Implementation of social emotional learning skills

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Abstract

The fact that the era we are living in is a global one with all its changes makes it impossible to separate it from the world of education. With the changes in this era, students are not only focusing on learning core competencies in their subjects, but also on mastering various skills needed in the 21st century. Educators must be able to adapt to the diverse changes that exist and must be able to equip and enhance their knowledge of various global issues. The concept of social-emotional learning is one of the educational issues currently being promoted. The research method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. This research aims to describe the implementation of social-emotional learning skills applied at Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan City. Based on the findings of the research above, it can be concluded that students attending Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan City have partially implemented SEL (Social Emotional Learning). This is due to the support of educators and school programs that promote skills in the field of SEL.

How to Cite

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Introduction

Schools are formal educational institutions in Indonesia. They serve as places where students receive both academic and religious education. Parents who consistently send their children to school have high expectations for positive changes in their children (Izzaty et al., 2017), such as increased knowledge, broader social relationships, and more developed perspectives. These expectations become the responsibility of educators to provide the best possible education for the students

In this regard, schools play a significant role in shaping students' personalities, ways of thinking, and behaviors (Saija, 2020). Therefore, schools must cultivate a positive climate for students. Improving school climate is one way to enhance the quality of education (Achdiyat & Warhamni, 2018). A positive school climate is expected to create a sense of safety and comfort for students (Zhang et al., 2020), which in turn contributes to improved academic performance (Achdiyat & Warhamni, 2018).

The current global era, with all its rapid changes, is inseparable from the field of education (Martínez-Romera, 2018). In this era, students are not only required to master core academic competencies but also various essential 21st-century skills. These include critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, collaboration, and more (Yayan et al., 2019; Schönert-Reichl, 2022). Mastery of these skills is expected to enable students to confidently and quickly adapt to diverse global changes. Such transformations inevitably influence various sectors, including education (Rahma Fadhila, 2021). Therefore, educational institutions must be responsive to the demands of the times and continuously implement dynamic reforms aligned with the needs of the 21st century.

The flexibility and dynamism inherent in the field of education must be anticipated by educators (Helaluddin & Alamsyah, 2019). Educators are required to adapt to various changes and enhance their knowledge of diverse global issues (Ahuja, 2016). These efforts aim to prepare young educators to remain resilient and capable of overcoming future challenges (Bailin et al., 1999). Social-emotional learning is one of the educational issues that has recently gained significant attention (UNESCO, 2021). In early 2016, the World Economic Forum (WEF) published a report outlining the latest goals of the education sector, which are closely related to social-emotional learning (SEL) (Schonert-Reichl, 2022; Voith et al., 2020).

The World Economic Forum (WEF) outlines the types of skills that students must master to navigate this disruptive era. There are three skill categories required in the 21st century: (1) foundational literacies, (2) competencies, and (3) character qualities. The first category, foundational literacies, includes basic literacy, numeracy, scientific literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, financial literacy, and civic and cultural literacy. The second category, competencies, consists of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. The third category, character qualities, encompasses curiosity, initiative, adaptability, leadership, social and cultural awareness, and perseverance (Voith et al., 2020).

In SEL, there are five core components considered essential for its effectiveness, including: (1) *Self-awareness,* which involves recognizing one's own identity, understanding emotions, acknowledging personal and others' strengths, self-efficacy, and self-confidence; (2) *Social awareness*, which includes empathy, respecting others, and perspective-taking; (3) *Responsible decision-making*, which involves evaluation and reflection, as well as personal and

