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Students' Needs Analysis of General English Course at Halu Oleo University

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Abstract
The General English course is a compulsory subject for non-English major students in Indonesian higher education. However, the curriculum is not comprehensive enough to meet the learners' needs for academic and communicative competence. This study aims to investigate the needs of non-English-major students in the General English course at Universitas Halu Oleo, Indonesia, regarding language components, skills, learning difficulties, and classroom activities. The quantitative study involved 123 students in the 2025/2026 academic year. Data were collected through a questionnaire with a Likert scale, and analysed through descriptive statistics in IBM SPSS Statistics. The results showed that students were interested in improving their pronunciation and that the most difficult part was grammar. The most developed and desirable skill in the classroom was listening. The less developed skill was speaking. Students also complained about sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar accuracy, and pronunciation. Results show a re-organization of the general English teaching through a needs-based approach that includes pronunciation practice, vocabulary development, contextualized grammar, guided speaking tasks, reading support, and a variety of classroom activities.

Keywords: *Needs Analysis; General English; Non-English Major Students; Syllabus Design; Higher Education.*

1. Introduction

The General English course is often considered less responsive to students' specific academic English needs. English is often made a compulsory subject for students in certain study programs in the Indonesian higher education system (Yusra & Hanifa, 2025). The learning process is frequently a function of institutional routines, faculty preferences, or the availability of instructional resources, rather than students' needs, learning obstacles, and future academic requirements (Apridayani et al., 2023). This situation shows a gap between the design of the General English course and the real academic and communicative needs of the students. This is especially true for non-English study programs where students are required to use English not only to meet course requirements but also to read academic texts, to engage with digital knowledge, to prepare for professional interaction, and to become part of a larger academic community. Needs analysis is a key component of curriculum development, helping teachers to determine students' main needs, gaps, goals, preferred ways of learning, and affective factors involved in learning English (Gan et al., 2023; Skerritt et al., 2023). In this sense, the students are not seen as passive recipients of predetermined curricula but as fundamental participants in the development of English language teaching that is pedagogically relevant, contextually sensitive, and responsive to their real academic experiences.

The consideration of student perspectives is not merely a pedagogical choice anymore but a critical need to make general English relevant in higher education. Recent research in language education has

revealed that students' needs vary in terms of different academic contexts, disciplinary backgrounds, learning experiences, motivation, self-efficacy, and expectations of classroom learning methodologies (Daoayan Biaddang & Caroy, 2024). This finding suggests that students in higher education cannot be considered as a homogenous group with the same English learning priorities. Studies of student voice demonstrate that involving students in curriculum studies can lead to heightened engagement, a sense of ownership, and more relevant classroom learning. The needs analysis of the University General English Course at Halu Oleo University is necessary. Students who are not from an English academic background may have different perceptions of the most important English skills, the most difficult linguistic elements, the most useful classroom activities, and the relationship between English and their future academic and professional aspirations (Bakogiannis et al., 2026; Figueroa Saavedra et al., 2021). This research focuses on students' perspectives to generate empirical evidence for designing a more student-centered General English course adapted to the local context of Indonesian higher education.

Needs analysis is an important aspect of language course development, but students' perspectives are often underrepresented in university General English programs. The need to acquire English has been emphasized in previous research across English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), academic writing, oral communication, and technology-enhanced learning (Fitria, 2024; Song & Zhou, 2022). These studies illustrate that students' English language needs are influenced by academic environment, disciplinary background, and potential professional duties. Studies of EAP tend to foreground academic reading and writing, whereas studies of ESP foreground discipline-based and professional communication. Whereas General English courses tend to be general courses with standard content. This difference demonstrates that General English requires a more contextualised approach so that its content can be connected to students' academic and professional expectations. However, limited studies have examined the specific General English needs of non-English-major students at Universitas Halu Oleo. Students from different academic programs have different needs, challenges, and expectations in learning English because their academic background shapes their language learning goals, perceived difficulties, and expectations toward English instruction (Alim et al., 2025; Smith et al., 2022). Hence, it is necessary to investigate their views to determine whether the course content, class activities, and pedagogical approaches fulfill their actual academic needs.

