




Formal Challenges of Criminal Liability of Legal Persons in Iran's Criminal Justice System

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In this discussion, we aim to address the topic of the formal challenges of criminal liability of legal persons in Iran's criminal justice system and the procedural issues associated with it. One of the innovations of the Islamic Penal Code ratified in 2013 is the recognition of criminal liability for legal persons. The significance and special status of legal persons in contemporary society compelled the legislator to establish this important institution in criminal law by dedicating several articles to it. Criminal liability of legal persons has not been discussed in Islamic jurisprudence. This research examines the criminal liability of legal persons in Iran's criminal justice system. The foundations of criminal liability of legal persons differ between jurisprudence and law, although there are similarities in the reasoning process; however, the methods of proof vary. The basis of the criminal liability of legal persons is vicarious liability. Legal persons may attempt to conceal their assets to evade the enforcement of criminal judgments. Additionally, corruption and collusion can influence judicial and enforcement procedures, thereby harming justice and trust in the judicial system. Delays in various stages of the judicial process, such as issuing judgments later than expected and delays in executing enforcement actions, can also reduce confidence in justice. Insufficient coordination and cooperation between judicial, enforcement, and law enforcement institutions can present obstacles to enforcing criminal judgments against legal persons. These challenges highlight the necessity of reforms and changes in Iran's judicial and criminal enforcement systems to improve procedural efficiency and enhance justice when dealing with legal persons who bear criminal liability. The research methodology is analytical and descriptive. The findings of this study emphasize reforming the perpetrator and facilitating fair trial proceedings, ensuring that the harm inflicted on victims is adequately compensated. Given the resources available to legal persons, they are in a better position than natural persons to compensate the victims of crimes. Punishing legal persons upholds the principle of equality before the law and the principle of the individuality of punishments, thereby promoting justice and fairness.

Keywords: Criminal liability, legal persons, jurisprudential foundations, legal foundations, natural persons.

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1. Introduction

The criminal liability of legal persons in Iran's criminal justice system is one of the complex and sensitive issues faced with multiple procedural challenges. Legal persons, as legal entities that can

potentially bear criminal liability, are pursued for legal violations. However, in practice, determining the criminal liability of legal persons and enforcing judicial rulings for them may encounter procedural obstacles and challenges. Procedural challenges in the criminal



liability of legal persons can include factors such as unclear laws, the complexity of judicial processes, difficulties in proving liability, and issues in the enforcement of criminal rulings. These challenges may directly impact the fairness and efficiency of the criminal justice system, leading to delays in legal proceedings, legal uncertainty, and difficulties in the reactive nature of some legal persons. In this context, examining and understanding the procedural challenges related to the criminal liability of legal persons in Iran's criminal justice system is of great importance, as it can identify the necessary solutions and reforms to improve the current situation. These analyses and investigations can facilitate the administration of justice, protect people's rights, and enhance the efficiency of the judicial system.

2. Concept of Criminal Liability of Legal Persons

Criminal liability of legal persons refers to the imposition of legal and criminal consequences on a legal person for committing a crime or criminal offense. In essence, natural persons, by committing crimes and offenses, are often pursued and prosecuted as legal persons, such as companies, organizations, and various firms. The criminal liability of legal persons may be determined due to their actions or contributions to committing crimes and criminal offenses. This liability can include directives overseeing the activities of legal persons, misconduct by officials, or violations of relevant laws and regulations. In various legal systems, the criteria and processes for determining the criminal liability of legal persons may differ, but overall, the significance of this issue for upholding justice, enforcing laws, and strengthening the legal and criminal system is very high.

3. Types of Liability

Liability can be categorized from different perspectives. The most common categorization found in legal literature is as follows:

3.1. Moral Liability

Moral liability refers to a type of liability that the legislator has not addressed (Tajmiri, 1996), such as a person's responsibility towards themselves, God, or others. The enforcement mechanism for such liability is only the impact of conscience and is internal, without legal sanctions. In other words, moral liability is the

reprimand of conscience for wrongdoing; an evil intention within a person can morally make someone responsible, and moral liability relates to the inner self (Katouzian, 1995).

