Journal of Creative Practices in Language Learning and Teaching (CPLT)
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PREFACE

THEME: Language, Communication, and Technology: Crossing Borders, Connecting Minds

It is with great honor and excitement that I introduce this Special Issue, which is published in conjunction with the International Conference on Multidisciplinary Approaches in Language (ICMAL2024) and the Language, Innovation, Invention, and Design (LIID2024) conference. These dynamic events, held under the overarching theme *"Language, Communication, and Technology: Crossing Borders, Connecting Minds,"* serve as a vibrant platform for intellectual exchange and innovation in the rapidly evolving fields of language, communication, and technology.The thematic focus of this Special Issue reflects the core mission of ICMAL and LIID: fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and encouraging fresh perspectives in applied language studies and the integration of technology in language education. By bringing together language practitioners, educators, researchers, and postgraduate students from around the globe, this publication seeks to capture the diverse and forward-thinking contributions that were presented at these conferences.

The articles featured in this issue span a broad range of topics, grouped under two significant sub-themes; a) Applied Language Studies which explore various dimensions of language as a tool for professional and intercultural communication, alongside its role in teaching, learning, and assessment. They offer valuable insights into how language can bridge cultural divides, enhance professional practices, and foster global connections, as well as b) Innovation and Technology in Language Learning which reflects transformative potential of technology, this section highlights pioneering research and applications of virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), mobile apps, gamification, and artificial intelligence (AI) in language education. These contributions illustrate how emerging technologies are reshaping the way languages are taught, learned, and experienced.

As a Guest Editor, I am deeply impressed by the diversity and quality of the submissions. The innovative research and creative solutions presented in this issue demonstrate the commitment of our global academic community to addressing the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of language and technology. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the authors for their outstanding contributions, to the reviewers for their meticulous feedback, and to the organizing committee for their tireless efforts in curating this conference and subsequent publication. I am confident that the articles in this Special Issue will inspire further dialogue, research, and innovation, contributing meaningfully to the advancement of language, communication, and technology.

Thank you for joining us on this intellectual journey.

Dr. Haida Umiera Hashim
Guest Chief Editor
Special Issue: *Language, Communication, and Technology: Crossing Borders, Connecting Minds*
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GUEST EDITORS

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Correlation between The Perceived Use and Usefulness of Grammar Learning Strategies Among ESL Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

It has been a challenge for students to learn grammar as it is complex and difficult for students to understand. Students have to employ strategies that could assist them to master the grammatical items learnt. The present research investigated the perceived use and usefulness of grammar

learning strategies among ESL undergraduate students in one public university in Malaysia. It also examined the perceived use and perceived usefulness of grammar learning strategies based on students' proficiency levels. The study employed quantitative research using a set of questionnaires which was randomly distributed via google forms to students who took a grammar course, and 75 students responded to the questionnaire. The data gathered were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicated that there were significant correlations between the perceived use and usefulness for all grammar learning strategies. The findings also revealed that social strategies were most used and perceived as useful in learning grammar by students with all levels of proficiency. There were significant mean differences in the perceived use, but no significant differences found in the perceived usefulness in grammar learning strategies based on students' proficiency levels. Since students with high proficiency level use all grammar learning strategies more than less proficient students, they could guide their friends in learning grammar. Students with different levels of language proficiency seem to perceive the usefulness of their grammar learning strategies equally. Therefore, teachers can use a diverse range of resources and activities in their classrooms without putting any students at a disadvantage.

Keywords: ESL, Grammar, strategies, proficient, quantitative

INTRODUCTION

Learning strategies are processes that students use for them to improve their learning. These strategies help students to organize their thoughts in planning and establishing their learning goals and objectives, monitoring their progress, modifying and assessing their learning process to achieve optimum learning outcomes (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). The theoretical framework of learning strategies was greatly discussed by scholars whether the strategies were behavioral and observable, or mental and unobservable or both. At the beginning, the learning strategies were seen as observable behaviors or actions employed by the students. However, they were later viewed to include thoughts, awareness and reflections as the mental attributes to the cognitive processing of the information by the students either subconsciously or unconsciously (Ellis, 1994). According to Liang (2009), researchers do not make any distinction between conscious and subconscious actions, but they acknowledge that students use the strategies consciously in coping with new information and by repetitively doing so, they will subconsciously use the strategies through self-adaptation. Although these arguments offer distinct viewpoints on learning strategies, basically, the general understanding of language learning strategies are that they can be behavioral (observable) and/or mental (unobservable), that they are general or specific techniques used by the students in learning the target language and that students are aware of the approaches and techniques used despite some subconscious activities occurred while learning language.

