



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Psychological Well-Being and Emotion Regulation as Predictors of Doomscrolling

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 19/10/2024

Accepted: 09/02/2025

KEYWORDS

Doomscrolling,
Psychological well being,
Emotional regulation.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the doomscrolling behaviours of individuals in terms of various variables. Data were collected from 348 individuals aged between 18-50 years. Doomscrolling Scale, Psychological Well-Being Scale and Emotion Regulation Scale were used as data collection tools. According to the information obtained from the research, it was determined that doomscrolling behaviour did not change according to gender and employment status. Doomscrolling behaviour varies according to age group, and this variability is in favour of the 18-30 age group. In addition, doomscrolling behaviour is negatively predicted by psychological well-being. Doomscrolling behaviour is positively predicted by suppression, a sub-dimension of emotion regulation, but not by reappraisal sub-dimension. All of these variables together explain 11% of the doomscrolling.

Humankind is a being that dislikes uncertainty and seeks answers to the unknown (Gülhan, 2015). In other words, individuals search for information to protect themselves or gain control in the face of unknowns (Gül, 2013). Today, with the development of technology, the easiest flow of information occurs through social media. Individuals also use social media in uncertain situations to obtain information, but since much of the information gathered is often inaccurate, it can negatively affect them. Despite this negative situation, individuals continue to seek information from social media. This behavior has given rise to the concept of "doomscrolling" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). In its most general definition, doomscrolling refers to individuals continuously scrolling through and following negative news on social media (Sharma, 2022).

Literature review shows that doomscrolling is a relatively new concept and gained more attention during the pandemic period (Curley, 2020). Coronavirus news, which affected the whole world, was followed by people through various technological devices. People touched the screen or scrolled to move on to the next news, obtaining different pieces of information. The word "scrolling" in the concept of doomscrolling refers to accessing similar information by scrolling the screen and engaging with what the algorithm presents (Anlı, 2023). The word "doom" refers to individuals constantly following negative news (Buchanan et al., 2021). According to research, individuals scroll through disaster news to fill information gaps and explain uncontrollable situations (Anand et al., 2021). According to a study conducted at the University of Miami Health System, doomscrolling is explained as individuals using technological tools to search for negative news

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and being unable to escape from this behavioral loop (Myers, 2020). According to Sharma et al. (2022), during negative situations such as disasters, epidemics, or violence, individuals search for negative news on social media and gradually become accustomed to it, which is referred to as doomscrolling. While this behavior originates from the motivation to seek information during a crisis, it eventually becomes automatic and unconscious. This inescapable cycle affects individuals in many areas, such as causing insomnia, loss of appetite, fear, and anxiety (Brooks et al., 2020).

Examining the factors that determine doomscrolling behavior, which negatively affects individuals, will make it more understandable in today's era. At this point, one of the variables that is thought to be subject to research is emotion regulation. Emotion regulation refers to noticing, understanding, accepting an emotion, and controlling the behaviors caused by the emotion (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). Emotion regulation involves processes such as controlling and analyzing one's emotions in accordance with environmental conditions and managing these emotions in order to achieve one's goals. The process that starts by evaluating the emotion ends with the regulation of the behaviour that is an emotional response (Gross, 1998).

The continuation of doomscrolling behavior increases individuals' feelings of anxiety and worry, causing them to experience difficulties in recognizing, making sense of, and regulating their emotions. This situation indicates that emotion regulation difficulties are being experienced. Emotion regulation is a concept related to the increase or decrease in the intensity of an emotion, how we experience that emotion, and how we maintain it (Leahy et al., 2011). There are limited studies on these two variables in both domestic and international literature. Öksüz et al. (2023) examined how doomscrolling behavior and emotion regulation skills affect individuals' psychological well-being after an earthquake. The results showed that doomscrolling and emotion regulation mediate mental adjustment and psychological well-being. Similarly, in their study, Flack, Burton, and Caudwell (2024) found that personal emotion regulation has an impact on doomscrolling behavior.

