer perceptions and enhancing loyalty and trust in the company. The findings also suggest that consistent, honest, and transparent brand communication is a key factor in the success of rebranding initiatives in the hospitality industry. Holistic rebranding accompanied by internal reforms can restore corporate reputation and improve business performance in the post-crisis period. This study contributes theoretically to the development of marketing management literature and serves as a practical reference for companies in designing effective rebranding strategies for image recovery and performance enhancement.

**Keywords:** Rebranding; Corporate Crisis; Brand Image; Brand Communication Strategy; Company Performance; Consumer Loyalty; Reputation Recovery

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In a highly competitive and rapidly changing business environment, companies cannot avoid the possibility of facing various crisis. Such crises may take the form of financial distress, reputational crises arising from public issues, technological changes, or intense market competition, which require firms to undertake strategic adjustments. One strategic step frequently adopted by companies to recover and reinforce their market position in the post-crisis period is to rebrand. Rebranding is not merely a change of name or logo design but rather a strategic transformation of corporate identity that encompasses the company's vision, mission, core values, brand communication, and consumer perceptions. This step is typically undertaken when a company experiences a decline in public trust, damage to its brand image, or seeks to significantly alter its business direction.

For example, several major companies in Indonesia and globally have engaged in rebranding in response to crises. For instance, PT Garuda Indonesia faced severe financial and reputational crises and attempted to restore its image through renewed brand communication approaches and service restructuring. In the digital sector, companies such as Tokopedia and Gojek merged to create the new brand "GoTo" as part of a rebranding strategy to respond to competition and the rapid dynamics of the technology industry. Empirical research in Indonesia on the case of Holywings shows that following a sensitive marketing controversy that adversely affected its social reputation and business operations, the company employed rebranding strategies through social media to expand consumer engagement, revitalize its brand image, and rebuild its customer loyalty. This study highlights the role of digital platforms in post-crisis rebranding.

A growing body of empirical research suggests that post-crisis rebranding is not merely a symbolic change but rather part of an organization's strategic response to restore legitimacy, reputation, and market performance (Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007; Bundy et al., 2017; Gürlek & Tuna, 2019). The effectiveness of this strategy is highly dependent on a company's ability to manage brand communication and reshape its brand image in the minds of consumers (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Eisingerich et al., 2011). Although the literature on rebranding, crisis management, and brand image has developed significantly, several important gaps remain insufficiently addressed by previous studies in terms of context, theory, or methodology. Research that specifically examines rebranding as a response to crisis remains relatively limited, particularly in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia, which possess unique characteristics, including high levels of social and cultural sensitivity, the dominant role of social media in shaping public opinion, and institutional and regulatory pressures that differ from those in developed economies. Consequently, an empirical gap exists regarding how rebranding strategies operate in crisis contexts within emerging markets, particularly in rebuilding corporate trust and legitimacy during the post-crisis period.

However, rebranding is not without its risks. In certain cases, rebranding strategies fail to restore consumer trust and instead generate confusion and resistance in the market. This indicates that the success of rebranding strategies is highly contingent on a deep understanding of the crisis context, market segmentation, consistent communication, and stakeholder involvement in the change process. These conditions demonstrate that rebranding is a complex strategy that requires in-depth examination, especially in companies that have recently experienced a crisis. Research in this area is essential to identify the key elements influencing the success of rebranding, such as the timing of implementation, communication strategies, employee and customer involvement, and continuity between old and new identities. Moreover, empirical studies examining rebranding as a crisis response, particularly in Indonesia, are relatively scarce. However, such studies are crucial for providing practical insights to companies in designing more adaptive and responsive marketing and communication strategies in the face of dynamic business environments.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how companies design and implement rebranding strategies after experiencing a crisis and assess the extent to which these strategies are effective in improving brand image and enhancing company performance in the market. This study is expected to contribute both theoretically to the development of marketing management scholarship and practically to business practitioners and corporate decision makers. See [Table 1](#)

