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Art Therapy in TikTok-Based Classical Guidance: An Expressive Islamic Counseling Review

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of art therapy in classical guidance services through TikTok and to interpret its relevance to Expressive Islamic Counseling. The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed guidance and counseling services, including classical guidance practices that increasingly need to respond to the communicative habits of digital-native students. One emerging innovation is the use of art therapy as an expressive service approach disseminated through TikTok. However, academic discussion of TikTok-based art therapy in digital school counseling, especially from the perspective of Expressive Islamic Counseling, remains limited. This research employed a qualitative exploratory case study design. The main informant was selected purposively: a junior high school guidance and counseling teacher who actively used TikTok to share art therapy-based classical guidance practices. Data were collected through digital observation of TikTok videos, caption and comment analysis, and an in-depth digital interview conducted through Direct Message. The data were analyzed thematically using Expressive Islamic Counseling as an interpretive framework. The findings show that TikTok-based art therapy represents an expressive, participatory, and non-judgmental innovation in classical guidance. It facilitates emotional catharsis, preliminary emotional assessment, self-reflection, and potential follow-up services. Nevertheless, the spiritual dimension of Islamic counseling remains implicit rather than

explicitly integrated. This study contributes conceptually by positioning digital art therapy not only as a medium of psychological expression but also as a potential means of self-reflection and spiritual awareness within Islamic counseling.

Keywords: Art Therapy, Classical Guidance, Expressive Islamic Counseling, Guidance and Counseling Teacher, TikTok.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has significantly reshaped educational practices and guidance and counseling services. Social media has become a public communication space that enables information to circulate rapidly, widely, and interactively (Rahardja, 2026). In the counseling context, this condition encourages guidance and counseling teachers to move beyond conventional classroom-based delivery and to use digital platforms as media for learning, psychoeducation, and student development services (Rizqiyah et al., 2025). For counseling practitioners, this transformation creates an opportunity to design services that are more adaptive to students who are familiar with visual, brief, and interactive communication.

TikTok has become one of the most influential short-video platforms in contemporary digital culture. It is no longer used only for entertainment; it also functions as a medium for education, professional communication, and youth-centered knowledge sharing (Maharani, 2025). Studies on TikTok in educational contexts show that short-video platforms can support engagement, creativity, and the public circulation of learning experiences (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021; Literat, 2021; Merga, 2025). Within school counseling, the use of TikTok indicates a spatial expansion of guidance and counseling practices from formal school settings to more open, fluid, and participatory digital environments.

One innovation that appears in digital counseling practices is the implementation of art therapy within classical guidance services. Art therapy uses artistic media to facilitate emotional expression, exploration of internal experiences, and self-awareness (Yusa et al., 2025). Empirical studies have shown that art therapy can provide a safe and indirect channel for expressing difficult emotions, especially when direct verbal communication is limited (Abbing et al., 2018; Ciasca et al., 2018; Hu et al., 2021; Regev & Cohen-Yatziv, 2018). In classical guidance, this approach is relevant because students, particularly adolescents, do not always have sufficient verbal capacity or emotional readiness to articulate personal experiences openly (Nurbarokah et al., 2025).

The phenomenon examined in this study is a TikTok video uploaded by a guidance and counseling teacher that displays the implementation of art therapy as part of classical guidance. Through short-video narration, the teacher presents art-based activities directed toward emotional expression and psychological reflection. Practically, such a format offers an alternative to conventional guidance delivery that tends to be verbalistic and teacher-centered (Ma'arif, 2025). However, the circulation of counseling practices in public digital spaces also raises academic questions regarding the depth of intervention, the validity of guidance service procedures, the ethical use of student-related content, and the meaning constructed through digital representation (Jaber & Al-Hroub, 2023; Karaman et al., 2021; Kabata et al., 2025).

Previous studies have demonstrated that art therapy contributes to emotional regulation, self-awareness, and psychological expression in various counseling and therapeutic settings. Meanwhile, Islamic counseling literature emphasizes the importance of integrating psychological expression, self-reflection, and spirituality in the helping process (Lazuardi et al., 2025). From the perspective of Expressive Islamic Counseling, emotional expression is not merely catharsis or the release of psychological tension. It is also part of a broader process of meaning-making, muhasabah, and spiritual awareness directed toward holistic psychological balance (Khoiriyah et al., 2024; Rahman, 2025; Winarso, 2024).