Psychological well-being, like emotion regulation, is also thought to explain doomscrolling behavior. Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff (2002) define psychological well-being as the individual's awareness of their own limitations and their ability to establish relationships with others by accepting these limitations, being autonomous, and using their capacity in the most efficient way. Huppert (2009) adds that psychological well-being involves the positive progression of individuals' lives, though this does not mean they will always experience positive emotions. Negative emotions will also be present, and the key is to manage them appropriately. Ryff (1989) conceptualizes psychological well-being in six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and purpose in life. Autonomy refers to individuals doing what is best for themselves despite all the negative influences of the environment. Environmental mastery is the ability of individuals to freely create the environment that suits them best. Personal growth refers to the feeling of continuous growth and development. Self-acceptance involves individuals recognizing and accepting both their strengths and weaknesses, both positive and negative aspects. In the dimension of positive relations with others, it refers to individuals' capacity to love others. Finally, purpose in life represents individuals having a goal to achieve their aims (Ryff, 1989).

Individuals who are aware of themselves and their limitations, in other words, those with a high level of psychological well-being, will try to make sense of the uncertainty they are in and cope with it in the most suitable way for themselves (Ryff & Singer, 2006). Based on this information, it can be said that there is a close relationship between doomscrolling and psychological well-being. When empirical studies are examined, it has been found that there are limited studies investigating doomscrolling and psychological well-being together. In a study conducted during the pandemic, Saindon (2021) identified a negative relationship between individuals' psychological well-being and doomscrolling behavior. Similarly, in a study by Öksüz and others, it was found that the relationship between doomscrolling behavior and well-being is also negative.

Humankind experiences various crises such as wars, earthquakes, and pandemics. It is becoming increasingly important to raise individuals who can cope effectively with the uncertain conditions they find themselves in. It is believed that by reducing doomscrolling behavior, individuals will be able to fulfill their life roles more effectively. Additionally, it is inevitable that these individuals will both protect their own mental health and provide support to those around them. For this reason, it seems crucial to identify the factors that influence doomscrolling behavior. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate whether doomscrolling behavior is predicted by emotion regulation and psychological well-being.

Method

This section provides information about the research model, the research group, the measurement tools used, the data collection steps, and the analysis.

Research Model

This cross-sectional study based on a quantitative approach was designed in a relational predictive model. In this model, the relationships between two or more variables are investigated, and the strength of these relationships are evaluated (Creswell, 2014).

Research Group

Individuals over the age of 18 living in various provinces of Türkiye participated in the research. The easy/convenient sampling method was used to reach the participants. In this sampling method, easy to reach participants are identified and included in the study (Yağar & Dökme, 2018). Here is some introductory information about the individuals participating in the study.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Scores for Participants

		n	%	tp
Gender	Female	237	68,1	68,1
	Male	111	31,9	100
Age	18-30	287	82,5	82,5
	31-40	50	14,4	96,8
	41-50	11	3,2	100
Marital Status	Single	291	83,6	83,6
	Married	52	14,9	98,6
	Divorced	5	1,4	100
Employment Status	Not working	248	71,3	71,3
	Working	100	28,7	100
Parental Status	No children	308	88,5	88,5
	Has children	40	11,5	100

As seen in Table 1, 68.1% of the participants are female, 82.5% are between the ages of 18-30, 83.6% are single, 71.3% are unemployed and 88.5% are not parents.

Data Collection Tools

Researchers used four data collection tools in this study. The first is the Demographic Information Form, which was prepared to determine the characteristics of the participants, such as age, gender, place of residence, educational level, socioeconomic level, occupation, marital status, and parental status. The other tools are described below.

Doomscrolling Scale: The Doomscrolling Scale (2022) was developed by Sharma, Lee, and Johnson. The adaptation of the scale to Turkish (2022) was conducted by Satici, Gocet-Tekin, Deniz, and Satici. In the adaptation study, both the 15-item and 4-item forms of the scale were validated using confirmatory factor analysis with the participation of 378 individuals. Item response analyses showed that all items had strong discriminative power. Criterion validity studies were conducted with the second study group of 419 individuals. Doomscrolling was found to be significantly associated with, social media addiction, the Big Five personality traits, fear of missing out, and some characteristics of social media use. In the third group of studies, structural equation modeling was conducted on 460 individuals to examine the relationship between doomscrolling and indicators of life satisfaction and psychological well-being. The results showed that psychological distress played a mediating role in the relationship between doomscrolling and well-being indicators. This study found that the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the doomscrolling scale was .95, providing evidence of reliability.