ethical responsibility; (4) *Self-management*, which includes impulse control, stress management, perseverance, goal-setting, and motivation; and (5) *Relationship skills*, which refer to the ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships, such as cooperating with others, seeking and providing help, and communicating effectively (Edgar & Morrison, 2021). The five components of SEL are illustrated in the following figure:
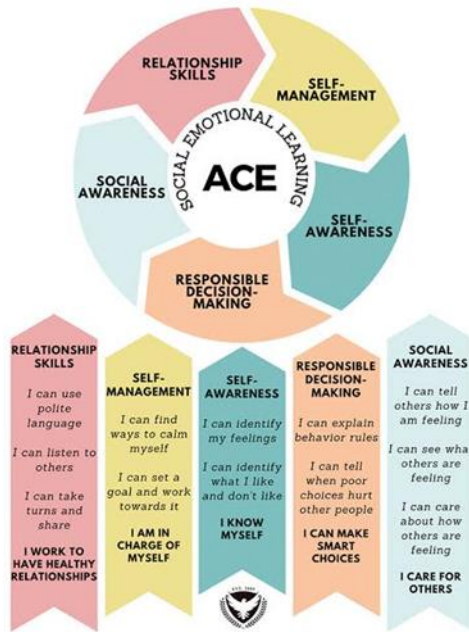
In this study, the researcher aims to examine how SEL is implemented among adolescents enrolled in upper secondary schools or Madrasah Aliyah (MA), in order to further explore the extent to which SEL has been adopted in the school. This research will identify which SEL components have been implemented and assess whether their implementation has been optimal or if further improvement is still required.

Methodology

Research design, site, and participants

The research method employed in this study is descriptive qualitative. According to Bogdan and Taylor, as cited in Moleong (2018), qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken expressions from individuals as well as observable behavior. This study aims to describe the implementation of social-emotional learning (SEL) skills applied at Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan.

This study was conducted by collecting data from six participants who are active students at the school and come from three different academic majors. To facilitate data and information collection, the researcher employed observation and interview techniques. The researcher served as the primary instrument in gathering the data. The main questions asked to the participants focused on: (1) student identity and (2) the implementation of social-emotional learning (SEL) skills.

Table 1. *Participants' profile*

No	Informant	Initials	Grade	Major
1	A1	AT	XII-3	MIPA
2	A2	YAUT	XII-1	MIPA
3	A3	NRA	XII-1	IPS
4	A4	ERA	XII-2	IPS
5	A5	ZSH	XII-3	Agama
6	A6	PR	XII-1	Agama

Table 2. *Terminology of SEL Components*

| No	Term Code	Concept	Description
1	S1	Relationship Skills	The ability to build cooperative relationships and communicate effectively.
2	S2	Self-management	Involves impulse control, stress management, perseverance, goal-setting, and motivation.
3	S3	Self-awareness	Understanding oneself holistically, including traits, character, emotions, affect, and thoughts.
4	S4	Responsible Decision-making	Skills in solving problems and making responsible choices.
5	S5	Social Awareness	Awareness of the surrounding social environment, such as empathy, adaptability, and mutual support.

Table 3. *Indicators of SEL Competencies*

No	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Skills	Responsible Decision Making
1	Identifying emotions	Impulse control	Perspective-taking	Active listening	Self-identification
2	Accurate self-perception	Stress management	Empathy	Communication	Analyzing situations
3	Recognizing strengths	Self-discipline	Appreciating diversity	Collaborating with others	Problem-solving
4	Self-confidence	Self-motivation	Respecting others	Help-seeking	Evaluation
5	Self-efficacy	Goal-setting	-	Offering help	Reflection
6	-	Organizational skills	-	Negotiation	Accountability

The data analysis technique in this study employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, as cited in Moleong (2018). The data analysis process consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. This study utilized

triangulation of methods and sources by cross-checking interview transcripts, field notes, surveys, and documentation records obtained from various data sources. Furthermore, to examine the validity of the data, the researcher applied a triangulation technique, as proposed by Wiliam in Moleong (2018), which involves verifying data from multiple sources using different techniques and at different times.