Nevertheless, there remains a clear research gap. Most studies examine art therapy in direct face-to-face counseling contexts (Kesya, 2026; Tiarno, 2022), while studies that specifically investigate art therapy within classical guidance as represented through TikTok are still limited. In addition, existing discussions often focus on the attractiveness of creative counseling techniques but pay less attention to the stages of classical guidance service delivery and the meaning of the practice within Islamic counseling discourse. Studies that explicitly interpret TikTok-based art therapy through the lens of Expressive Islamic Counseling are also scarce (Agus & Ulm, 2025).

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to read TikTok-based art therapy not merely as digital counseling content, but as a representation of classical guidance practice that can be interpreted through Expressive Islamic Counseling. This study also takes a critical position by distinguishing between partial conceptual alignment with Islamic counseling and full implementation of Islamic counseling values. Based on this gap, the study aims to analyze the implementation of art therapy in classical guidance through TikTok and to identify its relevance to the principles of Expressive Islamic Counseling. Academically, this study contributes to the development of digital guidance and counseling studies within Islamic counseling discourse.

Practically, it offers a reflective reference for guidance and counseling teachers seeking to develop creative, contextual, and spiritually meaningful services for students in digital educational ecosystems.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. This design was selected because the study sought to understand in depth a contemporary phenomenon: the implementation of art therapy in classical guidance as displayed through social media, and its relevance to Expressive Islamic Counseling. The exploratory case study was appropriate because the research focused on a real practice conducted by a guidance and counseling teacher in a digital space that is interactive, open, and dynamic.

The research locus was cyberspace, specifically the TikTok platform. TikTok was selected because it has increasingly been used as a medium for educational communication, including by guidance and counseling practitioners who disseminate service innovations to a wider audience. The case examined in this study was the implementation of art therapy in classical guidance displayed in short-video content by an active junior high school guidance and counseling teacher in Purbalingga.

The unit of analysis consisted of digital traces related to the service implementation, including the main video content, upload caption, user interactions in the comment section, and reflective narratives from the teacher as the content creator. The analysis therefore did not focus only on the visual representation of the activity, but also on the construction of meaning, the implementation of the practice, and audience responses to the displayed service.

The data consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained from audiovisual recordings of the TikTok upload, verbal transcripts of the teacher's explanation in the video, and an in-depth interview conducted through TikTok Direct Message. The interview was semi-structured and aimed to explore the background of using art therapy, the objective of the service, pedagogical considerations, and the informant's reflection on the implementation of the service in classical guidance. Secondary data were obtained from user comments on the relevant upload, conceptual documents on classical guidance, and scientific literature related to art therapy and Expressive Islamic Counseling.

The main informant was a junior high school guidance and counseling teacher who actively produced educational content on TikTok. The informant was selected through purposive sampling based on several criteria: being an active guidance and counseling teacher at

the junior high school level; having an active TikTok account used to share guidance and counseling content; having uploaded content explicitly showing the practice of art therapy in classical guidance; and being willing to participate in an academic digital interview.

Data collection was conducted in three stages. First, digital observation was carried out on the TikTok content that became the object of the study by examining visual elements, verbal instructions, captions, and audience interaction patterns in the comment section. Second, an in-depth cyber interview was conducted with the main informant through digital media to obtain explanations regarding the service implementation, the purpose of using art therapy, and professional reflection on the practice. Third, documentation study was conducted by reviewing relevant scientific literature, conceptual documents, and digital traces that supported data interpretation.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved data reduction, organization of digital data, initial coding of emerging themes, thematic categorization, and interpretation of findings (Rahman, 2025). Expressive Islamic Counseling was used as the interpretive lens to identify the pattern of art therapy implementation in classical guidance, the forms of emotional expression that emerged, and the possible connections between self-reflection, muhasabah, and spirituality in Islamic counseling.