Psychological Well-Being Scale: The psychological well-being scale was developed and used in the study conducted by Diener et al. (2010) and adapted to the Turkish culture by Telef (2013). The scores to be obtained

from this scale, which has a single-factor structure consisting of 8 items, range from 8 to 56. The items of the scale have factor loadings ranging from .54 to .76. The results obtained after the CFA analysis indicate the values of the goodness of fit index as RMSEA= 0.08, SRMR= 0.04, GFI= 0.96, NFI= 0.94, RFI= 0.92, CFI= 0.95 and IFI= 0.95. The criterion validity study used scores from the Psychological Well-Being Scale and the Needs Satisfaction Scale. The Psychological Well-Being Scale was found to be related to the sub-dimensions of the Psychological Well-Being Scale at levels ranging from .29 to .56. Similarly, the sub-dimensions of the Needs Satisfaction Scale were found to be related to each other at levels ranging from .30 to .73. While the internal consistency coefficient for reliability studies was calculated as .80, a strong positive correlation ($r=.86$, $p<.001$) was found between the first and second administrations of the scale according to the test-retest results. This study found that the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the psychological well-being scale was .89, providing evidence of reliability.

Emotion Regulation Scale: The scale was developed as a result of the study conducted by John and Gross (2003) and has a seven-point rating. It consists of two sub-dimensions, suppression and reappraisal, with a total of ten items. The scale was adapted to the Turkish culture with the study conducted by Eldeleklioğlu and Eroğlu (2015). The Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated as .78 in one of the subdimensions (reappraisal) and .73 in the other (suppression). Similarly, the test-retest coefficients were calculated as .74 in one sub-dimension (reappraisal) and .72 in the other (suppression). It was determined that the Emotion Regulation Scale is an instrument that measures the emotion regulation variable, can be used in studies in this direction, and meets the criteria and criterion. This study found that the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the emotion regulation scale was .73, providing evidence of reliability.

Data Collection and Processing

In the study, the experts who developed the measurement tools were first contacted by e-mail and permission for use was obtained. An application was then made to the ethics committee at Muş Alparslan University Ethics Committee and the necessary approvals were obtained (10.07.2023-99013). Following the approval processes, the measurement tools to be used in the study were transferred to the online environment and made ready for research data collection. During the preparation of the online data collection form, information about the purpose of the study and voluntary participation in the study was provided on the first page, and in this way, consent was obtained from the participants. After all these preparations, the online data collection form was distributed to different groups and the research data was collected. Then, the obtained data were transferred to the statistical program and the preparations for the analysis process were completed.

Simple linear regression analysis was used to determine if psychological well-being and emotion regulation were significant predictors of doomscrolling. An independent samples t-test and a one-way analysis of variance were also used to identify group differences. Before starting the data analysis, the assumptions of univariate outliers, normality, linearity, homogeneity, and multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2013) were examined, respectively. The results achieved for univariate normality were converted to standard z-scores and examined to see if the scores were within the limits of ± 3.29 , and three observations found to be outside these limits were removed from the data. The Mahalanobis distance value was calculated for the multivariate normality criteria and no observations were found that did not meet the criteria. The calculated kurtosis and skewness values are shown in Table 2, after examination it was determined that these values were within the acceptable (± 1) range (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Accordingly, the scores of 348 participants meet the assumptions of normality. The situation of multicollinearity was examined by calculating the Durbin-Watson value and this value was found to be 2.038. In addition, the condition index ($CI=6.347-13.95$), variance inflation factor ($VIF=1.229-1.040$) and tolerance values ($TOL=.96-.81$) were found to be within the acceptable ranges. The study also examined the relationships by using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Accordingly, the correlation values obtained and presented in Table 2 are expected to be no higher than .80 and the results obtained in this study indicate that there is no multicollinearity problem (Field, 2013). After obtaining the results indicating that all the assumptions and conditions regarding the regression analysis were met, the analyses were performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 22.00 program.