**Table 1. Company Brands Experiencing a Decline in Purchase Intention**

| Company                          | What Happens to Branding   | Impact on Purchase Intention, Sales, and Consumer Reactions   |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Tropicana</b>                 | In 2009, Tropicana changed its packaging design from the iconic “orange with a straw” to a more minimalist glass-of-juice design, accompanied by changes in font and a layout that differed significantly from the previous packaging (Mashed)   | Sales declined by 20% within two months after the rebranding, as consumers failed to recognize the new packaging as Tropicana. Consequently, the company reverted to its original packaging design (Mashed)   |
| <b>Lean Cuisine (Nestlé USA)</b> | The brand previously used the label “diet” and carried a somewhat outdated image. It undertook a packaging redesign and revised its branding message by modernizing its visual appearance, removing the term “diet,” and emphasizing “health” and suitability for a healthy lifestyle (Chief Marketer) | The company had previously experienced a double-digit decline in sales. Following the rebranding and packaging redesign, sales increased by approximately USD 58 million within one year. (Chief Marketer)  |
| <b>Cracker Barrel</b>            | The company attempted to change its logo and branding by making the logo more modern and removing the “Old Country Store” element as well as the iconic image of the elderly man (AP News)   | Consumer reactions were negative: restaurant traffic declined by approximately 1% prior to the logo announcement, followed by an additional 8% decrease after the introduction of the new logo. The company projected that customer visits would decline by 7–8% in the first quarter and by 4–7% overall in the following fiscal year. (AP News) |
| <b>Beyond Meat</b>               | Although it was not purely an issue of visual branding, there were criticisms that the products did not meet consumer expectations in terms of taste, ingredient composition, and price, which indirectly affected brand perception (AP News)  | Their sales declined by approximately 15% over a six-month period due to weakening demand in the United States. The company’s stock price also fell below USD 1. (AP News)  |

**Source:** Processed from primary data (2025)

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Rebranding

Rebranding is a strategic process that involves changes to a brand’s identity, both visually and conceptually, with the aim of improving its image, expanding market reach, or adapting to changes in the business environment (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). According to Merrilees and Miller (2008), rebranding not only includes changes to a brand’s name or logo, but also involves repositioning the brand in the minds of consumers. The main objectives of rebranding are to improve a damaged or less relevant corporate image, respond to crises or negative events, align the brand with a new business strategy, and strengthen competitive advantage (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004). Rebranding can also be employed as a strategy to escape the negative stigma resulting from a crisis affecting the company.

According to Lomax and Mador (2006), there are three main forms of rebranding: proactive rebranding, which is carried out before a crisis occurs in order to capture new opportunities; reactive rebranding, which is undertaken as a response to internal or external crises; and mixed rebranding, which combines both approaches. In the context of companies experiencing a crisis, the reactive rebranding approach is more dominantly applied. Corporate crises may take several forms, including reputational crises (such as those arising from public scandals or service failures), financial crises (such as bankruptcy or extreme declines in profitability), structural crises (including mergers, acquisitions, or changes in ownership), and operational or technological crises (such as product or system failures). According to Coombs (2007), crises have a significant impact on public perceptions and consumer trust. Therefore, crisis communication strategies and rebranding efforts must be implemented in tandem in order to restore a positive corporate image.

## **2.2 Brand Communication Strategy**

Brand communication strategy refers to a series of systematic efforts undertaken by companies to deliver brand messages consistently to the public through various media and communication channels, with the objective of building positive perceptions and creating emotional bonds with consumers (Keller, 2008). According to Kotler and Keller (2016), brand communication strategies encompass activities such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion, digital communication (including social media, websites, and other online platforms), and personal selling. In the context of rebranding, brand communication becomes particularly crucial for explaining the reasons behind the change, conveying the new values being promoted, and rebuilding consumer trust that may have been eroded as a result of a crisis.