Rubin (1975) was one of the earliest scholars who introduced language learning strategies taxonomy which classified the strategies into direct and indirect strategies. Based on these two classifications, Oxford (1990) developed a structured questionnaire called Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) which had a comprehensive list of strategies under direct and indirect strategies. Memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies were categorized under direct strategies, meanwhile, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies were placed under indirect strategies. Under memory strategies, students learn language by grouping, associating, or using

imagery. Highlighting, analyzing and summarizing are cognitive strategies. Compensation strategies involve guessing or using synonyms. When using meta-cognitive strategies, students plan, arrange, focus, and evaluate their learning. Effective strategies cover the motivation and attitudes of the students towards language learning, and finally, social strategies, for example, asking questions and cooperating, help students learn from others.

Based on SILL, Oxford et al. (2007) offered a framework for grammar learning strategies. They divided the strategies into three categories depending on whether they represent implicit learning with focus on form, explicit inductive learning, and explicit deductive learning. Grammar learning strategies include a focus on form such as noticing grammatical structures that cause problems with meaning or communication, paying attention to how more proficient people say things and imitating, noticing correction of erroneous utterances. Examples of grammar learning strategies facilitating explicit inductive L2 learning are participating in rule-discovery discussions in class, developing and testing hypotheses about how target structures work, checking with more proficient peers whether a given rule interpretation is correct or not. Grammar learning strategies that are applicable to explicit deductive learning (using the rules presented by the teacher in a variety of activities), are previewing the lesson to identify the key grammatical structures to be covered, paying attention to rules provided by the teacher or the coursebook, memorizing how structures change their form, and so on. However, Pawlak (2018) lamented that the framework was incomplete, thus, he developed a finer classification which was Grammar Learning Strategy Inventory (GLSI).

According to Pawlak (2018), there are four categories in GLSI, namely, metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and social strategies. Metacognitive is the process of comprehending the mental process to monitor and to evaluate the students' self-performance which involves self-direction or regulation. When students monitor and control their own learning, they become aware of their learning processes. They will be motivated to learn effectively as they evaluate their own knowledge and skills and take ownership of their learning progress (Zreagat & Kaur, 2012). Cognitive strategies involve the mental abilities of processing information received for problem-solving, understanding, memorizing, and revising. Students use cognitive strategies to comprehend and internalize language rules and patterns. Students will actively interact with the language by making connections between new and old information to make learning more meaningful and successful. They can establish a strong basis for continued language use (Di Carlo, 2017). Affective strategies may include the act of self-encouraging and self- talk, mood and anxiety level identification, self-reward and trying to relax which will help with overcoming barriers to learning. They also involve emotional and motivational aspects of language learning which enhance their engagement for improved performance (Yusuf et al., 2023; Zakaria et al., 2019). Social strategies require students to interact and communicate with teachers and peers to help them understand the grammar concept better. By learning grammar in a social setting, students can improve their understanding of grammar and gain a profound comprehension of the language structures and norms with the assistance of their teachers and peers (Mohamad et al., 2023; Zakaria et al., 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been studies conducted on grammar learning strategies used by learners of English as a foreign or a second language. Al Abri et al. (2017) investigated the different learning techniques utilized by 170 Omani grade ten students when learning grammar. It also investigated the variations in grammar learning techniques used by students of various skill levels. The questionnaire consisted of 38 items that covered three types of grammar learning processes: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies. The study found that Omani students in grade ten employed the three types of grammar learning strategies to varying degrees. In addition, they employed meta-cognitive methods more frequently than cognitive and socio-affective strategies. The study also found that more skilled students employed more metacognitive methods than less proficient ones. Another study on the use of grammar learning strategies was carried out by Mulugeta and Bayou (2019). The study was conducted on 991 preparatory school grade eleven students in Addis Ababa and a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was distributed to the students. The results indicated that the strategy with the highest mean was compensation strategy and the lowest was affective strategy. The students were also more direct strategy users than indirect strategy users.