To ensure research credibility, this study applied source triangulation by comparing data from video content, interview results, audience comments, and supporting literature. Member checking was also conducted with the main informant to ensure that the researcher's interpretation was consistent with the informant's experience and intended meaning. Ethical considerations were maintained by obtaining voluntary informed consent for the interview, limiting digital data use to academic purposes, and anonymizing personal identity when required.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Dimensions in Art Therapy on TikTok

The findings indicate that TikTok-based art therapy in classical guidance operates through several interconnected dimensions, namely expressive and non-judgmental service delivery, preliminary emotional assessment, adaptation to students' psychological characteristics and digital culture, and partial conceptual alignment with Expressive Islamic Counseling.

Art Therapy as an Expressive and Non-Judgmental Innovation in Classical Guidance

The implementation of art therapy in classical guidance positions students as active subjects who are given space to express their emotional conditions through visual media. In the observed practice, drawing activities were not directed toward producing aesthetically perfect artwork, but toward helping students represent their inner experiences in a more open and personal manner. This indicates that art therapy in classical guidance functions as an expressive medium that allows students to communicate emotions that may be difficult to articulate verbally.

The non-judgmental nature of the activity is an important element in this practice. By reducing pressure on artistic quality and emphasizing emotional honesty, the service creates a psychologically safe atmosphere for students. Psychological safety is essential in guidance and counseling because students are more likely to express personal experiences when they do not feel evaluated, criticized, or compared with others. In this context, art therapy contributes to the development of a supportive classical guidance environment that is more participatory, inclusive, and responsive to students' emotional needs.

Conceptually, this finding suggests that art therapy expands the communication model in classical guidance. Classical guidance is often associated with verbal explanation, group instruction, or informational delivery. Through art therapy, however, the service becomes more dialogical and expressive because students are invited to communicate through symbols, images, colors, and visual representation. Thus, TikTok-based art therapy reflects an innovation in classical guidance that shifts the service from a predominantly verbal approach toward a more creative and student-centered model.

Art Therapy as a Medium for Preliminary Emotional Assessment

The findings also show that art therapy can function as a medium for preliminary emotional assessment. The integration of visual expression and brief written reflection enables the guidance and counseling teacher to identify students' emotional tendencies, personal concerns, and possible needs for further support. In this sense, students' artwork does not merely represent creative expression, but may also provide initial information about their emotional state.

The use of art therapy as preliminary assessment is relevant because students, especially adolescents, do not always have the ability or willingness to explain their emotions directly. Visual expression can become an alternative entry point for understanding students' inner experiences. When students are asked to give meaning to their drawings through simple reflective statements, the activity encourages them to move from emotional expression toward self-recognition. This process is important in guidance and counseling because awareness of one's emotional condition is a foundation for further personal development.

In the context of classical guidance, this practice demonstrates that art therapy has both preventive and responsive functions. Preventively, it provides students with a safe space to recognize and express emotions before problems develop further. Responsively, it helps the guidance and counseling teacher identify students who may require additional support, such as individual counseling, group guidance, or emotional reinforcement. Therefore, TikTok-based art therapy can be understood as an initial gateway for mapping students' emotional needs within the broader guidance and counseling service system.

Art Therapy as an Adaptive Approach for Students' Psychological Characteristics and Digital Culture

Art therapy also appears as an adaptive approach for students with diverse psychological characteristics, particularly those who experience difficulty expressing emotions verbally. Students with introverted tendencies, for instance, may feel less comfortable communicating personal issues through direct verbal interaction. For such students, drawing and visual expression can provide a more accessible and less intimidating channel for emotional communication.

This finding indicates that the use of art therapy is not merely a response to digital trends, but also reflects psychopedagogical consideration in guidance and counseling practice. The approach allows the service to accommodate different communication styles among students. By providing non-verbal expressive space, art therapy supports a more differentiated form of guidance that considers students' emotional readiness, personality tendencies, and developmental needs.

In addition, the dissemination of this practice through TikTok reflects the transformation of guidance and counseling services in the digital era. TikTok functions not only as an entertainment platform, but also as a medium for educational communication and professional knowledge sharing. The presence of guidance and counseling content on TikTok shows that counseling practices are no longer limited to formal classroom settings. Instead, they

increasingly enter digital public spaces where students and practitioners can access, observe, and learn from innovative service practices. This transformation strengthens the relevance of classical guidance in responding to the communicative habits of digital-native students.

