

The Effect of Customer Citizenship Behavior and Customer Entitlement

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Abstract

A pro-social behavior can increase an individual's sense of entitlement and influence the person to engage in unethical behavior. However, limited studies have investigated the impact of customer citizenship behavior on customer entitlement. The objective of this study is to examine the effect of customer citizenship behavior on customer entitlement. We decomposed customer citizenship behavior into four dimensions: advocacy, feedback, helping others, and tolerance. We collected data from customers of hospitality firms. There were 263 respondents. We administered a structured questionnaire online. Structural Equation Modelling was used to analyze the data. The results show that helping other customers and advocacy have a positive effect on customer entitlement. However, the impacts of feedback and tolerance on customer entitlement were not significant. The implications of these findings are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: customer citizenship behavior, customer entitlement, extra-role behavior, advocacy, pro-social behavior

1. Introduction

Customer citizenship behavior is gradually becoming a topical issue in service and hospitality marketing research (Gong & Yi, 2021; Choi & Lotz, 2018; Cheng, Luo, Yen, & Yang, 2016; Tsai, Wu, & Huang, 2017). Research has shown that customers as transient employees exhibit extra-role behaviors such as providing feedback to the firm, helping other customers during service delivery, recommending businesses to family and friends, and spreading positive word-of-mouth about firms (Gong & Yi, 2021; Tung, Chen, & Schuckert, 2017). These extra-role behaviors can enhance service experience and help firms to improve on their service delivery (Yoo & Gretzel, 2008). Some researchers see customer citizenship behavior as customer value creation behavior that offers excellent value to firms (Gong, Choi, & Murdy, 2016; Yi & Gong, 2013). It is a crucial way of utilizing customers' talents (Ford, 1995).

Research on customer citizenship behavior has been growing steadily in the past decades—however, several areas have received limited attention from researchers. For example, customer citizenship behavior has both antecedents and consequences (Gong & Yi, 2021), yet many studies have focused on the antecedence (Choi, & Lotz, 2018; Cheng, Luo, Yen, & Yang, 2016; Tsai, Wu, & Huang, 2017; Di, Huang, Chen & Yu, 2010). There is little research done on the consequences (Gong & Yi, 2021). Even the studies investigating the outcomes have paid limited attention to customer-related outcomes, especially the adverse outcomes (Mandl and Hogleve, 2019; Alves, Ferreira, & Fernandes, 2016). However, the management literature has shown instances where employees have used their previous pro-social behavior to justify their future immoral acts and have felt entitled to certain benefits (Merritt et al., 2010; Yam et al., 2017). Our study thus investigates the effect of customer citizenship behavior on customer entitlement. It draws on the moral license theory, which states that when a person is faced with an ethical dilemma, they can draw confidence from their past good deeds to justify their present or future behaviors (Merritt et al., 2010; Nisan, 1990).

The objective of the study is to examine the effect of customer citizenship behavior on customer entitlement. This study contributes to the extant literature by providing empirical evidence on the degree to which customer citizenship behavior may lead to customer entitlement which may reduce a consumer's tendency to engage in a

fair social exchange (e.g., Huseman, Hatfiels, & Miles, 1985). It concludes with practical managerial implications practitioners by discussing how hospitality marketers can reduce the negative impact of customer citizenship behavior.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Customer Citizenship Behavior

Customer citizenship behavior originated from the organizational behavior literature. The concept is equivalent to organizational citizenship behavior, which is defined as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). This definition underscores the voluntary nature of citizenship behavior. Similarly, Gruen (1995, p. 461) defined customer citizenship behavior as “helpful, constructive gestures exhibited by customers that are valued or appreciated by the firm, but not related directly to enforceable or explicit requirements of the individual's role.” From the definition, customer citizenship behavior is discretionary and voluntary. Customer citizenship behavior can be towards other customers and the firm (Bove, Pervan, Beatty, & Shiu, 2009), but whatever be the case, it inures to the firm's benefit. Groth (2005) notes that like employees, customers provide valuable insights to firms that contribute to the success of the service organization. In addition, they provide useful ideas for new product development and business strategy.