The present study aims to investigate the English-language needs of non-English-major students enrolled in the General English Course at Halu Oleo University, Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceived needs of the essential English skills and components, their learning problems, the classroom practices they expect, the learning activities they like most, and their attitudes and motivation towards learning English. The present study contributes to the needs analysis literature by addressing these aspects with evidence from a public university setting in Indonesia. Unlike previous studies, it recognises students as not only the learners of a compulsory subject but also as the main informants in improving the General English curriculum. The findings are expected to provide empirical information for the improvement of the curriculum, instructional methods, and pedagogical approach of the General English course.

This research improves the General English course by prioritizing students' views as the primary data source for the curriculum. This research indicates that students at some higher education institutions in Indonesia view their need to learn English as an individual matter, not as a standardized, compulsory subject of General English. This study provides context-specific insights to make the General English course relevant to students' needs and academic significance at Halu Oleo University.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey approach (Creswell, 2014) to explore students' views on their English language requirements in the General English course at Halu Oleo University, Indonesia. The methodology was appropriate, as the study aimed to investigate students' perceived needs, in terms of learning needs, challenges, classroom activity preferences, and expectations of the course using quantifiable data. The survey methodology enabled the researcher to gather empirical data from a group

of students and to identify prevailing trends in their responses, thereby improving the design and implementation of the General English course.

2.2 Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at Halu Oleo University, Indonesia, in the context of the compulsory General English course. The participants of the study were the students who enrolled in the General English course in the academic year 2025/2026. The total number of the participants of the study was 123 students. The subjects were selected by purposive sampling technique because they were directly involved in the General English course and had relevant learning experiences related to the focus of the study. The inclusion criterion was active enrollment in the General English course during the data collection period. The responses of students from different academic programs were considered important for understanding the structure of General English that should be provided to meet their intellectual and communicative needs.

2.3 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using a standardized Likert-scale questionnaire.The aim of the questionnaire was to investigate what students considered to be the needs in the General English course of the university. The questionnaire consisted of 44 items organized into four main sections. The first section consisted of 12 items on students' perceived needs for English language components, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The second section consisted of 12 items on students' perceived needs for English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The third section consisted of 6 items on students' perceived barriers in learning English. The fourth section consisted of 14 items on students' preferred English learning activities and resources.

Each questionnaire item was rated on a five-point scale based on the instrument's response categories, so that students could express the degree of relevance, difficulty, frequency, usefulness, or agreement with reference to their English learning needs. The scale was interpreted as follows: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, and 5 = very high. The mean scores were interpreted using five categories: 1.00 to 1.80 = very low, 1.81 to 2.60 = low, 2.61 to 3.40 = moderate, 3.41 to 4.20 = high, and 4.21 to 5.00 = very high. The questionnaire was distributed by using Google Forms for systematic distribution, rapid data collection, and accurate writing of the participants' responses.

Before distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure the clarity of the items, their relevance, and their consistency with the purpose of the General English needs analysis. The review focused on whether the items sufficiently covered students' academic English needs, classroom practice expectations, learning difficulties, and preferred learning activities. Items that were unclear or overlapping were revised before the questionnaire was administered. The observation sheet was employed as an additional instrument to capture classroom practices, teacher responsibilities, learning activities, student engagement, instructional media, and the implementation of the General English course. The observation sheet was not used as the main quantitative instrument. It served as supporting contextual data to help explain the instructional setting in which students' needs appeared during the General English course.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with the latest version of the IBM SPSS Statistics. The questionnaire responses were coded using the five-point Likert scale and entered into SPSS for analysis. A reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was performed to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The reliability test indicated a good internal consistency with an overall Cronbach's alpha value of 0.887. The Cronbach's alpha values for the questionnaire sections ranged from 0.842 to 0.946, indicating acceptable to excellent reliability. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum scores, were calculated for each questionnaire item and for the composite scores of the primary dimensions of language components, language skills, learning difficulties, preferred learning activities, classroom expectations, and attitudes toward English learning. The results were analyzed to identify the dominant trends in students' needs in the General English course. The observation sheet was analyzed descriptively by identifying recurring patterns related to classroom practices, learning activities, student engagement, instructional media, and course implementation. The observation