Findings

This section explains the findings obtained from the analyses. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were calculated for the variables and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Relationships Between Doomscrolling, Psychological Well-Being, Emotion Regulation and Descriptive Statistics

		Correlation				Descriptive Statistics		
		1	2	3	4	Mean (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis
1.	Doomscrolling	-				38.39(20.82)	.969	.184
2.	Psychological Well-Being	-.263	-			40.82(8.85)	-.867	.501
3.	Suppression	.207	-.030	-		16.09(5.80)	-.006	-.494
4.	Reappraisal	-.096	.392	.167	-	30.25(7.18)	-.466	-.155

Examining Table 2, we see that the normality assumption is met with respect to the skewness and kurtosis values associated with the variables. When the relationships between these variables are examined, it can be seen that doomscrolling is negatively and moderately related to psychological well-being ($r = -0.263$; $p < .005$). In addition, doomscrolling is positively and moderately related to the suppression sub-dimension of emotion regulation ($r = 0.207$; $p < .005$), while it is negatively and weakly related to the reappraisal dimension ($r = -0.096$; $p < .005$). In addition, psychological well-being was found to be negatively and weakly related to the suppression sub-dimension of emotion regulation ($r = -0.030$; $p < .005$) and positively and moderately related to the reappraisal sub-dimension ($r = 0.392$; $p < .005$) ($r = 0.627$; $p < .001$).

Table 3. T-Test Results According to Participants' Gender

	Gender	n	\bar{x}	SS	t	p
Doomscrolling	Female	237	38,05	20,584	-,443	,65
	Male	111	39,11	21,403		
Psychological Well-Being	Female	237	40,96	9,011	,431	,66
	Male	111	40,52	8,552		
Suppression	Female	237	15,61	6,070	-2,39	,017
	Male	111	17,10	5,063		
Reappraisal	Female	237	30,57	7,384	1,230	,21
	Male	111	29,56	6,704		

When examining Table 3, it was found that there was no significant difference between the genders on the doomscrolling, psychological well-being, and reappraisal sub-dimensions of emotion regulation ($p > .05$), while there was a significant difference in favor of males on the suppression sub-dimension of emotion regulation ($t = 2.39$, $p < .05$).

Table 4. T-Test Results According to Participants' Working Status

	Working Status	n	\bar{x}	SS	t	p
Doomscrolling	Yes	100	35,75	22,551	-1,502	,13
	No	248	39,45	20,036		
Psychological Well-Being	Yes	100	42,08	8,080	1,687	,09
	No	248	40,31	9,118		
Suppression	Yes	100	15,88	5,250	-,420	,67
	No	248	16,17	6,019		
Reappraisal	Yes	100	29,64	6,820	-1,006	,31
	No	248	30,50	7,319		

When Table 4 is examined, no significant difference was found between employees and non-employees in doomscrolling, psychological well-being, suppression and reappraisal sub-dimensions of emotion regulation ($p > .05$).

Table 5. T-Test Results According to Participants' Age Groups

	Age	n	\bar{x}	SS	t	p
Doomscrolling	18-30	287	39,71	20,983	2,778	,007
	31-50	61	32,13	19,000		
Psychological Well-Being	18-30	287	40,40	9,238	-2,440	,016
	31-50	61	42,82	6,479		
Suppression	18-30	287	16,40	5,821	2,230	,026
	31-50	61	14,59	5,518		
Reappraisal	18-30	287	30,52	7,316	1,500	,135
	31-50	61	29,00	6,411		

When Table 5 was examined, it was found that there were statistically significant differences between the age groups in doomscrolling, psychological well-being, and the suppression sub-dimension of emotion regulation ($p < .05$). Doomscrolling levels and suppression sub-dimension of emotion regulation levels were significantly higher in the 18-30 age group compared to the 31-50 age group ($t=2.778$, $p < .05$; $t=2.230$, $p < .05$). Psychological well-being scores were significantly higher in the 31-50 age group compared to the 18-30 age group ($t=-2.440$, $p < .05$). There was no significant difference between the age groups in the reappraisal sub-dimension of emotion regulation ($p > .05$). Since there were not enough observations in the 41-50 age group to make a statistical comparison during the analyses, the observations in this group were added to the 31-50 age group and the analyses were conducted.