There is no agreement on the dimensionality of customer citizenship behavior (Gong & Yi 2021). For instance, Yi and Gong (2013) identified advocacy, feedback, helping other customers, and tolerance as the dimensions of customer citizenship behavior. However, Gong and Yi (2021), in their systematic literature, identified seven dimensions of customer citizenship behavior: making recommendations, providing feedback to the organization, helping other customers, display of relationship affiliation, participation in firm activities, benevolent acts of service facilitation, and flexibility. Therefore, it appears that the dimensionality is based on the context and focus of the study. Thus, in this study, we followed Yi and Gong (2013) and identified advocacy, feedback, helping other customers, and tolerance as the dimensions of customer citizenship behavior.

Customer citizenship behavior has antecedents and outcomes. However, there is a limited study on the outcome (Gong & Yi, 2021). One outcome that has been overlooked is consumer entitlement emanating from customer citizenship behavior, even though it leads to a sense of belonging (Rihova et al., 2015).

2.2 Customer Entitlement

Customer entitlement is defined as customers who believe that they deserve special treatment due to their past good behaviors. It can also mean customers who believe they deserve preferential treatment but have done nothing to deserve that (Boyd & Helms, 2005). This means that some people demand specific preferential treatments regardless of their deservingness (Naumann, Minsky, & Sturman, 2002). Customer entitlement reshapes customer expectations in an exchange relationship (Fisk, & Neville, 2011). Entitlement is inherent in every person, and it can be permanent or temporary (Yam et al., 2017; Campbell et al., 2004). A consumer's sense of entitlement may negatively affect the person's judgment, leading to unethical behavior (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). For instance, some customers might yell and verbally abuse service employees (Barling et al., 2009). Although some studies have examined the determinants (Dreze and Nunes 2009) and outcomes of consumer entitlement (Fisk & Neville, 2011), its relationship with pro-social behaviors is still under-researched. Especially, studies investigating the effect of customer citizenship behavior on the consumer are scarce. In addition, per the organizational behavior literature, the moral license theory can explain the relationship between customer citizenship behavior and customer entitlement, yet limited studies have applied the theory to study this relationship. Drawing inspiration from the moral license theory, this study investigates the effect of customer citizenship behavior on customer entitlement.

2.3 Moral Licensing Theory

According to the moral license theory (Nisan, 1990), individuals frequently deviate from morally acceptable behaviors due to their perceptions that their moral self is separable from a specific act but inextricably woven into their moral balance. Moral self refers to “one's perceived moral standing at any given moment” (Monin & Jordan, 2009, p.341). Per the theory, people's moral standing accumulates, and people with good moral standing may use that as a basis to engage in immoral acts. The theory explains how people find ways to justify their questionable decisions. Merritt et al. (2010), for instance, notes that “when people are under the threat that their next action might be (or appear to be) morally dubious, individuals can derive confidence from their past moral behavior, such that an impeccable track record increases their propensity to engage in otherwise suspect actions” (p. 344). This argument implies that when customers engage in extra-role behavior in a service context, the

customer can use that citizenship behavior to justify questionable behaviors. The person might not be remorseful for the unwarranted behavior. The past good deeds may be as used to justify future behavior (*Sachdeva, Iliev, & Medin, 2009*).

Similarly, customers may use their past good deeds to make specific demands from the service provider (Fisk & Neville, 2011). The moral license theory has been applied to study the negative outcomes of organizational citizenship behavior (Klotz, & Bolino, 2013). However, studies examining customer citizenship behavior on customer entitlement through the lenses of moral licensing are limited in the marketing literature. This study proposes that when consumers engage in citizenship behaviors such as providing feedback to improve their competitiveness, advocating for the service provider, helping other customers, and be tolerant in a service context, the consumer will feel entitled (for example, demand preferential treatments). Our argument is consistent with the extant literature, which has shown that people who have a high sense of entitlement exhibit competitive behaviors, misappropriate resources usually and assign to themselves disproportionate levels of rewards (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004) and expect special treatments (Naumann, Minsky, & Sturman, 2002).