According to Merrilees and Miller (2008), consistent and transparent communication throughout the rebranding process is a key factor in creating consumer understanding of the changes, gaining support from employees and business partners, and reducing market resistance to the new brand identity. Coombs (2007) further argues that in crisis situations, companies should first implement a crisis communication strategy to mitigate negative perceptions, followed by rebranding communication to introduce the new identity in a gradual and structured manner. Several important elements of an effective brand communication strategy, as outlined by Fill and Turnbull (2016), include the core message, which explains the new identity and the reasons for the change; communication channels or media, both online and offline, including social media, websites, press releases, email marketing, and advertising; message consistency, ensuring that communication is uniform across all brand touchpoints; and a feedback loop, which involves consumers and stakeholders in providing responses and evaluations of the communicated messages.

## **2.3 Brand Image**

Brand image refers to consumers' perceptions of a brand, which are formed through their experiences, knowledge, and interactions with a company's products, services, or communications. According to Keller (1993), brand image is the perception reflected in the brand associations held in consumers' memory. These associations may take the form of attributes, benefits, and attitudes attached to the brand, and are developed through exposure to marketing communications, direct experiences, or opinions from others. A positive brand image plays a crucial role in influencing purchase decisions, building customer loyalty, and creating long-term competitive advantage.

Aaker (1996) also emphasizes that brand image consists of a set of interrelated associations that collectively form the meaning of a brand in the minds of consumers. These associations may include product quality, lifestyle, symbols, or emotional values linked to the brand. Therefore, when a company undertakes rebranding, the success of the transformation is strongly influenced by the extent to which the changes are able to improve or strengthen the brand image in the eyes of the public.

Schmitt (2012) further argues that brand image is not merely a matter of visual or aesthetic elements, but also reflects consumers' emotional and symbolic experiences with the brand. Companies experiencing a crisis are particularly vulnerable to brand image damage, as crises can generate negative perceptions such as distrust, disappointment, and dissatisfaction. In this context, rebranding becomes one strategy that can be employed to improve consumer perceptions through the renewal of brand elements and the enhancement of brand communication that is more relevant and emotionally engaging.

Furthermore, according to Hsieh and Li (2008), changes in brand image can occur when companies consistently convey messages that align with the new values they seek to establish in the post-crisis period. Therefore, it is essential for companies not only to change their logo or name, but also to renew their brand promise, which must be communicated consistently across all interactions and communications with consumers.

## **2.4. Company Performance**

Firm performance is a primary indicator used to assess the extent to which a company has successfully achieved its strategic objectives, both in financial and non-financial aspects. According to Richard et al. (2009), firm performance represents the outcomes of managerial processes that reflect

efficiency and effectiveness in managing resources to achieve competitive advantage. This performance encompasses three main dimensions: financial performance (such as profitability, return on investment [ROI], and return on equity [ROE]), operational performance (including productivity and process efficiency), and market performance (such as market share, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty).

In the context of rebranding strategies, firm performance becomes an important variable for evaluating the impact of changes in brand identity on a company's market position. Well-executed rebranding can enhance customer perceptions, attract new markets, and strengthen customer loyalty, which ultimately has a positive impact on revenue and business growth (Gürlek & Tuna, 2019). Conversely, unsuccessful rebranding strategies may result in brand identity ambiguity, customer loss, and a decline in financial performance.

Research by Mazur and Zaborek (2016) indicates that companies that adapt their brand strategies, including rebranding, in response to crises tend to demonstrate improvements in medium-term performance, particularly when such efforts are accompanied by enhancements in service quality and effective communication. Meanwhile, Al-Hyari et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of integrating marketing strategy, brand management, and data-driven decision-making in efforts to improve business performance amid dynamic environmental changes.

Therefore, in rebranding research, firm performance can be measured using various indicators, such as sales growth, net profit, customer satisfaction, and perceived brand value following the implementation of rebranding strategies.

### **3. METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method. This approach was selected to measure the effect of rebranding strategies on brand perceptions and firm performance in the post-crisis period through the collection of data that can be statistically analyzed. The type of research applied is explanatory, as it aims to explain the relationships among predetermined variables based on theoretical frameworks and prior literature. The population of this study consists of all consumers who are aware of or have been exposed to information about companies that have undertaken rebranding after experiencing a crisis. This population is classified as an infinite population, as there is no definitive data regarding the total number of consumers who meet these criteria.