Partial Conceptual Alignment with Expressive Islamic Counseling

The implementation of art therapy in classical guidance shows partial conceptual alignment with Expressive Islamic Counseling. This alignment can be seen in three main aspects: emotional catharsis, self-reflection, and the possibility of follow-up guidance. Through drawing, students are given space to release emotional burdens in a symbolic and non-verbal manner. In Expressive Islamic Counseling, emotional expression is not understood merely as psychological release, but can also become an initial step toward self-awareness and inner balance.

The reflective dimension of art therapy also resonates with the concept of muhasabah. When students' express emotions and give meaning to their drawings, they begin to recognize and reflect on their inner condition. This process is conceptually close to the Islamic counseling perspective, which emphasizes self-awareness, self-evaluation, and the effort to understand one's psychological and spiritual condition. However, in the observed practice, this reflective process remains primarily psychological and has not yet been explicitly directed toward spiritual reflection.

Therefore, the relationship between TikTok-based art therapy and Expressive Islamic Counseling should be understood carefully. The practice demonstrates conceptual relevance to Islamic counseling because it supports emotional expression, self-awareness, and the possibility of continued guidance. Nevertheless, the spiritual dimension is still implicit. Elements such as prayer, *dhikr*, *tafakkur*, patience, *tawakkal*, or explicit reflection on the relationship between the self and Allah have not been clearly integrated into the service process. As a result, the practice can be interpreted as partially aligned with Expressive Islamic Counseling, but not yet as a fully articulated model of Islamic counseling intervention.

This finding opens an important opportunity for future development. Art therapy in classical guidance can be strengthened by integrating Islamic reflective values more explicitly, without reducing its expressive and student-centered character. Such integration may produce a more holistic model of digital guidance and counseling that addresses students' emotional needs while also nurturing spiritual awareness in accordance with the principles of Islamic counseling.

Table 1: Summary of Findings on Art Therapy Implementation in Classical Guidance

Theme	Empirical Indicator	Thematic Interpretation
Expressive service implementation	Drawing based on feelings; brief written reflection	Art therapy functions as non-verbal emotional expression.
Non-judgmental service environment	Instruction that no drawing is right or wrong; artwork is not graded	The service creates psychological safety for students.
Identification of emotional needs	Teacher's statement about emotional reinforcement and follow-up counseling	The activity becomes an initial assessment of service needs.
Adaptation to student characteristics	Informant's statement regarding introverted students	The service considers students' individual expressive needs.
Digital dissemination of guidance practice	Audience interaction and comments on TikTok	The practice shows the transformation of counseling services into digital public space.

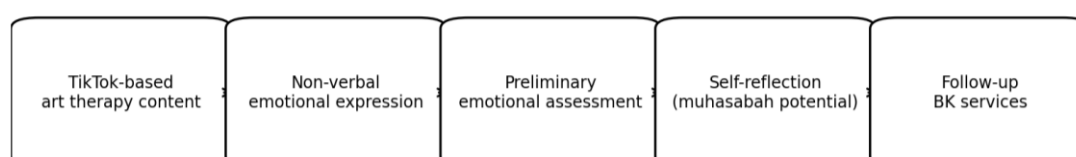


Figure 1: Analytical Flow of TikTok-Based Art Therapy in Classical Guidance

Expressive Islamic Counseling Interpretation

There are four expressive Islamic counseling interpretation. *First*, Art Therapy as Emotional Catharsis. The findings show that art therapy provided a space for students to express emotional conditions through visual media without academic judgment. In Expressive Islamic Counseling, emotional expression is an important component of counseling because individuals often face obstacles in verbally communicating psychological experiences. Non-verbal artistic expression can function as catharsis, namely the release of suppressed emotions that may be difficult to express directly (Eka, 2026; Hu et al., 2021).

In the Islamic counseling context, emotional release is not understood merely as psychological discharge. It can also become an initial step toward self-awareness. Individuals who recognize and express inner conditions have a greater opportunity to understand themselves consciously. Therefore, the art therapy practice analyzed in this study is conceptually aligned with Islamic counseling principles that place self-recognition as an early stage of psychological recovery.