findings were used as additional contextual data to support the interpretation of the questionnaire findings.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The descriptive analysis was conducted to identify students' perceived needs in the General English course based on four major dimensions: language component needs, English skill needs, English learning barriers, and preferred learning activities and resources. The analysis used mean scores, standard deviations, minimum scores, maximum scores, and interpretation categories to describe the dominant patterns in students' responses. The results are presented sequentially to show how students evaluated the importance of English language components, their engagement, and self-perceived mastery across English skills, the barriers they experienced in learning English, and the activities they considered useful for supporting their English development. The conceptual framework underlying the dimensions of students' perceived needs in the General English course is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Conceptualization of students' perceived needs in General English

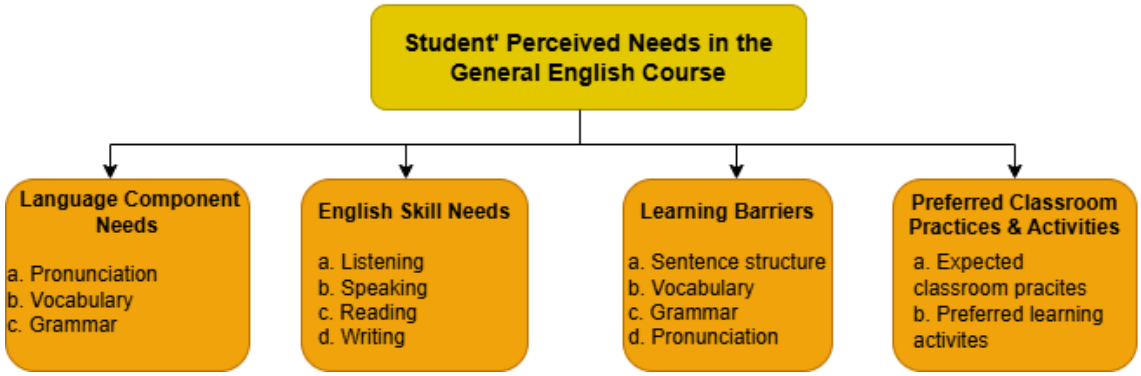


Figure 1 demonstrates the conceptual interrelationship among the dimensions of students' perceived needs in the General English course at Halu Oleo University . The framework conceptualizes students' needs as a multidimensional construct comprising four interrelated domains: linguistic component needs, English proficiency needs, learning barriers, and preferred instructional methods and activities. The language component consists of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar as basic elements that help students develop their English language skills. The required skills in English are listening, speaking, reading and writing, which are the main communicative competences that are expected to be acquired during the General English course. The framework outlines key learning issues in sentence construction, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, and emphasizes the linguistic obstacles that can impact students' understanding and language fluency. Preferred teaching methods and learning activities are combined to meet students' expectations for a supportive and engaging learning experience. The framework suggests that students' needs are pedagogically related and should be addressed through a learner-centered, contextually grounded approach to General English training in higher education. Students' language component needs are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Students' Perceived Needs for English Language Components

Aspect	Component	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Interpretation
Perceived importance	Grammar	4.20	0.90	2	5	Very high
Perceived importance	Vocabulary	4.37	0.84	2	5	Very high
Perceived importance	Pronunciation	4.38	0.79	2	5	Very high
Expected classroom practice	Grammar	3.89	0.92	2	5	High
Expected classroom practice	Vocabulary	4.08	0.92	2	5	High

Aspect	Component	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Interpretation
Expected classroom practice	Pronunciation	4.07	0.89	2	5	High
Perceived difficulty	Grammar	3.09	1.07	1	5	Moderate
Perceived difficulty	Vocabulary	2.82	1.02	1	5	Moderate
Perceived difficulty	Pronunciation	2.98	1.16	1	5	Moderate
Contribution to English success	Grammar	4.13	0.87	2	5	High
Contribution to English success	Vocabulary	4.26	0.77	2	5	Very high
Contribution to English success	Pronunciation	4.28	0.78	2	5	Very high