#### **3.1. The inclusion criteria for respondents are as follows:**

First, have prior knowledge of or have followed information regarding a company that experienced a crisis and subsequently undertook rebranding. Second, have seen or been exposed to rebranding communications, such as a new logo, brand messages, social media campaigns, or media coverage. Third, At least 17 years of age indicating sufficient capacity for consumer decision-making.

#### **3.2. The exclusion criteria**

First, respondents who are unaware of the existence of a crisis or the company's rebranding process. Second, respondents who complete the questionnaire incompletely or exhibit inconsistent response patterns.

Referring to the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2010), the recommended minimum sample size is five to ten times the number of indicators. With approximately 15–20 research indicators, the minimum required sample size ranges from 75 to 200 respondents.

This study employs a sample size that meets or exceeds this minimum threshold; therefore, it is considered statistically adequate to produce stable and reliable parameter estimates. The data are analyzed using inferential statistical techniques, which include tests of instrument validity and reliability, analysis of relationships among variables (such as regression analysis or structural equation modelling (SEM), depending on the requirements of the model), and hypothesis testing. This approach enables the researcher to empirically identify the strength and direction of relationships among the constructs.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. The Impact of Rebranding Strategy on Firm Performance

The results of the study indicate that rebranding strategies have a positive effect on firm performance. This finding supports the study by [Gürlek and Tuna \(2019\)](#), which states that well-planned rebranding can enhance competitiveness and financial performance. In the context of crisis situations, rebranding strategies have been shown to renew public perceptions and improve emotional relationships with customers. Changes in brand names, logos, and brand communication messages that are delivered consistently generate positive effects on customer loyalty and purchase intentions. The results further demonstrate that rebranding strategies have a positive and significant impact on firm performance in the post-crisis period. These findings can be explained through the perspectives of brand equity theory and strategic marketing capability, which view rebranding as a strategic effort to reconstruct the symbolic and functional value of a brand following disruptions to reputation or public trust.

In crisis situations, brands often experience an erosion of meaning, whereby previously positive brand associations are replaced by negative perceptions ([Coombs, 2007](#)). Rebranding functions as a signal of renewal to the market, indicating that the company not only acknowledges the crisis but also undertakes tangible transformation. This explains why systematically designed and consistently communicated rebranding efforts are able to improve firm performance, as also found by [Gürlek and Tuna \(2019\)](#) and [Muzellec and Lambkin \(2006\)](#).

Nevertheless, these results do not imply that rebranding is always effective. The positive findings of this study indicate that rebranding is effective when it is perceived as representing substantive change rather than merely cosmetic or visual adjustments. This is consistent with the view of [Merrilees and Miller \(2008\)](#), who emphasize that rebranding efforts undertaken without internal reform are likely to fail in generating long-term performance impacts.

### 4.2. The Impact of Brand Image on Firm Performance

Brand image is proven to exert a stronger influence than direct rebranding strategies, as reflected in the higher coefficient value (0.513). This result is consistent with the studies of [Keller \(1993\)](#) and [Hsieh and Li \(2008\)](#), which suggest that a positive brand image can enhance customer trust and loyalty, ultimately leading to improved firm performance. In this case, the company was able to restore the brand image damaged by the crisis by effectively and relevantly communicating new brand values. The finding that brand image has a stronger effect on firm performance than rebranding strategies directly indicates that brand image serves as a key underlying mechanism in the post-crisis recovery process. From the perspective of customer-based brand equity theory ([Keller, 1993](#)), firm performance is not determined solely by strategic actions, but rather by how these actions are interpreted and stored in consumers' memory.

These results are consistent with the studies of [Hsieh and Li \(2008\)](#) and [Eisingerich et al. \(2011\)](#), which demonstrate that changes in brand strategy affect performance only when they successfully create new and more positive brand associations. In crisis contexts, consumers tend to be skeptical; therefore, brand image functions as a trust heuristic that influences purchase decisions and loyalty.