Figure 1. *Research Design*
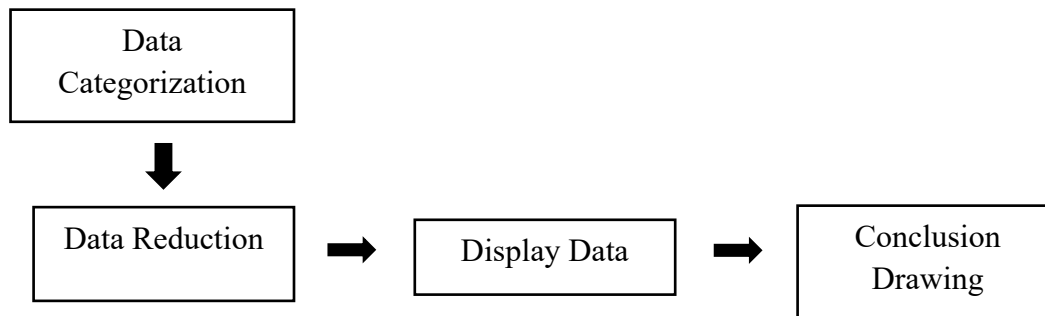
Results

Based on interviews conducted with six (6) participants who are all in the same grade level, namely the 11th grade, but enrolled in different academic streams Science (MIPA), Social Science (IPS), and Religious Studies this study seeks to identify whether they have implemented the first SEL component, namely relationship skills (coded as S1). As previously explained, relationship skills are essential for individuals to interact effectively with one another (Elliott et al., 2018). In daily life activities, these skills help individuals to adapt and cope with various changes in their environment (Ahmed et al., 2020). This is crucial, as humans are social beings who spend most of their lives engaging and interacting with others (Aldiyah, 2021).

In this case, the researcher found that nearly all participants (100%) stated that they possess good listening skills, particularly in paying attention to what others say, including instructions delivered by teachers. Furthermore, four participants, representing approximately 15% of the total, reported difficulties in communication, specifically when speaking in front of an audience. However, this issue is being addressed through the implementation of the Student Learning Center (SLC) learning method, in which teachers encourage students to express themselves freely in front of the class, especially when presenting learning materials they are responsible for. Thus, this aspect continues to be improved to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

Additionally, the researcher observed that all participants demonstrated strong collaboration skills. This is supported by the fact that teachers consistently assign group-based tasks that require students to work together. One example of such a learning activity is project-based learning, which the students enjoy, as they perceive it to be more engaging, challenging, and less monotonous.

On the other hand, regarding help-seeking and help-giving skills, only five participants (80%) reported that they actively seek assistance when needed, while the remaining participant mentioned preferring to "stand on their own." However, in terms of offering help, all six

participants (100%) stated that helping others is a fundamental obligation for every human being.

Figure 2. *Implementation of Relationship Skills*
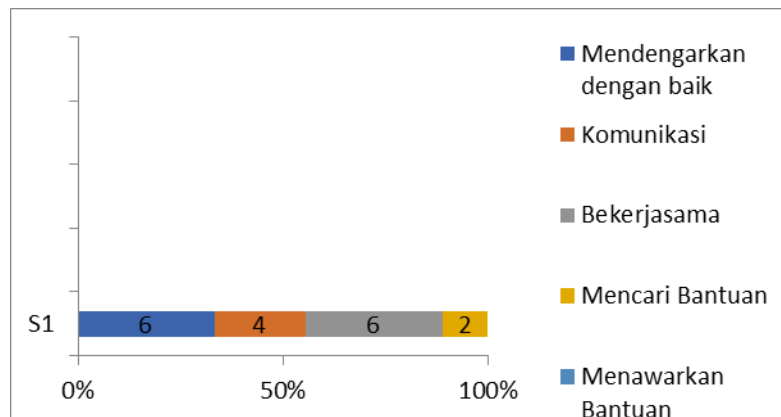
Based on the interviews conducted regarding the implementation of social-emotional learning (SEL) skills at Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan City, it was found that the application of self-management skills among the six (6) participants varies considerably. Adolescence is a developmental stage in which individuals experience complex physical and psychological changes (Parmar & Jogsan, 2017). Overall, it is a transitional period that involves significant adaptations and transformations across various aspects of life (Badeni & Saparahayuningsih, 2021). Psychologically, adolescents frequently struggle with identity-related conflicts (Parmar & Jogsan, 2017). Moreover, their emotional development is highly dynamic; unstable mood fluctuations often create challenges in their social functioning (Mohr & Mohr, 2016). In this context, the researcher observed a correlation between adolescents' emotional development and the self-management component of social-emotional learning skills.