Table 1 shows that pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar were all perceived as important components of General English. Pronunciation received the highest score for perceived importance, while vocabulary and pronunciation showed very high contributions to English success. In contrast, grammar had the highest difficulty score, although it remained in the moderate category. These findings indicate that pronunciation and vocabulary are students' primary component-related needs, while grammar requires systematic instructional support. Students' perceived needs across the four English skills are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Students' Perceived Needs for English Language Skills

Aspect	Skill	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Interpretation
Frequency of engagement	Listening	3.72	0.81	1	5	High
Frequency of engagement	Speaking	3.18	0.78	1	5	Moderate
Frequency of engagement	Reading	3.33	0.87	1	5	Moderate
Frequency of engagement	Writing	3.29	0.79	1	5	Moderate
Self perceived mastery	Listening	3.11	1.07	1	5	Moderate
Self perceived mastery	Speaking	2.67	1.00	1	5	Moderate
Self perceived mastery	Reading	2.92	0.98	1	5	Moderate
Self perceived mastery	Writing	3.03	1.02	1	5	Moderate
Expected classroom practice	Listening	3.72	0.93	2	5	High
Expected classroom practice	Speaking	3.62	0.99	1	5	High
Expected classroom practice	Reading	3.67	0.93	1	5	High
Expected classroom practice	Writing	3.61	0.98	1	5	High

Table 2 indicates a gap between students' current engagement, self-perceived mastery, and expected classroom practice. Listening showed the highest engagement and expected classroom practice. However, speaking received the lowest self-perceived mastery score, suggesting that students viewed oral production as their weakest skill. Overall, all four skills received high scores for expected classroom practice, indicating that students need more balanced and structured practice in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students' English learning barriers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Students' Perceived Barriers in Learning English

Learning Barrier	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Interpretation
Difficulty understanding teachers and classmates due to limited vocabulary and grammar	3.20	0.95	1	5	Moderate
Difficulty speaking English due to poor pronunciation	3.24	0.86	1	5	Moderate
Difficulty speaking or writing due to limited vocabulary and grammar	3.19	0.98	1	5	Moderate
Difficulty speaking or writing due to unfamiliar English expression patterns	3.06	1.05	1	5	Moderate

Learning Barrier	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Interpretation
Difficulty understanding reading texts due to limited vocabulary and grammar	3.28	0.85	1	5	Moderate
Difficulty understanding reading texts due to the sentence structure	3.41	0.99	1	5	High

Table 3 shows that students' main barrier was difficulty understanding reading texts due to sentence structure. Other barriers, including limited vocabulary and grammar, poor pronunciation, and unfamiliar English expression patterns, were categorized as moderate. These results indicate that students' learning difficulties are not limited to one skill, but involve connected problems in sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, reading comprehension, speaking, and writing. Students' preferred learning activities and resources are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4
Students' Preferred English Learning Activities and Resources

Learning Activity or Resource	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Interpretation
Memorizing bilingual word lists	3.96	0.79	1	5	High
Studying English grammar rules	4.33	0.70	1	5	Very high
Practicing English sounds, stress, and intonation	4.28	0.85	1	5	Very high
Practicing English grammar patterns	4.33	0.72	1	5	Very high
Memorizing dialogues from textbooks	4.14	0.90	1	5	High
Doing English Indonesian exercises	4.43	0.74	1	5	Very high
Watching English movies	4.34	0.72	1	5	Very high
Listening to English music	4.36	0.65	1	5	Very high
Reading English novels and magazines	4.01	1.13	1	5	High
Writing English journals	3.85	1.14	1	5	High
Chatting online in English	4.10	1.04	1	5	High
Speaking with friends in English	4.20	0.92	1	5	Very high
Speaking with native English speakers when opportunities are available	4.16	0.96	1	5	High
Seeking English learning resources outside class	4.20	0.87	1	5	Very high

Table 4 shows that students responded positively to all listed learning activities and resources. The highest preferences were found in English Indonesian exercises, listening to English music, watching English movies, studying grammar rules, and practicing grammar patterns. Students also showed strong interest in pronunciation practice, speaking with friends, and seeking English learning resources outside class. The results of this study suggest that students prefer a balanced approach to learning which includes structured exercises, grammar practice, pronunciation training, exposure to authentic media, autonomous learning, and communicative activities.