3.2. Legal Liability

Legal liability is the liability that has been anticipated by law and has legal enforcement mechanisms (civil, criminal, and administrative), whereby a person is responsible to others (Jafari Langroudi, 2005). The branches of legal or statutory liability include civil liability, criminal liability, and administrative liability, which differ in some respects but share the common element of breaching a binding obligation imposed by a contract or law.

3.3. Civil Liability

Civil liability is defined as the obligation to compensate another person's damage. In other words, a person is considered civilly liable when they are required to redress the harm caused to another (Katouzian, 1995). A more comprehensive definition states that civil liability is the duty or obligation of a person to compensate for the damage inflicted on another, regardless of whether the damage results from the responsible person's actions, those of their affiliates, or objects and property under their ownership or control (Lorasa, 1996).

Civil liability is divided into two main categories:

a) **Contractual Liability**, also known as liability arising from a contract, which occurs when a failure to fulfill a contractual obligation leads to liability. Contractual liability has a contractual basis, and the party breaching the contract is obligated to compensate the damage caused to the obligee (Lorasa, 1996).

b) **Tort Liability**, also referred to as non-contractual liability, arises from legal orders and prohibitions. In other words, tort liability exists when a violation of a legal duty results in harm to someone (Lorasa, 1996). It does not require a prior contract or obligation for liability to be established. Any legal liability that lacks the characteristics of contractual liability is termed tort liability (Jafari Langroudi, 2005). As such, civil liability, in its broader sense, encompasses both contractual and tort liability. The Civil Liability Law of 1960 employs this term in the aforementioned sense.

3.4. Administrative Liability

Administrative liability arises when a government employee commits a mistake or administrative offense. The legislator has stipulated specific punishments for administrative offenses and has designated courts to address such matters. Article 1 of the Law on the Handling of Administrative Violations, ratified on December 15, 1993, enumerates administrative offenses (Mousazadeh, 1998).

3.5. Criminal Liability

In general, criminal liability refers to the obligation of a person to answer for offenses against others, whether to protect individual rights or to defend society. This concept is known as "criminal liability" or "penal liability". According to the Legal Terminology book, criminal liability is defined as the liability of a perpetrator for committing a crime specified by law, and the responsible person will be subject to one of the punishments stipulated by law. The harmed party from a crime is usually society, in contrast to civil liability, where the affected parties are individuals (Shambiati, 1992). Our discussion also pertains to criminal liability in the legal and jurisprudential sense, where scholars have attributed liability for certain subjects, such as public titles and assets, even though they are not human (Shambiati, 1992).

4. Legal Persons in Law

In none of the laws is there a definition of a legal person or legal personality, although various laws and regulations have addressed their rights and obligations. Thus, jurists, based on their perspectives, have provided definitions for this concept.

Among the legal relationships existing in society, there are rights and obligations whose subjects are not natural persons but groups and institutions that possess assets similar to natural persons. These entities are called legal, fictitious, or moral persons. Legal persons are created through legal recognition and acceptance because acquiring rights and obligations is a necessity for a natural human existence, while legal persons are not natural beings. Some jurists argue that a legal person is a legal entity recognized by law for societal benefits, allowing it to have specific assets and defend its

exclusive interests. It is distinct from natural persons and has a separate legal existence, its own will independent of its members, and unique legal activities different from those of its members. Legal persons must be supported by law to ensure their will is effective and their activities are not nullified, which entails the legal recognition of their personality (Shambiati, 1992). A legal person can be defined as a group of individuals or a public interest recognized by statutory law as equivalent to a natural person and the subject of rights and obligations (Jafari Langroudi, 2005). Some jurists have defined a legal person as follows:

From the perspective of legal terminology, a "person" (civil) is an entity subject to rights, such as a human being, a commercial company, charitable organizations, or the government. Therefore, the term "person" includes both natural (human or natural person) and legal persons. The term "person" does not commonly refer to a commercial house in our regulations except in a single article of the legal bill regarding the exchange agreement for the sale of oil and gas and its operation, which states: "A person refers to either a natural or legal person, including partnerships, trading houses, companies, registered or unregistered associations" (Jafari Langroudi, 2005).

5. Significance of Criminal Liability of Legal Persons

The criminal liability of legal persons holds substantial importance in the legal system, justified from various aspects. Some reasons for the importance of criminal liability of legal persons include the following:

Administration of Justice: Determining and enforcing criminal liability for legal persons can contribute to the realization of the principles of criminal justice. If legal persons are exempt from their criminal responsibilities, it can lead to inequality and injustice in prosecuting offenses.