Unlike Al Abri et al. (2017) and Mulugeta and Bayou (2019), Zhou (2017) studied the use of grammar learning strategies among high school students in China using a mixed methods research design. This study used three instruments for data collections: test papers, questionnaires, and interviews. He chose three strategies to be studied namely cognitive, meta-cognitive and social/affective strategies using the Likert scale scoring system. The interview sessions were included in order to look for supporting explanations for the questionnaire given. Zhou (2017) found that the cognitive approach was used the most by the students and there was no significant relationship between the use of grammar learning strategies and language achievement. In addition, a qualitative study was conducted on English good achievers at seventh grade of SMP (equivalent to junior high school) by Haryani (2019). The researcher used an open-ended questionnaire and conducted an interview with the students to learn their use of grammar learning strategies. The grammar learning strategies investigated were meta-cognitive strategy, cognitive strategy, and socio-affective strategy. The study found that the students used meta-cognitive strategy the most compared to socio-affective strategy and cognitive strategy in which cognitive strategy had the lowest percentage of usage.

While the previous research was done on school students, there were also studies conducted on the university students. Juniar and Carissa (2020) investigated the use of grammar learning strategies among Indonesian university students by distributing a five-point Likert scale questionnaire to collect the data. They focused on cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategy with two additional strategies which were memory and compensation strategies. They found that social strategy had the highest average followed by compensation strategy, meta-cognitive strategy, cognitive strategy, affective strategy, and memory strategy. Similarly, Alsied et al. (2018) conducted a study on the use of grammar learning strategies among undergraduate Libyan EFL students. The findings indicated that the students employed a variety of grammar learning techniques, including memory strategies, metacognitive strategies, socio-affective strategies, and cognitive strategies, which were the least commonly used. Memory strategies were discovered to be the most employed by the students. Using a different approach, Ghannam (2019) did a

qualitative study on university students studying European and non-European languages to understand the process of developing grammar learning strategies and the grammar learning strategies used by the students when they were facing grammar learning problems. The researcher held semi-structured interviews to collect information from the students. The study discovered that the strategy that was developed and used most by the students was cognitive strategy, social strategy was found as less important, and affective strategy as not significant. Prasetyaningrum et al. (2023) quantitatively investigated the use of grammar learning strategies among 75 students at Hamzanwadi University and found that the most used strategies were metacognitive as the students used these strategies to pay attention to certain grammatical patterns and use their familiarity which they gained from previous materials to learn new grammatical items. The previous studies discussed show that grammar learning strategies have been vigorously researched at various levels of students. This indicates that grammar learning strategies are important for students to employ in supporting and enhancing their grammar competence.

Studies on the influence of students' proficiency levels on the use of grammar learning strategies have also been an interest of the researchers. Al Abri et al. (2017) discovered, for instance, that high proficient students employed metacognitive strategies more frequently than less proficient student. Nonetheless, the students in these two groups equally employed cognitive and affective strategies. Meanwhile, Haryani (2019) found that proficient language students employed metacognitive strategies more frequently than other strategies. An investigation of grammar learning strategies among students with varying proficiency levels by Zekrati (2017) revealed that high proficient students used more grammar learning strategies than low proficient students. More recent studies by Mohamad et al. (2023), and Aisyah et al. (2024) also found similar findings to Zekrati's (2017).