It can be observed from the diagram below that adolescents tend to experience difficulties in controlling impulses. Impulse control refers to an individual's ability to resist or manage immediate urges or desires to engage in certain behaviors (Jagers et al., 2018). It involves the capacity to think ahead, evaluate the consequences of actions, and make better long-term decisions rather than responding impulsively in the moment (Jagers et al., 2018). In this case, the researcher found that only three participants reported being able to control their impulses, which indicates the presence of a more developed self-concept and self-regulation.

In addition, stress management. Generation Z, which generally includes individuals born between the mid-1990s and the mid-2010s, has experienced various social, technological, and economic changes that may contribute to higher levels of stress compared to previous generations (Supratman & Lucy, 2015). Generation Z is particularly vulnerable to stress due to their high dependency on technology, sensitivity toward others' judgments, and exposure to a wide range of societal issues (Rahmawati et al., 2019). In this study, it was found that only three respondents stated that they were able to manage their stress by engaging themselves in more positive activities.

In contrast to self-discipline, only two participants stated that they were able to discipline themselves. This is attributed to the effective implementation of rules within their family

system. The rules established by their families since childhood have accustomed them to living a disciplined life. Furthermore, regarding self-motivation and goal setting, self-motivation psychologically refers to an internal drive that encourages individuals to achieve goals, take certain actions, or fulfill their psychological needs (Noddings, 2006). It involves intrinsic desires and energy that arise from within the individual, rather than external pressure (The SEL Resource Pack for Singapore Schools, 2008). Almost all participants reported that they possess strong motivation to achieve their desired goals. External demands as well as internal aspirations strengthen their determination to realize their ambitions. This motivation is also supported by their involvement in organizational activities that help them develop their personal potential. As shown in the diagram below, four out of six participants are actively engaged in school organizations to further enhance their learning, gain enjoyment, and acquire positive and constructive knowledge.

Figure 3. *Implementation of Self-Management*
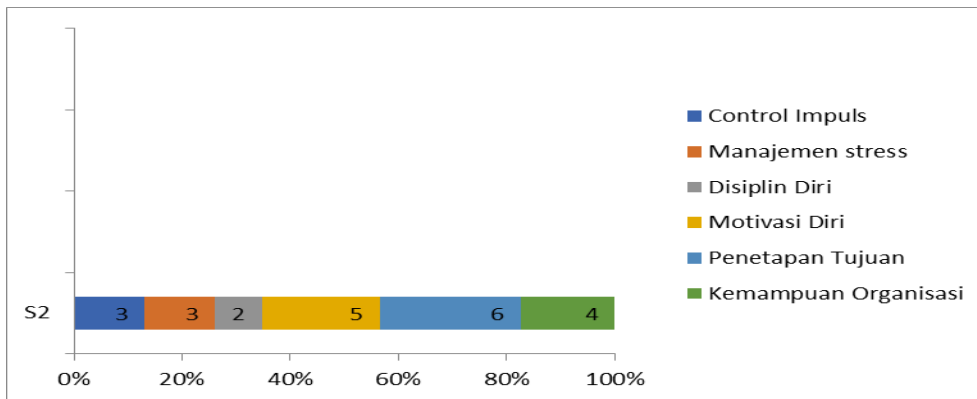
The next component of SEL is Self-Awareness, coded as S3. Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand oneself comprehensively, including an understanding of one's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, strengths, and personal weaknesses (Sue & Sue, 2013). It is a significant aspect of emotional intelligence and serves as a foundation for personal development, effective decision-making, and healthy interpersonal relationships (Dennis, 2010).

To enhance self-awareness, individuals can begin by identifying their emotions. Emotional identification is the ability to recognize, understand, and express emotions, both one's own and those of others. This process involves being aware of various emotional forms, being able to differentiate one emotion from another, and recognizing emotional expressions within oneself or others (Jagers et al., 2018). Emotional identification is an essential component of emotional intelligence, which encompasses understanding and managing emotions at both personal and interpersonal levels (McGee et al., 2022).