Crime Prevention: The existence of criminal liability for legal persons can serve as an effective deterrent against crimes and offenses. Awareness of the legal and criminal consequences of their actions may decrease the likelihood of legal persons committing offenses.

Strengthening the Law: Imposing criminal liability on legal persons can enhance respect for laws and regulations. Knowing that adherence to laws is obligatory and that non-compliance will result in criminal liability increases respect for the legal system.

Creating Effectiveness: The implementation of criminal liability for legal persons can help enhance the efficiency of the judicial system. Despite potential challenges in establishing criminal liability, if properly enforced, it can increase trust in the judiciary and improve the effectiveness of law enforcement. Therefore, criminal liability of legal persons is of significant importance, and its proper implementation can reinforce public confidence in the judiciary, promote justice, and prevent crimes.

6. Laws Related to the Criminal Liability of Legal Persons in Iran

In Iran, the criminal liability of legal persons is regulated by the Iranian Penal Code. The Penal Code, enacted in 2013, outlines provisions related to the criminal liability of legal persons, including the following:

Article 28: This article addresses the criminal liability of legal persons, stating that if a legal person commits an offense and violates criminal laws and regulations, it must face proportionate financial penalties.

Article 29: This article also discusses the liability of legal persons and the imposition of sanctions (penal measures) against those legal persons that have committed offenses.

The criminal liability of legal persons is a contentious topic in Iranian criminal law, with disagreements among jurists. Some jurists deny the criminal liability of legal persons, while others affirm it. With the enactment of the Islamic Penal Code of 2013, criminal liability of legal persons became an institution recognized by the legislator. Before this legislation, other laws had briefly addressed the issue. The explicit acceptance of criminal liability of legal persons resolved one of the contentious issues in the law. Understanding the legal foundations on which the liability of legal persons is based is crucial for determining appropriate punishments. Without this understanding, criminal justice goals and the implementation of justice cannot be achieved (Jafari Langroudi, 2005).

7. Nature of Legal Persons

Recognizing the nature of legal persons is crucial in holding them accountable, as jurists who deny the existence of legal persons cannot impose liability on them. Today, due to the significance and expansion of

legal persons' existence in social life, denying their existence is not a valid argument. Thus, the nature of legal persons is examined based on three theories (Shambiati, 1992).

These excerpts related to the criminal liability of legal persons are only part of the provisions outlined in the laws regarding their liability in Iran. For a more detailed and thorough study, one should refer to the Iranian Penal Code.

8. Procedural Challenges in the Criminal Liability of Legal Persons

Article 143 of the Islamic Penal Code stipulates that the criminal liability of a legal person does not preclude the criminal liability of the natural person who committed the crime. This means that the criminal liability of a legal person can coexist with that of a natural person. In other words, while a legal person is now subject to criminal liability and can be penalized, this does not absolve the natural person who committed the crime from punishment. Several reasons support this:

Firstly, according to the principle of the individuality of punishments, any person who commits a crime must personally bear the punishment, and except in extraordinary cases, it is not permissible to punish someone else for the perpetrator's actions.

Secondly, even if the natural person acted as a representative of the legal person, they committed the criminal act independently and exercised free will (Jafari Langroudi, 2005). In fact, unlike cases of indirect perpetration where the direct agent is merely an instrument without criminal intent, the legal representative of a legal person acts with full free will and deserves punishment. The provision of criminal liability for legal persons is implemented for social and criminological reasons and to better administer justice, without negating the liability of the primary offender.

Thirdly, the absence of criminal liability for the natural person who committed the crime, as outlined in Article 143, is inconsistent with the above-mentioned principles of criminal law and contradicts well-established criminological doctrines. On one hand, there is no doubt that the primary perpetrator of the crime and the disruptor of public order is a conscious being whose decisions or actions led to the crime's occurrence. Thus, crime prevention is only achievable when this perpetrator receives an appropriate societal response to

their criminal behavior and is explicitly warned that repeat offenses will result in harsher consequences. On the other hand, legislators have occasionally ignored the criminal liability of legal persons due to social and political considerations. For instance, Article 20 of the Islamic Penal Code explicitly states that "the punishments specified in this article are not applicable to governmental or public non-governmental legal persons when they exercise sovereignty" (Jafari Langroudi, 2005). It is evident that, in such cases, overlooking the crime entirely and leaving it unpunished would be unacceptable. Both justice and criminological considerations demand that, at the very least, the natural person responsible for the decision and the primary perpetrator be held accountable to ensure that no crime remains unpunished and to prevent others from assuming they can commit offenses under the protection of a governmental or public non-governmental legal entity.