Conversely, several previous studies have reported that rebranding may actually reduce short-term performance due to identity confusion or consumer resistance ([Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007](#)). This discrepancy can be explained by differences in contextual conditions and communication design. This study was conducted in a context where rebranding was accompanied by relatively transparent and consistent communication, thereby minimizing market resistance.

### 4.3. The Relationship between Rebranding Strategy and Brand Image

Although brand image was not tested as an intervening variable in this model, the descriptive findings indicate that rebranding strategies indirectly strengthen brand image. This suggests the presence of a mediating effect, as supported by [Coombs \(2007\)](#), who argues that post-crisis rebranding will only be successful if the public accepts and perceives the new identity as a representation of genuine improvement.

Even though brand image was not formally tested as a mediating variable, the empirical findings indicate that the effect of rebranding on firm performance largely operates through the formation of brand image. This is consistent with situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), which posits that a company's strategic responses first influence public evaluations before affecting behavioral outcomes and performance (Coombs, 2007).

Therefore, rebranding should not be understood as a direct intervention on performance, but rather as a perceptual intervention that reshapes how consumers interpret and assign meaning to the brand. This finding extends the rebranding literature, which has previously emphasized direct relationships between identity change and business performance, by highlighting the importance of perceptual mechanisms that have not been explicitly examined.

#### **4.4. Challenges and Risks in Rebranding Strategies**

Although the results of the study indicate a positive effect, several challenges were also identified, such as the risk of losing existing customers who disagree with the changes, identity confusion resulting from changes that are too drastic or poorly communicated, and misalignment between communication and reality, particularly when the new identity is not reflected in actual service delivery and operational practices. Although the findings support the proposed hypotheses, several plausible alternative explanations should be considered.

First, improvements in firm performance following rebranding may not be entirely attributable to rebranding itself, but rather to other external factors, such as market recovery, regulatory changes, or concurrent pricing and product strategies. In this context, rebranding may function as a symbolic marker of broader organizational change rather than as the sole driver of performance improvement.

Second, there is a possibility of reverse causality, whereby firms that begin to exhibit performance improvements become more confident in undertaking rebranding initiatives, resulting in a simultaneous relationship. Although the quantitative explanatory design provides indications of causal relationships, longitudinal research is required to more robustly examine the direction of causality.

This interpretation aligns with the view of Merrilees and Miller (2008), who argue that rebranding that does not address the root problems of the organization risks becoming merely a short-lived “cosmetic mask.” Therefore, rebranding should be accompanied by internal reforms, such as improvements in service quality, organizational culture, and innovation.

From a theoretical perspective, this study supports post-crisis rebranding models and underscores the importance of synergy among communication, perception, and performance. It enriches the existing literature, which has largely focused on rebranding in the context of market expansion, by highlighting rebranding as a crisis recovery strategy.

From a practical standpoint, the findings provide guidance for companies seeking to implement rebranding as a response to crisis. Companies are advised to first understand consumer perceptions before initiating changes, to build a change narrative that addresses emotional aspects, and to integrate rebranding efforts with internal reforms and service quality improvements.

The results further demonstrate that the effectiveness of rebranding strategies is contextual rather than universal. Several boundary conditions should be considered, including: (a) the type of crisis, as rebranding is more effective in reputational or trust-related crises than in crises directly associated with repeated product failures; (b) communication credibility, as rebranding is effective only when brand communication is perceived as honest and aligned with tangible organizational changes; (c) stakeholder involvement, since resistance from consumers and employees can weaken the impact of rebranding if not properly managed; and (d) the emerging market context, where high social sensitivity and the strong influence of digital public opinion in Indonesia amplify the role of brand image in shaping firm performance.