3.2 Discussion

This study examined students' voices regarding their perceived needs in the General English course at Halu Oleo University. The findings indicate that students' needs were reflected in four interconnected areas, they are language component needs, English skill needs, English learning barriers, and preferred learning activities and resources. This interpretation is aligned with the concept of needs analysis, which emphasizes that language instruction should be designed based on learners' necessities, lacks, and wants (Chemir & Kitila, 2022). This pattern is consistent with the purpose of the study, which was to identify how non-English-major students perceive the components, skills, difficulties, classroom practices, and learning activities that are relevant to their English learning. Pronunciation and vocabulary emerged as the most prominent component-related needs, while grammar was perceived as the most difficult component. In terms of skills, listening received the highest score in engagement and expected classroom practice, whereas speaking received the lowest score in self-perceived mastery. Learning barriers were mainly related to sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. These

findings suggest that General English instruction needs to connect language components with skill practice rather than treating them as separate instructional areas.

The academic contribution of this study is the context-specific evidence on General English needs analysis in Indonesian higher education. Previous studies have discussed students' English needs in EAP, ESP and broader university contexts (Chung et al., 2025; Huang & Yu, 2023). However, this study adds empirical evidence from non-English-major students in a compulsory General English course at Universitas Halu Oleo. It shows that students' needs are not limited to isolated language components or skills, but are formed through the interaction of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, speaking confidence, sentence-structure barriers, and preferred learning activities. This finding contributes to the General English needs-analysis literature by showing the importance of designing locally responsive courses that connect linguistic components, communicative skills, learning barriers, and classroom activity preferences in one integrated instructional framework.

Needs analysis remains an important basis for language course design because it provides information about what learners perceive as important, what they find difficult, what they expect to practice, and what learning activities they consider useful. In line with Ahmed (2025) and Vieilandie et al. (2024), the present study shows that students' responses reveal both component-related needs and learning process needs. The results also support a learner-centered view of curriculum, in which students are not only recipients of a predetermined course but also relevant sources of information for improving General English instruction. This learner-centered orientation is also relevant to language curriculum development because information from needs analysis can guide the selection of course content, teaching procedures, and learning objectives (Orabah et al., 2022; Yulianawati et al., 2025). In this sense, the study strengthens the view that General English should integrate language form, meaning, comprehension, and communication.

Practical implications from this study concern the design of classroom instruction in the General English course. Since pronunciation and vocabulary were strongly valued, lecturers may provide more systematic practice in pronunciation, word stress, intonation, contextual vocabulary use, collocation, and vocabulary application in speaking, reading, and writing (Shahid & Kabilan, 2025). Grammar also requires careful attention because it was perceived as the most difficult component. Rather than being taught only through abstract rules, grammar may be integrated into sentence analysis, reading comprehension, guided writing, oral practice, and feedback on students' language production (Waluyo et al., 2023). Speaking practice also needs more structured classroom support through pair work, guided dialogue, short presentations, and small-group discussion. At the policy level, the General English course may benefit from periodic needs analysis to ensure that learning outcomes, materials, classroom tasks, and assessment practices remain aligned with students' academic and communicative needs (Broeckelman-Post et al., 2023; Tomlinson et al., 2023).

The results show internal consistency across the four dimensions. Grammar was perceived as the most difficult component, while sentence structure appeared as the strongest reading-related barrier. Vocabulary was highly expected in classroom practice and also appeared in several learning barriers related to reading, speaking, writing, and classroom interaction. Pronunciation was rated as the most important component and also appeared as a barrier in speaking. These patterns indicate that students' needs are interconnected: vocabulary supports comprehension and expression, pronunciation supports speaking, and grammar supports sentence-level understanding (Liu, 2025; Warnby, 2025). Compared with Moiinvaziri (2014) study on General English needs analysis in Iran, this study similarly found that vocabulary and grammar were important issues. However, the present study places stronger emphasis on pronunciation and sentence structure, suggesting that General English needs should be examined within local institutional contexts (Oruç, 2024).