In a Malaysian context, few recent studies were done on language learning strategies, but not specifically on grammar learning strategies. For example, Hashim et al. (2018) conducted a mixed-methods research in investigation language learning strategies used by successful adult learners of TESL students to enhance their English language skills which included writing, reading, listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar. They found that successful language learners had the same preferences in using all three strategies which were cognitive, metacognitive and socio affective, however, different strategies were used for different language skills that they want to improve on. Sani and Ismail (2021) examined the use of language learning strategies among 30 primary school students and found that the most common language learning strategies employed by these young learners were the compensation strategies. Similar to Sani and Ismail's (2021) study, Dawi et al. (2021) investigated the language learning strategies preferred by 50 primary school students for reading skills. Using a survey, they found that these young learners preferred two strategies namely, affective strategies and cognitive strategies. Replicating Dawi et al.'s (2021) study, Dawi and Hashim (2022) conducted another research on language learning strategies among 54 young learners and discovered that the affective strategies were the most preferred and cognitive strategies were the least preferred for reading skills. In investigating grammar learning, Lim et al. (2021) explored the use of language learning strategies among 30 students in a primary school using SILL and discovered that cognitive strategies were the most and memory strategies were the least employed by the students.

Based on the previous studies done in Malaysia, it seems that the focus was mainly on language learning strategies and not specifically on grammar learning strategies. In fact, studies on grammar learning strategies should be emphasized since students are not aware of the best strategies to be used in learning. Without recognizing their grammar learning strategies, they might not be able to effectively improve their grammar competence. In addition, since perceived use and usefulness are also the variables under investigation, their concepts need to be clarified. According to Albright (2015), perceiving is the process of identifying meaning and values in the environment experienced by individuals. It is "the act of understanding, realizing, seeing, noticing, or becoming aware of" (p. 22). This view is supported by Cherry (2024) who stated that the process of perceiving involves using individuals' cognitive functions and senses to become aware of the relationships and the events that are happening in the environment around them. Therefore, the perceived use and usefulness in the present study refer to the thought processes of ESL undergraduate students on how they use the grammar learning strategies and how useful they think the strategies are in learning grammar. This study aims to investigate the perceived use and usefulness of grammar learning strategies among ESL undergraduate students and to answer the following research questions.

1. Are there correlations between the perceived use and usefulness of grammar learning strategies among ESL undergraduate students?

2. Which strategies do ESL undergraduate students with different language proficiency levels perceive as most used and useful in learning grammar?

3. Are there any mean differences in the perceived use and usefulness of grammar learning based on ESL undergraduate students' levels of proficiency?

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a quantitative research design using a survey approach. According to Asenahabi (2019), this type of research involves acquiring substantial data that can be gathered from a group of people in a short period of time using closed-ended questions. This approach is beneficial when a researcher is investigating various variables through a reasonable sample size and appropriate statistical analysis. In addition, using a survey design is less intrusive as compared to interviews or observations because the respondents could answer the survey at any time convenient to them (Sarangam, 2021). In the present study, a 36-item questionnaire, which had 5 sections, was distributed randomly using a Google Form link via WhatsApp to 100 ESL undergraduate students who enrolled in a grammar course during their first semester. The grammar learning strategies items were adopted from Al Abri et al. (2017) and Pawlak (2018) using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-(never) to 5-(always) as the response type. The data collection was done in three months and 75 responses were collected. The data from the questionnaire, extracted from the Google Form Spreadsheet, was transferred into SPSS software. Students' levels of proficiency were determined by the students' final grammar test scores. The total for the grammar scores was 40 marks. Those who obtained 30 and above were considered as high proficient students. Those who scored between 20 to 29 were average proficient students and low

proficient students scored below 20. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data. The significance level was set at 0.05 for inferential statistics.

RESULTS

The presentation of the findings will follow the research questions of the study. The first research is sought to answer whether there are correlations between the perceived use and usefulness of grammar learning strategies among ESL undergraduate students. Table 1 below shows the results gathered from a series of Pearson's correlation tests. They revealed that there was a significant positive weak correlation in cognitive strategies ($r=0.352$, $p<0.05$) between the perceived use and usefulness. There were also significant positive moderate correlations in metacognitive ($r=0.623$, $p<0.05$), affective ($r=0.520$, $p<0.05$) and social $r=0.577$, $p<0.05$) strategies. This indicates that the students not only employ, but also perceive the benefits of using all four strategies in learning grammar.