Second, Self-Reflection as Early *Muhasabah*. The students were not only asked to draw; they were also asked to write one word or a short sentence representing their feelings. Methodologically, this was not merely an additional activity, but a form of directed reflection. In Expressive Islamic Counseling, reflection on emotional experience is closely related to *muhasabah*, which refers to the process of reviewing, recognizing, and evaluating one's inner condition (Khoiriyah et al., 2024; Rahman, 2025; Winarso, 2024).

Through drawing and assigning meaning to the image, students did not only release emotions but also began to recognize their internal experiences. This finding suggests that art therapy in guidance and counseling services can be interpreted as a form of intrapersonal reflection that resonates with *muhasabah* in Islamic counseling. Nevertheless, the observed practice remained at the level of psychological reflection and had not yet been explicitly directed toward spiritual reflection or a transcendental relationship with Allah.

Third, Follow-Up Services as Islamic Counseling Assistance. Interview data indicate that the teacher did not position art therapy as a final intervention, but as an entry point for further assistance such as individual counseling or group guidance. In Expressive Islamic Counseling, emotional expression is not the final goal; rather, it forms part of a helping process directed toward self-understanding, psychological strengthening, and inner balance.

The existence of follow-up services shows consistency with the principle of counseling as a process-oriented helping relationship. This is particularly important in classical guidance, because a group-based expressive activity may reveal individual emotional needs that require more personal and responsive intervention.

Fourth, The Boundary of Spiritual Integration. Although the findings show conceptual alignment with Expressive Islamic Counseling, the spiritual dimension was not yet explicit in the observed service. The teacher's instructions were still mainly oriented toward psychological aspects, such as emotional expression, recognition of feelings, psychological reflection, and emotional reinforcement. Elements that more explicitly represent Islamic counseling, such as *dhikr*, reflective prayer, *tafakkur*, patience, *tawakal*, or explicit spiritual meaning-making, were not found in the observed classical guidance process.

Therefore, it is more academically precise to state that the practice has partial conceptual relevance to Expressive Islamic Counseling, but does not yet fully represent explicit implementation of Islamic counseling. This boundary is important because it prevents overclaiming and strengthens the analytical rigor of the study.

TikTok-Based Art Therapy as a Digital Innovation in Classical Guidance and Expressive Islamic Counseling

The implementation of art therapy through TikTok represents the digital transformation of guidance and counseling services. The findings show that guidance and counseling services are no longer limited to formal classroom settings, but are increasingly represented in open, interactive, and visual digital spaces. TikTok therefore functions not only as a dissemination medium, but also as a space in which teachers display professional practice and construct new forms of educational communication. This finding is consistent with studies emphasizing that digital platforms can reshape pedagogical interaction, youth expression, and school-based support services (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021; Jaber & Al-Hroub, 2023; Literat, 2021).

Art therapy expands the communicative channel of classical guidance by allowing students to express emotions non-verbally. This study confirms the relevance of art therapy as a medium for students who may find it difficult to articulate psychological experiences through spoken language. Previous studies have shown that art therapy can facilitate self-expression, emotional regulation, and indirect access to difficult internal experiences (Abbing et al., 2018; Haeyen et al., 2015; Hu et al., 2021; Regev & Cohen-Yatziv, 2018). In the school counseling context, this makes art therapy a potentially inclusive strategy for students with varied expressive capacities.

The non-judgmental instruction used by the teacher demonstrates the importance of psychological safety in classical guidance. By telling students that their drawings would not be judged artistically, the teacher reduced evaluative anxiety and opened space for honest emotional expression. This matters because classical guidance often involves many students at once; without a safe atmosphere, students may hesitate to engage in personal reflection. Thus, art therapy becomes not only a creative activity but also a relational strategy for building trust in group-based guidance.

The use of art therapy as preliminary emotional assessment indicates that expressive activities can help guidance and counseling teachers identify students' follow-up needs. The short written reflection behind the drawing functions as a bridge between visual expression and verbal meaning-making. This finding suggests that art therapy can operate within a preventive-responsive continuum: it serves as a universal classical guidance activity while also helping the teacher identify students who may require individual counseling or group guidance.