A noteworthy finding is that students valued both structured and communicative learning activities. English-Indonesian exercises, grammar rule study, and grammar pattern practice were rated positively, while media-based and communicative activities were also considered useful. This pattern suggests that students did not prefer a single instructional orientation. Instead, they appeared to expect a balanced General English course that combines form-focused practice, vocabulary development, pronunciation support, authentic exposure, and communicative use (Li, 2025; Pakdaman et al., 2022).

This study has a clearly defined methodological and contextual scope. The descriptive quantitative survey design was appropriate for identifying dominant patterns in students' perceived needs, learning barriers, and preferred learning activities. The study involved 123 students from several faculties and study programs at Halu Oleo University, providing context-specific evidence from learners directly involved in the General English course. Contextual evidence from students is useful because English course design should respond to learners' institutional background, learning purposes, and communicative demands (Ramasamy et al., 2024). Since the study focused on student voice, questionnaire data served as the main source of evidence and were supported by observation sheet data. Learners' perspectives are important in needs analysis because they help course designers understand the gap between existing instruction and students' actual academic and communicative needs (Siregar et al., 2026). Thus, the findings are best understood as a systematic description of students' perceived needs within the General English course context at Halu Oleo University.

This research can be extended and further research can be done on the general English needs of different universities, faculties, study programs or levels of proficiency. Such an extension would provide Learners' needs may differ according to their institutional context, academic discipline, and learning targets, thus requiring wider evidence (S & Sreenivasulu, 2024). Mixed-methods designs can also be used in further studies by including interviews, lecturers' perspectives, syllabus analysis, classroom observation, or performance-based assessments. Another possible direction is to develop and evaluate a needs-based general English syllabus which includes pronunciation practice, vocabulary development, contextual grammar, structured speaking tasks, reading support, bilingual exercises, authentic media and independent learning resources.

4. Conclusion

The study indicates a gap between the current General English course framework and the actual academic and communicative needs of students and underscores the importance of a systematic needs analysis in English teaching in higher education. The findings indicate that students' English learning needs are complicated as a result of the interplay of language components, English skills, learning obstacles and favoured learning methods. Pronunciation and vocabulary are considered as important elements in the preparation of students for communication. Grammar, sentence structure and speaking need more systematic and contextual instructional support. The findings show that the current instructional practices are not sufficient to satisfy students' learning needs and expectations.
So, the General English training should be needs-based pronunciation practice, vocabulary improvement, contextual grammar, reading support, structured speaking exercises, bilingual learning methods and real language exposure. The findings suggest that a needs analysis should be conducted continuously to improve the design of the General English courses offered in higher education, although the results are limited to Halu Oleo University.

However, this study has several limitations. The study was conducted in one university that is Universitas Halu Oleo, thus the findings may not represent all non-English major students in other Indonesian higher education contexts. Furthermore, the study heavily relied on self-reported data from questionnaires, which captured students' perspectives rather than direct measures of their English skills. In the future, students from other universities, faculties and proficiency levels may be included in the studies. They may also include interviews, perspectives of lecturers, observation of the classroom, analysis of syllabus, or performance-based assessment to get a fuller picture of students' General English needs.

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Conflict of Interest

There was no competing interest in the conduct of this study.

Declaration of AI Use

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI), Grammarly, and QuillBot to improve language quality, grammar, clarity, and readability. The authors reviewed and edited all AI-assisted suggestions and remain fully responsible for the content, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this manuscript. References were managed using Mendeley and manually verified to ensure accuracy and compliance with APA 7th edition citation and formatting guidelines.

Author Contributions Statements

HA contributed to the conceptualization, literature review, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript drafting. H and WASU contributed to the research design, methodological guidance, critical revision, and refinement of the manuscript. YY and RNH contributed to reviewing the manuscript, providing intellectual input, and supporting the interpretation of the findings. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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