Table 1. Correlations between the perceived use and usefulness of grammar learning strategies

	Strategies	Perceived Usefulness	p-Value
Perceived Use	Cognitive	0.352	0.002
	Metacognitive	0.623	0.001
	Affective	0.520	0.001
	Social	0.577	0.001

The second research question is to discover the strategies that ESL undergraduate students with different levels of proficiency perceive as most used and useful in learning grammar. Table 2 shows that regardless of the proficiency levels, social strategies were used most (Low=3.37; Average=4.23; High=4.26) and perceived useful (Low=4.25; Average=4.40; High=4.49) by the students. It also shows that students with high proficiency levels had the highest means for the perceived use and usefulness for all four strategies (Social=4.26, 4.49; Metacognitive=4.10, 4.39; Affective=3.93, 4.08; Cognitive; 4.00, 4.15) than those with low (Social=3.39, 4.25; Metacognitive=3.37, 4.18; Affective=3.31, 3.91; Cognitive; 3.15, 4.13) and average (Social=4.23, 4.40; Metacognitive=3.88, 4.28; Affective=3.58, 3.96; Cognitive; 3.63, 4.00) proficiency levels. This indicates that social strategies are commonly employed and regarded as beneficial by students with all levels of proficiency and that students with high proficiency levels use all four strategies more than their counterparts.

Table 2. Strategies employed and perceived usefulness by students with different levels of proficiency

Strategies	Low		Average		High	
	Use	Usefulness	Use	Usefulness	Use	Usefulness
Social	3.39	4.25	4.23	4.40	4.26	4.49
Metacognitive	3.37	4.18	3.88	4.28	4.10	4.39
Affective	3.31	3.91	3.58	3.96	3.93	4.08
Cognitive	3.15	4.13	3.63	4.00	4.00	4.15

Research question three seeks to answer whether there are any significant mean differences in the perceived use and usefulness of grammar learning strategies based on students' proficiency levels. Table 3 shows that based on the ESL undergraduate students' proficiency levels, there were significant mean differences in the perceived use of all grammar learning strategies. At this point, which levels of proficiency that had any influence on the perceived use of grammar learning strategies were still unknown, therefore a Tukey post hoc test was run.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA test results for perceived use of grammar learning strategies

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
COGNITIVE	Between Groups	8.177	2	4.089	11.077	<.001
	Within Groups	26.574	72	.369		
	Total	34.751	74			
META COGNITIVE	Between Groups	6.375	2	3.188	8.311	<.001
	Within Groups	27.616	72	.384		
	Total	33.991	74			
AFFECTIVE	Between Groups	4.601	2	2.300	5.374	.007
	Within Groups	30.821	72	.428		
	Total	35.422	74			
SOCIAL	Between Groups	9.756	2	4.878	11.455	<.001
	Within Groups	30.660	72	.426		
	Total	47.888	74			

Table 4 showed that students with high proficiency level used more cognitive strategies than low proficient students (MD=.847, $p<0.01$) and those with average proficiency level also used more cognitive strategies than low proficient students (MD=.473, $p<0.05$). However, high and average proficient students used cognitive strategies equally (MD=.374, $p>0.05$). Students with high language proficiency level used more metacognitive strategies than low proficient students (MD=.753, $p<0.01$) and those with average language proficiency also used more metacognitive strategies than low proficient students (MD=.509, $p<0.05$). Nevertheless, high and average proficient students used metacognitive strategies equally (MD=.244, $p>0.05$). Students with high proficiency level were found to use more affective strategies than low proficient students

(MD=.618, p<0.01). However, they and average proficient students used affective strategies equally (MD=.346, p>0.05). Average and low proficient students also used affective strategies equally (MD=.244, p>0.05). As for social strategies, high proficient students used the strategies more than low (MD=.875, p<0.01) proficient students. In addition, students with average proficient level also used more social strategies than low proficient students (MD=.841, p<0.01). High and average proficient students used social strategies equally (MD=.034, p>0.05). These findings indicate that more proficient students used all the grammar learning strategies significantly higher than those who were less proficient.