Fourthly, this legislative policy serves to prevent criminals from exploiting the legal system. If the legislator relied solely on the criminal liability of legal persons, it would inadvertently create opportunities for ruthless, professional criminals to commit crimes as legal representatives and, after making substantial illicit profits, witness the legal person be penalized while they remain unpunished, leaving many innocent people to suffer the consequences of a crime they did not commit. When the legal person faces penalties that could lead to its dissolution or weakening, it is likely that these criminals would establish another legal entity and continue their illegal activities. The potential consequences of such legislative gaps have led the legislator to emphasize the enduring liability of primary offenders despite the established principles of criminal law.

The criminal liability of legal persons, like any other legal issue, encounters specific challenges. One major procedural challenge is identifying the responsible individuals. Legal persons often consist of multiple, diverse individuals, complicating the identification and assignment of responsibility for criminal acts or offenses. Another challenge lies in determining the extent of the criminal liability of legal persons. Factors such as the severity of the harm, the violation of relevant laws, and the legal person's behavioral history must be considered when deciding penalties. The concept of criminal liability

of legal persons might seem ambiguous or complex to some, and raising public awareness and understanding of this subject can facilitate better comprehension and acceptance. Effective and proper oversight of the activities of legal persons and the fair and logical enforcement of laws are also critical challenges. Adequate supervision and law enforcement can positively impact the application of criminal liability to legal persons. These challenges represent only a portion of the issues that legislators and judicial authorities may face concerning the criminal liability of legal persons.

9. Ambiguity of Laws on Procedural Challenges of Criminal Liability of Legal Persons in Iran's Criminal Justice System

Ambiguity in laws is one of the issues that can lead to procedural challenges in the criminal liability of legal persons within Iran's criminal justice system. If the laws and regulations related to the criminal liability of legal persons are ambiguous or vague, this can result in difficulties in determining the degree of liability, imposing appropriate penalties, and conducting precise oversight. Such a situation can lead to complexity, delays in judicial processes, and even dissatisfaction among affected individuals. To address this challenge, it is essential to improve the clarity and precision of laws related to the criminal liability of legal persons. Drafting and revising laws to minimize ambiguities, clarify concepts, and clearly define the degrees of liability can improve the enforcement process and the application of criminal liability. Moreover, effective communication to inform the public and legal persons about these laws and regulations is crucial to prevent misunderstandings. Utilizing an efficient and fair judicial system is another solution that can help overcome procedural challenges in the criminal liability of legal persons. Administering justice so that all persons, including legal persons, experience equality before the law can enhance public trust in the judiciary and ensure transparency and fairness in the process of imposing criminal liability.

The progress of societies has brought legal persons into the social sphere, and their extensive presence has led to issues, including the commission of crimes by these entities. Consequently, governments have sought ways to prevent crimes committed by institutions. However, the criteria for criminal liability for natural persons (maturity, reason, and free will) were incompatible with

the nature of legal persons. For a long time, the prevailing belief was that only natural persons could possess will and reason, and therefore criminal liability.

Thus, while the needs of society justified the criminal liability of legal persons, such liability was inconsistent with the foundations of criminal liability for natural persons. Eventually, the belief that punishing legal persons, more than any other sanction, fulfills the objectives of criminal law for these entities prevailed (Zar'aat, 2006), as imposing punishment not only signifies the protection of a value and condemnation of behavior contrary to it but also serves as a deterrent.