In this regard, the researcher found that only two participants were able to identify their emotions. This is influenced by the emotional guidance provided by their families as well as their strong attachment to their immediate family members. Secure attachment within the family can provide emotional comfort for children, enabling them to regulate their emotions more effectively (Pertiwi et al., 2019). In general, emotional identification has a significant

impact on interpersonal communication, empathic ability, and relationships between individuals (Lau, 2006). This skill also contributes to an individual's ability to manage emotions effectively, as emotional awareness is a crucial first step in addressing and regulating one's feelings (Kosasih, 2014).

The next aspect is the ability to form accurate perceptions. Perception is the process of interpreting and giving meaning to sensory information received through our senses, such as sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch (Tentama & Abdillah, 2019). Gestalt Theory emphasizes that humans tend to perceive patterns and integrate elements of sensory experiences into a meaningful whole (Mathew, 2017). Adolescents often experience emotional crises, during which they may struggle to define abstract concepts. In this regard, the researcher found that only three participants believed they were capable of accurately interpreting their perceptions. However, in general, adolescents tend to face difficulties in understanding their own perceptions and often mix them with unstable emotions (Manning et al., 2017). This condition may later affect their ability to resolve conflicts.

Furthermore, five out of six participants reported that they possessed the ability to recognize their own strengths. They believed that the goals they wished to achieve were aligned with their strengths and competencies. Another component is self-confidence, which refers to an individual's belief in their own abilities and self-worth. It includes a positive evaluation of one's skills, knowledge, and potential. Self-confidence not only involves the belief that one can succeed in specific tasks but also encompasses self-acceptance, positive self-esteem, and resilience when facing challenges. In this study, only two out of six participants felt that they had strong self-confidence, as demonstrated by their courage to speak in public and their adaptability in new environments. Building self-confidence is not easy; it requires intrinsic motivation as well as support from the surrounding environment (Waskito, 2018). Finally, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks or achieve specific goals. The level of self-efficacy among adolescents at Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan requires further development, as only three out of six participants were found to possess adequate skills in this aspect. Self-efficacy is crucial for individuals to protect themselves and achieve their desired goals.

**Figure 4.** *Implementation of Self-Awareness*
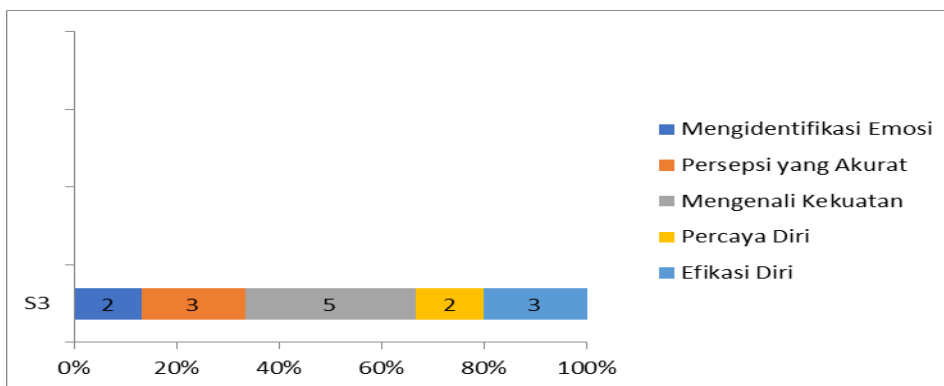
The next component is Responsible Decision-Making, coded as S4. Based on the chart obtained from participants' responses, the implementation of Responsible Decision-Making is considered satisfactory. This can be seen in their ability to solve problems and engage in self-reflection. Their reflective behavior is influenced by routines practiced in their school environment, where religious values are consistently implemented and have become a positive habit for students. The school enforces regulations that encourage the practice of sunnah worship, such as performing Dhuha prayer daily. Instilling religious values in students is considered an appropriate approach. Additionally, the school conducts activities such as reading Yasin every morning and listening to religious lectures every Friday, which helps strengthen students' internalization of religious values. These activities contribute to improving their personal qualities and enhancing their ability to solve problems using rational and thoughtful decision-making.