From the perspective of Expressive Islamic Counseling, the observed practice has conceptual relevance in terms of catharsis, self-reflection, and continuing assistance. Emotional expression through drawing can become an initial step toward self-awareness, while the act of naming one's feelings can be interpreted as an early form of *muhasabah*. However, because the observed service did not explicitly include spiritual practices or Islamic value articulation, its relationship with Islamic counseling remains partial rather than complete. This distinction contributes to the novelty of the study by offering a balanced interpretation: the practice is relevant to Islamic counseling discourse, but still requires further development to become an explicitly Islamic counseling model.

The findings open an opportunity to develop a more integrative model of digital classical guidance. If art therapy that already facilitates emotional expression is combined with structured spiritual reflection based on Islamic values, the service may become more holistic. In Islamic education contexts, such a model can support not only psychological expression but also the cultivation of reflective awareness, spiritual meaning, and ethical self-understanding among students.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of art therapy in classical guidance through TikTok and interpreted its relevance to Expressive Islamic Counseling. The findings indicate that TikTok-based art therapy represents a form of digital innovation in guidance and counseling services, particularly in the way classical guidance is adapted to the communicative culture of digital-native students. Through visual and creative expression, art therapy provides students with a safer and more participatory medium to express internal experiences that may be difficult to communicate verbally. In this context, art therapy does not merely function as a creative classroom activity, but also serves as an initial medium for recognizing students' emotional conditions and identifying possible needs for further guidance or counseling support.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of digital guidance and counseling studies by showing that social media can become a representational space for professional counseling practices, not only a channel for information dissemination. Within the discourse of Expressive Islamic Counseling, the study also demonstrates that emotional expression, self-reflection, and continuing assistance have conceptual relevance to Islamic counseling values, especially in relation to *muhasabah* as a process of recognizing and reflecting on one's inner condition. However, the findings also show that the Islamic spiritual dimension

in the observed practice remains implicit. Therefore, TikTok-based art therapy can be understood as partially aligned with Expressive Islamic Counseling, but it has not yet fully developed into an explicitly Islamic counseling model.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in its critical interpretation of TikTok-based art therapy as a digital classical guidance practice that bridges psychological expression and Islamic reflective awareness. This study offers a new perspective for understanding how creative counseling practices in digital spaces may be connected to Islamic counseling discourse. Practically, the findings provide guidance and counseling teachers with an alternative approach for designing services that are expressive, inclusive, and responsive to students' emotional communication needs. Such an approach is especially relevant for students who may experience barriers in verbal expression and require a less intimidating medium for self-disclosure.

This study has several limitations. It focuses on a single TikTok-based practice and relies on available digital materials, so the findings should be interpreted carefully and cannot be generalized to all classical guidance contexts. In addition, the study does not directly examine students' subjective experiences as primary data, which limits the depth of interpretation regarding the psychological impact of the activity. Future research should investigate the direct implementation of art therapy in school settings by involving students as primary participants. Further studies may also develop and test a more explicit Islamic expressive counseling model by integrating art therapy with structured spiritual reflection, such as *muhasabah*, *tafakkur*, reflective prayer, and other Islamic values. Overall, this study advances the understanding of how digital media, creative guidance practices, and Islamic counseling perspectives can be integrated to respond to students' psychological and spiritual needs in contemporary Islamic education.

Declaration of AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this revised English manuscript, the authors used Grammarly to support translation, academic language editing, grammar refinement, and adjustment to the IJISS manuscript structure. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the integrity, accuracy, and originality of the publication's final version.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

a. Unun Achmad Alimin: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Writing Original Draft, and Writing Review & Editing.

b. Sri Kadarsih: Methodology, Validation, Supervision, Project Administration, and Writing Review & Editing.

c. Maulana Syarifudin: Literature Review, Resources, Visualization, and Writing Review & Editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author, subject to ethical considerations related to digital data and participant confidentiality.

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Ethical Approval Statement

The authors confirm that this study adhered to ethical research standards for digital qualitative research. Participation in the interview was based on voluntary informed consent, and personal data were used only for academic purposes. No patient-identifying information was used in this study.

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