3. Hypotheses Development

3.1 Feedback

The extant literature recognizes feedback to a firm as a dimension of customer citizenship behavior (Gong & Yi, 2021; Yi & Gong, 2013). Customers provide feedback through online platforms or in person. Some customers offer feedback voluntarily, while other customers provide feedback when a firm requests them to provide feedback. Feedback can be positive or negative. It is a valuable resource for the firm to improve customer service and experience (Bettencourt, 1997; Voss, Roth, Rosenzweig, Blackmon, & Chase, 2004). According to Guo et al. (2013), although the provision of feedback may help improve organizational functioning, it might cost the customer. Individuals value their knowledge and the information they possess, which sometimes leads to knowledge hoarding (Alnaimi, & Rjoub, 2019). However, customers who identify themselves with a brand and feel connected with the brand easily share their ideas with the firm (Assiouras, Skourtis, Giannopoulos, Buhalis & Koniorodos, 2019). Other people share information to expect that others will do them good in the future rewards (Cho, Park, & Kim, 2015). Thus, we argue that customers who provide feedback to service providers will have a high sense of entitlement due to the feedback they have provided. We hypothesize that:

H1: Feedback has a positive effect on customer entitlement

3.2 Advocacy

Consumers advocate for a brand by recommending the brand to others. Advocacy is defined as a recommendation of a firm "to others, such as friends or family" (Yi and Gong, 2013, p. 1280). According to Yi and Gong (2008), making recommendations and providing positive word-of-mouth overlap conceptually. However, customers who advocate for a firm by recommending the firm to others are recognized as a citizenship behavior (Yi and Gong, 2013; Gremler & Brown, 1999). Customer advocacy also involves extolling the quality orientation of a firm (Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst, 2005). Other customers rely on customer advocacy to inform their purchasing decision, and it is a source of competitive advantage for firms (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Bettencourt, 1997). The marketing literature has shown that the impact of customer loyalty on voiced complaints is fully mediated by customer entitlement (Li, Ma, & Zhou, 2017). Therefore, if we argue that customer who advocates for a service provider is likely to have a high sense of entitlement. Based on these shreds of evidence, we hypothesize that:

H2: Advocacy has a positive effect on customer entitlement

3.3 Helping other Customers

Customers citizenship behavior can be directed towards other customers (Roy, Shekhar, Lassar, & Chen, 2018). This citizenship behavior may involve teaching other customers how to appropriately use a service and explain how to use the service accurately. It also consists of a customer ensuring that other customers behave appropriately in a service setting (Anaza & Zhao, 2013). These voluntary supports enhance customer experience (Kim & Yi, 2018). Although these good deeds are rendered to other customers, the customers who provide them might feel they deserve special treatment since it is the responsibility of the firm to provide these services to the customers and ensure enhanced customer experience (Harvey & Martinko, 2009; (Boyd & Helms, 2005). Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Helping other customers has a positive effect on customer entitlement

3.4 Tolerance

Tolerance is defined as a customer's "willingness to be patient when the service delivery does not meet the customer's expectations of adequate service, as in the case of delays or equipment shortages" (Yi and Gong, 2013, p. 1281). Even though the services received are below the customer's expectations, the customer accepts the services to ensure a sustainable relationship with the firm. The customer does not complain and spread negative word-of-mouth but continues to do business with the service provider (Keh & Teo, 2001). According to the marketing literature, relational customers usually demand better services after service failure (Wolter, Bacile, Smith, & Giebelhausen, 2019; Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009; Hess, Ronald, Ganesan, & Klein, 2003) due to the increased personal relevance of the service (Wolter et al., 2019). Fombelle, Jarvis, Ward, and Ostrom (2012) postulate that customer-brand relationship issues similarly affect the sense of self of the customers. This evidence implies that it will increase their sense of entitlement when customers forgive a service firm perform below their expectations. Thus, we propose that:

H4: Tolerance will have a positive impact on customer entitlement

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample and Data Collection

The experiential nature of hospitality demands that customers collaborate with the service provider and participate in the service delivery, such as sharing feedback (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Assiouras et al. (2019) indicated the need to study customers' extra-role behaviors to enhance customers' experience and value. Hence, our study is situated in three sectors of the hospitality industry: hotels, restaurants, and bars. These sectors play an integral role in the hospitality industry, and besides, customer co-creation and experience are critical to the industry (Assiouras et al., 2019). This quantitative research method used an online survey to administer a structured questionnaire. The respondents were selected using convenience sampling. Since the study's objective is to test theoretical effects, the use of survey and convenience sampling is justified (Assiouras et al., 2019; Hulland, Baumgartner & Smith, 2018). The respondents were customers of hostels, bars, and restaurants, and they had engaged in extra-role behaviors within the previous three months. The total (263) respondents were nearly equally distributed by gender (131 males and 132 females). The majority (63.5%) of our respondents were between the ages of 20 to 30 years, 25.9% were within 30 to 39 years, 8% were within 40 to 49 years, and 2.7% were above 50 years.

4.2 Measurement Instrument

We adapted the measures extant relevant literature. Items measuring tolerance, feedback, advocacy, and helping others were adapted from Yi and Gong (2013), and those measuring customer entitlement were adapted from Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman (2004). We adapted the measures from these sources because they were consistent with definitions of the constructs. The measurements are captured in Table 1.

Table 1. Constructs, measurement items and reliability and validity tests

Item description	loadings	T-value
Feedback ($\alpha = 0.820$, CR = 0.827, AVE = 0.617)		
If I have a useful idea on how to improve service, I let the employee know.	0.727	
When I receive good service from the employee, I comment about it	0.877	12.595
When I experience a problem, I let the employee know about it	0.743	11.213
Advocacy ($\alpha = 0.928$, CR = 0.930, AVE = 0.815)		
I said positive things about the hotel/restaurant/bar and the employee to others.	0.881	
I encouraged friends and relatives to use the hotel/restaurant/bar	0.927	22.061
I recommended the hotel/restaurant/bar and the employee to others	0.9	20.946
Helping other customers ($\alpha = 0.867$, CR = 0.868, AVE = 0.621)		
I help other customers if they seem to have problems.	0.825	
I assist other customers if they need my help	0.806	14.144
I advise other customers	0.747	12.913
I teach other customers to use the service correctly	0.773	13.453

Tolerance ($\alpha = 0.684$, CR = 0.7, AVE = 0.542)

If service is not delivered as expected, I would be willing to put up with it.	Dropped	
If the employee makes a mistake during service delivery, I would be willing to be patient.	0.824	
If I must wait longer than I normally expected to receive the service, I would be willing to adapt	0.636	7.087
Customer entitlement ($\alpha = 0.878$, CR = 0.881, AVE = 0.601)		
I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others.	0.556	
Excellent service should come to me	0.794	9.075
I demand the best because I'm worth it	0.858	9.431
I deserve special treatment	0.858	9.431
I feel entitled to more of everything	0.770	8.922

4.3 Results for the Measurement Model

The goodness-of-fit of the model was assessed before hypothesis testing. We used Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the validity and reliability of the measures and constructs. The model showed good overall fit as follows: $\chi^2 = 242.030$; $df = 105$; $\chi^2/df = 2.400$; CFI = 0.945; TLI = 0.929; IFI = 0.946; NFI = 0.911; RMSEA=0.073. Hair et al. (2014) recommend latent variables with loadings of 0.5 and above an acceptable threshold to determine the latent variables' validity. All the loadings for the items were above 0.5 except one of the items measuring tolerance. This item was dropped. Besides, all the AVEs were above 0.5. Also, the composite reliability values (CR) for all constructs were 0.7 and above (see table 1), indicating that the items are reliable. To assess the discriminant validity, we followed Fornell and Larcker (1981) procedure. From the analysis, all the inter-construct correlations are less than the AVEs, as shown in the diagonal of Table 2.