Table 4. The mean differences of the proficiency levels

Dependent Variable	(I) PROFICIENCY	(J) PROFICIENCY	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
COGNITIVE	Average	Low	.47318*	.041
	Total	High	-.37406	.059
META COGNITIVE	High	Low	.84724*	<.001
	Total	Average	.37406	.059
AFFECTIVE	Average	Low	.50941*	.029
	Total	High	-.24424	.303
SOCIAL	High	Low	.75365*	<.001
	Total	Average	.24424	.303

Table 5 below shows that there were no significant differences in the perceived usefulness in all four grammar learning strategies as the p-values in F test were above 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that students with different levels of proficiency equally perceived the usefulness of grammar learning strat.

Table 5. One-way ANOVA test results for perceived usefulness of grammar learning strategies

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
COGNITIVE	Between Groups	8.177	2	4.089	11.077	<.001
	Within Groups	26.574	72	.369		
	Total	34.751	74			
META COGNITIVE	Between Groups	6.375	2	3.188	8.311	<.001
	Within Groups	27.616	72	.384		
	Total	33.991	74			
AFFECTIVE	Between Groups	4.601	2	2.300	5.374	.007
	Within Groups	30.821	72	.428		
	Total	35.422	74			
SOCIAL	Between Groups	9.756	2	4.878	11.455	<.001
	Within Groups	30.660	72	.426		
	Total	47.888	74			

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study revealed that there were correlations between the perceived use and usefulness of all four grammar learning strategies. Prasetyaningrum et al. (2023) posit that students should use appropriate grammar learning and know how to put them into practice. By realizing the benefits of grammar learning strategies, the students will apply them and find the best strategy that suits them in achieving their learning goals. This will make their learning more effective in grasping certain grammatical patterns and structures.

The study also discovered that social strategies were perceived as the most used and useful among all four grammar learning strategies. The findings are in line with Abdul Halim's (2020) and Mohamad et al.'s (2023) studies which also found that social strategies were most used by students. High proficient students were also found to be using all grammar learning strategies more than average and low proficient students. This finding is supported by Mohamad et al. (2023) and Aisyah et al. (2024). These findings indicate that since high proficient students are more likely to use different grammar learning strategies, the low proficient students can be guided in using the strategies that are most beneficial for them in learning grammar.

In terms of differences, this study revealed that there were significant mean differences in the perceived use in all four grammar learning strategies among students with different levels of proficiency. The findings did not support the study by Al Abri et al. (2017) who discovered that high proficient students only used more metacognitive strategies than less proficient students. Similarly, Cahyani et al. (2022) also found that there were significant mean differences in the use of grammar learning strategies among low, average, and high proficient students. However, they discovered that low and average proficient students commonly used social strategies, meanwhile, high proficient students used metacognitive strategies.

This study also found that there were no significant mean differences in the perceived usefulness of grammar learning strategies among ESL undergraduate students with different levels of proficiency. This shows that all students regardless of their proficiency see the benefits of grammar learning strategies. Sani (2016) found that students perceived learning grammar as useful and not wasting their time because they could gain better English skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The present study concluded that students who employed grammar learning strategies would also see the benefits of those strategies in mastering English grammar. Being aware of their own grammar learning strategies could assist the students to monitor their own learning and eventually do better in their English performance. Teachers can also design their teaching materials and adapt their grammar teaching approaches once they understand the strategies preferred by the students. In this study, social strategies were found to be favored by students with all levels of proficiency, thus, teachers could gear their grammar activities that will encourage students use these strategies in their classrooms. In addition, since students with a high level of proficiency use more grammar learning strategies than less proficient students, they can help their counterpart choose the most appropriate grammar learning strategies to enhance their grammar knowledge. Regardless of their

levels of language proficiency, the students believe that grammar learning strategies are useful to them, therefore, the teachers can have wider resources and use various activities in their classrooms without worrying about the students' grammar learning processes.

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Conflict of Interest

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Authors' Contributions

Nur Syuhada Abdul Halim conducted the research and collected the data. PM Dr Faizah Mohamad analyzed the data, interpreted the results and worked on the draft of the manuscript. Dr Elia Md Johar and Dr Zaemah Abdul Kadir gave feedback and edited the manuscript. All authors refined the manuscript and approved its final version.