Figure 5. *Implementation of Responsible Decision-Making*
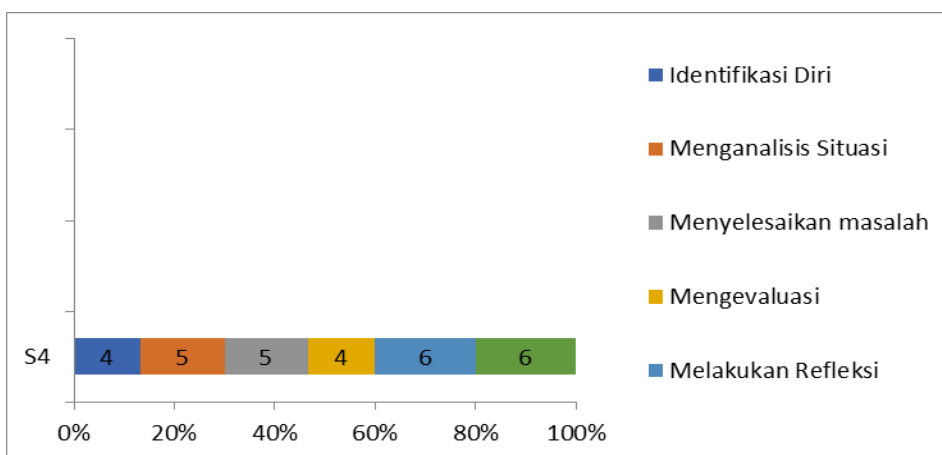
The final component of SEL is Social Awareness, coded as S5. In this regard, the researcher observed that all participants demonstrated strong abilities in social awareness, particularly in their concern for others. This is evident in their perspective-taking skills, which refer to the ability to understand and view a situation or problem from another person's point of view (Voith et al., 2020). It involves the capacity to put oneself in someone else's position and to understand their feelings, thoughts, and experiences (Voith et al., 2020). A total of five out of six participants reported that they possessed adequate perspective-taking skills. As social beings, humans must maintain empathy toward others. Empathy plays a crucial role in building healthy and meaningful relationships, thereby facilitating effective interpersonal communication (Andersone, 2017). Thus, empathy is not only an important interpersonal skill but also an integral aspect of social life and personal as well as collective well-being. Empathy among students in this school is cultivated by educators through specific school programs. One such activity is "Clean Friday," which is conducted weekly with the aim of enhancing cooperation and empathy among students. Therefore, all school activities are oriented toward supporting the development of SEL competencies.

Figure 6. *Implementation of Social Awareness*
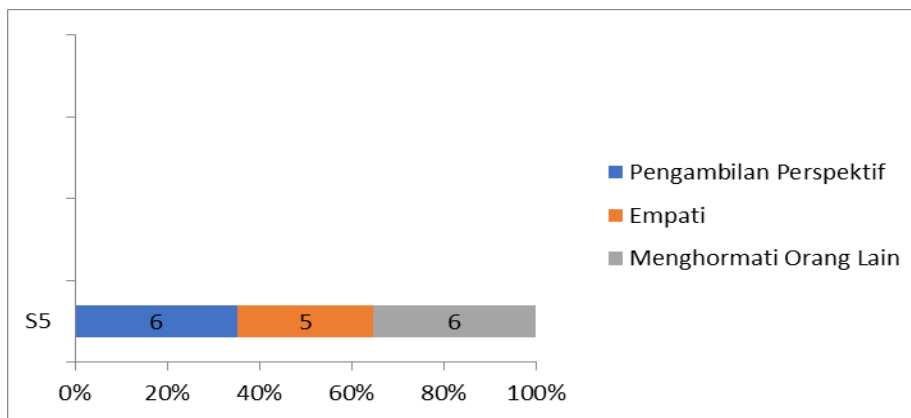
Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the research findings above, it can be concluded that the students at Madrasah Aliyah X in Medan have implemented several components of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). This is supported by the role of educators and school programs that facilitate the development of SEL skills. Most school activities are designed to foster social-emotional values in students, such as the "Clean Friday" program, Dhuha prayer, Yasin recitation, and other religious routines.

In addition, family guidance, rules, and support also play a significant role in shaping students' SEL competencies. Parental support enhances the development of SEL values in students. Furthermore, learning activities based on the student-centered learning approach help strengthen students' SEL potential, particularly in the areas of self-awareness and problem-solving.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Acknowledgments

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