Table 2. Inter-construct correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Feedback	0.785				
2 Advocacy	0.704***	0.903			
3 Helping other customers	0.556***	0.470***	0.788		
4 Tolerance	0.508***	0.503***	0.562***	0.736	
5 Customer entitlement	0.299***	0.315***	0.340***	0.237**	0.775

Additionally, we applied the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) to assess discriminant validity (see Table 3). The results show no discriminant validity issues since all values are less than the 0.85 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015; Ab Hamid et al., 2017). These results indicate that there is no discriminant validity issue in this study.

Table 3. HTMT analysis

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Feedback					
2 Advocacy	0.716				
3 Helping other customers	0.585	0.485			
4 Tolerance	0.508	0.536	0.564		
5 Customer entitlement	0.286	0.309	0.352	0.263	

4.4 Common Method Bias

Common latent factor (CLF) method was applied in common method bias (CMB). The chi-square test for the zero constrained model was significant (i.e., measurable bias was detected) (see table 4).

Table 4. Zero constraints test

	X ²	DF	Delta	p-value
Unconstrained Model	154.521	88	X ² =97.509	0.000
Zero Constrained Model	252.03	105	DF=17	

Table 5. Equal constraints test

	X ²	DF	Delta	p-value
Unconstrained Model	154.521	88	X ² =97.509	0.000
Zero Constrained Model	252.03	105	DF=17	

Therefore, a bias distribution test was made (of equal constraints). The chi-square test is significant on this test as well (i.e., unevenly distributed bias) (table 5); hence, we retain the CLF construct for the hypotheses testing (see Figure 1).

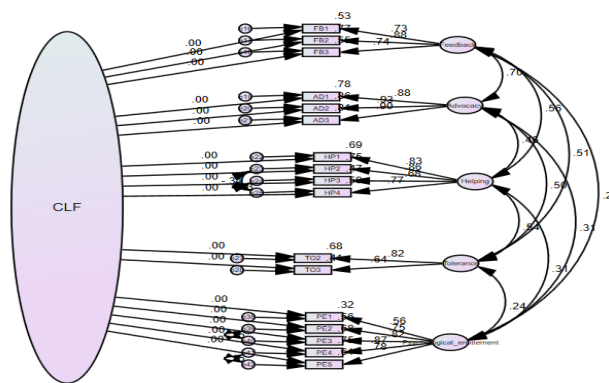


Figure 1. The CLF construct for the hypotheses testing

4.5 Results for Structural Model

Since the measurement model measures were dependable and sizable, we proceeded to test the hypotheses by evaluating the structural model results. Following Hair and Lukas’ (2014) recommendation, we assessed the structural model results using the model’s potency and the correlations among constructs. The structural model exhibited acceptable fit overall ($\chi^2 = 19.096$; $df = 9$; $\chi^2/df = 2.122$; CFI = 0.983; TLI = 0.960; IFI = 0.983; NFI = 0.969; RMSEA=.065).

Hypothesis 1, which states that feedback positively affects customer entitlement, is not supported ($\beta = 0.04$, $p = 0.68$). Similarly, hypothesis 4 was not supported ($\beta = 0.016$, $p = 0.844$). However, hypothesis 2, which indicates that advocacy positively affects customer entitlement, was supported ($\beta = 0.201$, $p = 0.027$). Also, hypothesis 3 that states that helping other customers has a positive effect on customer entitlement, was supported ($\beta = 0.204$, $p = 0.01$) (see table 6). Finally, Paulo et al. (2018) argued that gender and age influence consumer behavior, so we should account for their effects. However, the analysis shows that gender and age had no significant effect on customer entitlement (see table 6).

Table 6. Findings on hypotheses testing

	Estimate	t-value	P-value	Decision
Controls				
Gender	-0.075	-1.329	0.184	
Age	-0.063	-1.122	0.262	
Direct Path				
Tolerance	0.016	0.197	0.844	Not supported
Helping	0.204	2.583	0.01	Supported
Advocacy	0.201	2.214	0.027	Supported
Feedback	0.04	0.413	0.68	Not supported

The results mean that when a customer helps other customers in a service context and advocates for a hospitality firm, the customer's sense of entitlement increases. However, when the customer shows tolerance in a service context and provides feedback to a hospitality firm, the customer's sense of entitlement does not increase.