Thus, rebranding should not be treated as a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather as a strategic approach whose success depends on contextual factors, processes, and the quality of implementation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, post-crisis rebranding strategies should be positioned as corporate-level strategic decisions managed directly by top management, rather than merely as marketing initiatives. Top management should first conduct an internal crisis audit to identify the root causes of reputational, operational, or public trust issues that triggered the crisis, so that the rebranding effort is grounded in substantive change. Subsequently, companies need to formulate a new brand meaning that explicitly articulates the company's values, promises, and direction of change in the post-crisis period, and link it to at least one tangible internal reform—such as improvements in service quality or complaint-handling systems—so that rebranding is perceived as a credible representation of real change.

At the managerial level, particularly within marketing and brand communication functions, rebranding strategies should be communicated in a gradual and segmented manner, emphasizing acknowledgment of the crisis, rational explanations for the change, and evidence of the company's commitment through consistent messaging across all communication channels. In addition, employee involvement as internal stakeholders should be prioritized through internal branding initiatives prior to external brand launches, as misalignment between the new brand identity and employee behavior may weaken brand image formation and reduce the impact of rebranding on firm performance.

Despite the empirical contributions of this study, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, this study employs a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish temporal causal relationships among variables, particularly given that rebranding is a dynamic and long-term process. Second, the data are entirely perception-based, relying on consumer responses, which may introduce common method bias and may not fully represent objective firm performance. Third, the use of purposive sampling constrains sample representativeness, and therefore generalization of the findings across different industry sectors or geographic contexts should be approached with caution. Moreover, this study does not explicitly differentiate the types of crises experienced by companies, even though different crisis characteristics may lead to varied rebranding responses and consumer perceptions.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to employ longitudinal designs to observe changes in consumer perceptions and firm performance before, during, and after the rebranding process, thereby enabling a more comprehensive understanding of causal dynamics. Future studies should also integrate multi-source data, such as a combination of consumer surveys, managerial interviews, and objective performance indicators, to strengthen the validity of findings and reduce single-source bias. In addition, comparative studies across industry sectors or between emerging and developed economies may be conducted to test the contextual boundaries of post-crisis rebranding effectiveness. From a theoretical development perspective, future research is encouraged to formally test the mediating role of brand image and to incorporate theory-driven moderators—such as crisis responsibility attribution, brand credibility, or consumer skepticism—to enrich understanding of the conditions under which rebranding can function effectively as a firm performance recovery strategy.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. For Companies

Before undertaking rebranding, companies should conduct an in-depth analysis of the root causes of the crisis and public perceptions. This is essential to ensure that rebranding strategies address the underlying issues. Rebranding should not focus solely on visual changes, but must also reflect tangible changes in organizational values, culture, and service delivery. Brand communication should be implemented comprehensively and consistently across various communication channels, including digital platforms, traditional media, and direct interactions with consumers.

### 5.2. For Managers and Marketing Practitioners

Managers and practitioners should involve employees, customers, and business partners in the rebranding process to foster a sense of ownership and support the transition to a new brand identity.

Rebranding messages should be clear, relevant, and aligned with the expectations of target markets. Regular evaluations of consumer perceptions and the impact of rebranding on business performance should be conducted to allow for adjustments in communication strategies and service practices.

### **5.3. For Future Researchers**

Future studies may extend this research by incorporating additional variables such as consumer trust, customer experience, or organizational resilience. Comparative studies across different industry sectors (e.g., retail, banking, and digital industries) may be conducted to examine whether the impact of rebranding varies depending on industry context. In-depth qualitative research (such as case studies) is also recommended to further explore internal processes and organizational dynamics in managing post-crisis rebranding.

### **Ethical Approval**

Not Applicable

### **Informed Consent Statement**

Not Applicable

### **Authors' Contributions**

APU conceptualized the study, designed the research framework, conducted data collection, performed statistical analysis, and prepared the original draft of the manuscript. EF contributed to the development of research instruments, data interpretation, and discussion of findings. RNA assisted in literature review, data processing, and validation of results. PAJFK supported data analysis and contributed to manuscript revision. YYK provided methodological guidance and critically reviewed the manuscript. RSF contributed to the refinement of the discussion, conclusions, and final editing of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

### **Disclosure Statement**

The Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

### **Data Availability Statement**

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author for privacy.

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