Table 6. T-Test Results According to Participants' Marital Status

	Marital Status	n	\bar{x}	SS	t	p
Doomscrolling	Married	52	32,29	19,226	-2,303	,02
	Single	296	39,46	20,940		
Psychological Well-Being	Married	52	42,44	6,864	1,748	,08
	Single	296	40,54	9,142		
Suppression	Married	52	14,58	5,453	-2,043	,04
	Single	296	16,35	5,830		
Reappraisal	Married	52	28,46	6,766	-1,955	,04
	Single	296	30,56	7,216		

Examining Table 6, there is a significant difference in the doomscrolling and two sub-dimensions of emotion regulation according to marital status ($p < .05$). Doomscrolling and emotion regulation sub-dimension scores are significantly higher for single individuals than for married individuals ($t=-2.303$, $p < .05$; $t=-2.043$, $p < .05$; $t=-1.955$, $p < .05$). The psychological well-being of single and married individuals was not significantly different ($p > .05$). Since there were not enough observations in the divorced group to make a statistical comparison, the analyses were conducted by adding this group to the single group.

As there were not enough observations to make a statistical comparison between groups by parental status, no analysis was performed.

Table 7. Multiple Linear Regression Results for Psychological Well-Being and Emotion Regulation Predicting Doomscrolling

	β	Standard Error β	Standardization β	t	p	Correlation	Partial Correlation
Constant	52,866	6,274		8,427	,000		
Psychological Well-being	-,571	,131	-,243	-4,368	,000	-,263	-,229
Suppression	,739	,186	,206	3,966	,000	,207	,209
Reappraisal	-,101	,164	-,035	-,616	,539	-,096	-,033

When Table 7 is examined, it is seen that psychological well-being (Standardized β = -.243, $p<.05$) negatively predicts doomscrolling. The suppression sub-dimension of emotion regulation (Standardized β = .206, $p<.05$) positively predicts doomscrolling. However it was determined that the reappraisal sub-dimension of emotion regulation was not a significant predictor of doomscrolling (Standardized β = -.035, $p>.05$). Accordingly, while the suppression sub-dimension of emotional regulation positively affects doomscrolling, psychological well-being negatively affects doomscrolling. In addition, it was determined that these predictors together explained 11% of the variance in the dependent variable as a result of the analysis ($R^2 = .11$).

Discussion

In this study the relationship between doomscrolling behavior, psychological well-being and emotion regulation sub-dimensions was examined. According to the results obtained, doomscrolling does not vary according to gender in relation to the subdimension of psychological well-being and emotion regulation known as reappraisal. However, the subdimension of emotion regulation known as suppression yielded results in favor of men. There are various studies showing that women have higher levels of psychological well-being than men (Atalay & Özyürek, 2021; Kiye et al., 2024). The roles attributed to women and men are referred to as gender roles (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2000). In this study, the impact of these predominantly established roles in Turkish culture appears to have diminished. However, the subdimension of emotion regulation known as suppression is still evident in men. This indicates that men still face challenges in expressing their emotions (Lane et al., 1998). This may also be related to gender roles. Culturally, expressing emotions is often attributed to weakness for men (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2000).

It was examined whether the variables in the study showed a significant difference according to employment status. There was no significant difference between employees and non-employees in the doomscrolling, sub-dimensions of emotion regulation, suppression and reappraisal and psychological well-being. It is believed that individuals being busy with a job relaxes them, they do not think about some things or even do not have the opportunity to think (Akçay & Çoruk, 2012). However, like the finding obtained, there are emotions wherever there are people (Daş, 2017). Individuals who are in a negative situation or emotion will try to get rid of it.

It was determined that there was a significant difference between the age groups in doomscrolling, psychological well-being and suppression sub-dimension of emotion regulation. But there was no significant difference between the age groups in the reappraisal sub-dimension of emotion regulation. Doomscrolling levels and suppression sub-dimension of emotion regulation levels are higher in the 18-30 age group than in the 31-50 age group. Psychological well-being levels are higher in the 31-50 age group than in the 18-30 age group. During the Covid 19 pandemic period, the resilience of individuals decreased with age (Kara and Biçer, 2020). The 18-30 age group includes adolescence and young adulthood (Steinberg, 2007). When we look at the characteristics of this developmental period, self-centredness is dominant and the world revolves around these individuals (Santrock, 2012). For this reason, they may have difficulty in recognising their emotions and expressing them correctly, so they will prefer to hide them more. In addition, this generation, born into technology, will benefit more from technology in the face of problems.