5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to assess the direct effect of customer citizenship behavior on customer entitlement. Following Yi and Gong (2013), we decomposed customer citizenship behavior into four dimensions: feedback, tolerance, advocacy, and helping other customers. The management literature had shown that people who demonstrate extra-role behavior in an organization use that as a basis to arrogate to themselves disproportionate levels of rewards (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004) and demand special treatments (Naumann, Minsky, & Sturman, 2002) in the future. However, the marketing literature has not adequately assessed how an extra-role behavior like customer citizenship behavior could affect a customer's sense of entitlement. The findings of our study suggest that when a customer encourages friends and relatives to use a hospitality service firm and say good things about the firm and its employees, the person's sense of entitlement increases. The customer may feel that they deserve special treatment and more deserving than others because of their past deeds.

Furthermore, our findings imply that when such a customer helps other customers to use the service correctly, the customer's sense of entitlement increases. However, when the customer provides feedback or demonstrates tolerance in a service context, the customer's sense of entitlement does not increase. Thus, our finding departs from the existing literature (Wolter, Bacile, Smith, & Giebelhausen, 2019; Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009; Hess, Ronald, Ganesan, & Klein, 2003) customers who tolerate service failure makes unnecessary demands in the future. The reason might be that the customer does not consider these extra-role behaviors substantial to demand preferential treatment (see Monin & Jordan, 2009). Thus, not every past good deed of a customer may increase a customer's sense of entitlement.

5.1 Theoretical Contribution

Our first contribution lies in assessing the effect of customer citizenship behavior on customer entitlement. The existing studies had paid little attention to how a customer's past good deed can serve as a basis for the customer to engage in questionable behavior in the future (Mandl and Hogueve, 2019; Alves, Ferreira, & Fernandes, 2016). Our study has shown that customers can use some of their citizenship behavior to demand special treatment in the future. Second, our study is among the limited studies that have employed the moral license theory (Nisan, 1990) to explain customer citizenship behavior within a hospitality service context. The study shows that customers may use their past deeds to demand special services in the future. However, not every good deed may qualify as a good deed credit' to increase entitlement in the future. Third, our study is also a response to Gong and Yi (2021), who noted that limited studies have focused on the outcomes of customer citizenship behavior and calls for more studies to be conducted in the area. Although they emphasize that customer citizenship behavior can lead to several positive outcomes for customers and employees, our study implies that it can lead to negative behavior from a customer.

5.2 Managerial Implications

This study offers managerial insights for hospitality firms, especially hotels, bars, and restaurants. One of the managerial implications is that hotels, bars, and restaurant managers should be aware of the drawbacks of customer citizenship behavior. This implication is beneficial to hospitality firms that want to rely on customers' extra-role behavior to improve service experience and co-create value. For example, customers who help other

customers and advocate for hospitality firms will demand preferential treatment to offset their good deeds. Therefore, managers must only encourage customer citizenship behaviors in only areas where customers will feel that engaging in those activities is only a way of fulfilling their civil and moral obligations—for instance, encouraging customers to be tolerant during service encounters and sharing feedback with the firm. Additionally, management must also create precise communication mechanisms: Share expectations for appropriate CCBs and the corresponding means of appreciation. They must also provide non-cash incentives such as points from loyalty programs, priority booking, or access to unique experiences to encourage without creating a sense of entitlement. Managers must offer employees the communication and de-escalation skills they need to handle instances where clients use previous CCBs to get special treatment. Encourage the polite establishment of boundaries by clearly outlining organizational policies and procedures.

6. Limitations and scope for Future Research

Our study has shown that customer citizenship behavior may lead to customer entitlement. However, we did not investigate how a customer's sense of entitlement can impact their overall experience and service providers. Future studies can investigate the effect of customer entitlement on service employees' response to customer's expectations. We also recommend that future studies should test the model and non-competitive and not-for-profit business settings. Again, future study may employ a longitudinal survey design to assess the changes in customer citizenship

behavior and entitlement over time.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

The journal and publisher adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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