Although legal persons can commit crimes similar to those committed by natural persons, they cannot be subjected to the same punishments as natural persons. However, in line with the purpose of punishment, which is to inflict a degree of pain on violators of the law (Shiki, 2014), penalties can be devised for legal persons in proportion to their character. These penalties can range from destructive punishments, such as dissolution or permanent closure, to severe disruptive penalties like asset confiscation, to partial disruptive penalties like temporary bans from certain professional activities and reputational sanctions (Sanei, 1992). Thus, the study of punishment types for legal persons (including primary, supplementary, and ancillary punishments) is a crucial aspect of criminal law, starting with the classification of primary punishments for legal persons and then addressing supplementary, ancillary, and religious punishments.

The complexity of laws regarding procedural challenges in the criminal liability of legal persons can be one of the main issues in Iran's criminal justice system. Factors such as the large number of laws and regulations related to the criminal liability of legal persons can lead to conflicts and contradictions among them. This complicates the understanding and enforcement of laws, causing inconsistency and ineffectiveness in applying criminal liability. Additionally, frequent changes in laws and regulations require continuous legal knowledge updates for judges, lawyers, and other related individuals, which can lead to complexity and inconsistency in law enforcement. Ambiguities and lack of clarity in the wording of laws related to the criminal liability of legal persons can also make interpretation and enforcement difficult. These ambiguities may result in varied interpretations and inconsistent judicial

rulings. To mitigate the complexities of laws concerning procedural challenges in the criminal liability of legal persons, reforms and improvements in the regulations, enhancing clarity and transparency in laws, advancing legal knowledge in society, and strengthening an efficient and fair judiciary are necessary. Coordination among judicial authorities in interpreting and enforcing relevant laws is also crucial to minimize potential complications.

10. Difficulties in Proving Liability

One of the existing problems in penalizing legal persons is the lack of enforcement measures in case of non-compliance. For instance, Paragraph 5 of Article 20 of the Penal Code specifies fines as an enforcement mechanism. However, if a legal person fails to pay the fine, it cannot be converted into another punishment. Moreover, insolvency regulations do not apply to legal persons. It is therefore recommended that the legislator establish enforcement mechanisms for such cases or provide for alternatives.

Proving the liability of legal persons in Iran's criminal justice system may involve challenges that complicate the process of establishing responsibility. To prove the liability of legal persons, clear and sufficient evidence and documentation must be presented. If the evidence is ambiguous or inadequate, proving liability may become problematic. Additionally, the complexity and overlap of evidence and reasons may make the analysis and assessment of liability difficult. In cases where various pieces of evidence are interwoven, determining liability can be time-consuming and challenging. Lack of coordination among different judicial institutions can lead to delays and obstacles in proving the liability of legal persons. Inadequate collaboration between courts, law enforcement, the prosecution, and other enforcement bodies can negatively impact judicial processes. To resolve these issues and facilitate the process of proving liability for legal persons, adherence to principles of justice, attention to transparency, fostering coordination among judicial institutions, improving judicial procedures, and providing proper training to relevant individuals can be effective.

11. Challenges in Enforcing Criminal Judgments

Legal persons may resist the enforcement of criminal judgments and attempt to delay their implementation. This issue can create numerous problems for judicial enforcement bodies, victims, and society as a whole. Legal persons may engage in actions to conceal their assets to avoid the enforcement of criminal judgments against them. This can complicate the enforcement process and cause delays in judgment execution. Delays in the judicial process, including late issuance of judgments and delays in carrying out enforcement actions, can increase costs, hinder compensation for damages, and reduce public trust. To enhance efficiency and minimize problems in enforcing criminal judgments related to the liability of legal persons, reforms in relevant laws, streamlining and expediting the judicial process, improving coordination among different judicial institutions, developing technology in the field of enforcement, and creating new methods to address challenges can be beneficial.

12. Solutions for Addressing Procedural Challenges

Strengthening coordination among institutions: Enhancing coordination and cooperation among various judicial, executive, and law enforcement bodies can improve the enforcement process and reduce inefficiencies. Promoting transparency in judicial and enforcement processes can help reduce corruption and asset concealment. Facilitating and expediting judicial and enforcement procedures, such as reducing the time to issue judgments, simplifying enforcement actions, and providing opportunities for appeal, can improve the enforcement process. Educating legal persons about their responsibilities and enforcement guidelines can reduce minor issues and raise awareness. The use of modern technology in the enforcement of criminal judgments can improve efficiency and transparency. These solutions can contribute to improving the enforcement process for criminal judgments related to the liability of legal persons and help resolve associated procedural challenges.