Doomscrolling behaviors and emotion regulation skills vary by marital status. The sub-dimension levels of emotion regulation and doomscrolling are significantly higher in singles than in married individuals. There was no significant difference between single and married individuals in psychological well-being levels. This finding provided statistically significant data. However, it is thought that the data is not significant at the real level. Because the number of married individuals is one sixth of the number of single individuals. Therefore, it was not included in the discussion.

One of the findings of the study is that psychological well-being predicts doomscrolling behaviour negatively at a significant level. Kiye, Doğan and Coşkun (2024) study on individuals who experienced the earthquake and the result of this study are in parallel. Individuals with a high level of psychological well-being can make the environment they are in the most suitable for themselves, can easily do what is appropriate for their potential in the face of adverse conditions, know their strengths and weaknesses, and can establish healthy relationships (Ryff, 1989). Doomscrolling behaviour, on the other hand, involves a cycle in which individuals continuously follow negative news on the screen in the face of uncertain situations (Curley, 2020). Considering this information, it can be said that the two concepts are related to each other in opposite directions. Similarly, previous studies have also shown a negative correlation between the two variables (Flack et al., 2024; Öksüz et al., 2023).

The sub-dimension of emotion regulation skills, reappraisal, does not significantly predict doomscrolling behaviour. When individuals review the negative situations they are in and regulate their emotions accordingly, they enter the cycle of following disaster news less (Oral, 2016). Regulating the current emotion, that is, reevaluating it, involves a kind of control and flexibility (2013). A controlled individual who can think flexibly will try to remove himself/herself from the negative situation. It is thought that these individuals will not put themselves into the cycle of doomscrolling scenarios.

The suppression sub-dimension of emotion regulation positively predicts doomscrolling. In other words, the higher the suppression level of individuals, the higher their doomscrolling behaviours. Suppression means preventing the emotional state of the individual instead of expressing it (Gross, 2001). Concealed emotions are not enough to relax the individual (Gross, 2002). The individual who cannot relax may find himself/herself in this cycle by watching or reading negative news (Sharma et al., 2022).

As a result, it was determined that doomscrolling behaviour did not vary according to gender and employment status, but it varied according to age group. In addition, doomscrolling behaviour was predicted negatively by psychological well-being and positively by suppression, which is a sub-dimension of emotion regulation. The limitations of the study should be taken into consideration when interpreting this information obtained. One of these limitations is that the data is based on self-report. The other is that the number of women is relatively higher than men and the age distribution is not homogenous. Despite the mentioned limitations, this study is considered to be important for determining the factors affecting the doomscrolling behaviour of adult individuals. Psychoeducation, seminars or individual interviews can be conducted to increase the psychological well-being levels of individuals. Similarly, studies such as recognising, noticing and expressing emotions can be carried out to reduce suppression emotions, which is a sub-dimension of emotion regulation.

In this context, it is thought that the information obtained will help the field practitioners. In addition, the doomscrolling is a fairly new concept. It is thought to contribute to the literature to understand this concept.

Considering the limitations of the current study, suggestions can be made to researchers. Since doomscrolling is a relatively new concept, its relationships with different psychological characteristics can be examined in order to understand its nature. These may include positive indicators, such as family life satisfaction, resilience or hope. At the same time, negative indicators, such as stress, anxiety, anger, can also be considered. A qualitative approach can be used to design studies that reach more detailed and in-depth information about doomscrolling. Additionally, longitudinal studies that include experimental processes can contribute more to the literature.

Author Contributions. The contribution of both authors is equal.

Funding Disclosure. No financial supported.

Conflicts of Interest. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Data Availability. All data in the article can be obtained from the authors upon request.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate. The research was approved by the ethics committee of Muş Alparslan University. (10.07.2023-99013)

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