13. Conclusion

1. Individuals exist in two forms. One is natural, like human beings who are born, live, and die; these are referred to as natural persons. The other form is legal or fictitious, where people

attribute personality to an entity created by legal recognition, even if it does not have a physical existence, which is described in legal terms as a legal person.

2. The concept of legal personality is a modern term, emerging after the scientific development of legal discussions. It was not addressed in earlier times, particularly during the era of the prophets, and if any similar instances can be found from that period, they do not align with the independent legal concept that exists today.
3. The term "legal personality" is not used in jurisprudence, but various related concepts are found in Islamic law. Assigning ownership capacity and liability to non-human entities, such as public interests and undefined categories, today recognized as legal persons, and the validity of wills and endowments for them, indicate the acceptance and acknowledgment of "legal personality" in jurisprudence, even though the term is not explicitly used. The practical consensus confirms the legitimacy of interacting with legal persons.
4. The commission of a crime by any person, whether natural or legal, requires the presence of material and moral elements. However, since legal persons do not have a tangible physical presence to commit the material element of a crime or possess the moral element, criminal law has adopted an individualistic approach to liability. Consequently, the existence of legal persons is recognized in all societies, and it is accepted that legal persons have a distinct collective will separate from the individual wills of their members. Therefore, when a legal person decides to commit a criminal act, it is considered to have expressed a criminal intent, which is entirely valid in a legal sense. Just as a legal person can open a bank account or engage in transactions in its name, it can also be held criminally liable.
5. Vicarious liability, which is essentially the theory of criminal liability based on another's actions, suggests that agents of legal persons act on their behalf, and the legal person borrows the mental element from its agents.

6. According to the principal-agent theory, the legal acts of the primary agents and representatives of a legal person are attributed to the entity itself, holding the legal person accountable. This theory is based on the notion that legal persons are fictional entities. Another basis, vicarious criminal liability, argues that liability arises from a failure to exercise proper oversight and control. When a crime occurs due to inadequate supervision, and a senior or supervisory individual within the legal person is responsible for this lack of proper management, liability is established. Article 143 of the Penal Code adopts the representation standard, embracing the principal-agent theory for discretionary punishments in Article 20, but for liability related to blood money, the vicarious liability theory is upheld according to the note in Article 14.
7. In legal and jurisprudential sources, criminal liability has traditionally been limited to natural persons, and no reference is made to the criminal liability of legal persons. Therefore, such liability is not formally recognized in Islamic jurisprudence. However, with the expansion of society and the extensive activities of legal persons in all aspects of human life, crimes committed by these entities have become significant. It is established that whoever commits an act or omission that constitutes a crime under the law must be punished, and failure to perform prohibited or obligatory acts also warrants punishment, making legal persons punishable under jurisprudence.
8. Recognizing the criminal liability of legal persons supports the principle of equality before the law and the principle of the individuality of punishments, fostering justice and fairness. Legal fairness dictates that just as natural persons are held accountable and liable for damages, violations, or crimes in social and economic contexts, the same should apply to legal persons.
9. The commission of a crime in the name of or for the benefit of a legal person by its legal representative, along with a causal link between

the legal person's conduct and the resulting harm, forms the elements of criminal liability for legal persons.

10. According to Article 20 and the note in Article 14, the type and manner of establishing liability in these provisions differ. Article 20 states: "When a legal person is held liable under Article 143," suggesting that the legislator acknowledges various forms of liability for legal persons. The liability created under Article 143 of the Islamic Penal Code pertains only to discretionary and hudud offenses, whereas liability for civil and criminal offenses based on personal injury is governed by the note in Article 14.
11. Not every crime can be attributed to a legal person. Just as not all punishments can be imposed on legal persons, not every crime is assignable to them.

In conclusion, the criminal liability of legal persons in Iran's criminal justice system can face various challenges. Procedural challenges may arise when legal persons attempt to conceal assets to avoid criminal judgments, complicating enforcement and causing delays. Legal persons may resist enforcement and deliberately delay proceedings, causing numerous problems for judicial authorities, victims, and society. Corruption and collusion can also disrupt the enforcement of judgments, undermining justice and public trust. Delays in judicial processes, such as late issuance of judgments and delayed enforcement actions, are also among the issues discussed in this article.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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