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Marketing Strategy Development and Implementation for Agricultural Products in the Philippines: A Review

Nestor A. Alquizalas Jr ¹ and Abdani D. Bandera ^{2,*}

¹ Department of Plant Science, College of Agriculture, Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City, Philippines.

² Department of Agribusiness Management, College of Agriculture, Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City, Philippines.

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Abstract

This study examines the development and implementation of agricultural marketing strategies in the Philippines, focusing on structural constraints, institutional dynamics, and emerging innovations within value chain systems. Utilizing a qualitative literature review of peer-reviewed journals, government reports, and institutional publications, the study synthesizes evidence on market access, digital transformation, collective marketing, intermediary roles, and policy interventions in the agricultural sector. Findings reveal that despite agriculture's significant contribution to GDP and employment, the sector remains constrained by fragmented value chains, inadequate infrastructure, weak institutional coordination, and persistent marginalization of smallholder farmers from formal markets. Market inefficiencies are further intensified by dependence on intermediaries, limited access to credit and market information, and uneven integration into higher-value supply chains. While collective marketing arrangements and government-led initiatives such as the KADIWA program and the Philippine Rural Development Project demonstrate potential for improving market connectivity, their impacts remain uneven and limited in scale. Digital transformation has accelerated, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, yet adoption is hindered by low ICT literacy and infrastructure gaps. The study concludes that Philippine agricultural marketing requires a more integrated, inclusive, and climate-resilient framework that aligns production, marketing, and value chain development. Strengthened institutional coordination, digital capacity building, and scalable policy implementation are essential for long-term agricultural transformation and rural development.

Keywords: Agricultural marketing; Market access; Value chain development; Smallholder farmers; Digital agriculture; Supply chain management

1. Introduction

The agricultural sector continues to serve as a fundamental economic pillar in the Philippines, accounting for roughly 9% of national GDP and providing employment for approximately 25% of the total workforce in 2024 (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2024) while Agribusiness has evolved into a multidimensional and dynamic system that extends beyond traditional agricultural production, encompassing processing, distribution, marketing, and consumption (Candontol et al, 2025, Davis and Goldberg, 1957). Although this considerable economic footprint, the sector grapples with enduring structural inefficiencies, disoriented market structures, and the marginalization of smallholder farmers from formal, lucrative marketing channels. These persistent barriers compromise productivity levels, income predictability, and the sector's capacity to compete effectively in both domestic and international markets.

* Corresponding author: Abdani D. Bandera

Emerging scholarship in agricultural marketing underscores the capacity of digital innovations and cooperative institutional arrangements to redress entrenched market dysfunctions. The global COVID-19 pandemic functioned as a pivotal accelerant for technological adoption, precipitating widespread migration toward e-commerce platforms within agricultural commerce. Research conducted in China documents marked expansion in digital marketplace engagement for farm products throughout this period, indicating comparable prospects for market system modernization in developing country contexts (Guo et al., 2022). Simultaneously, marketing cooperatives have attracted renewed attention as organizational vehicles facilitating smallholder production consolidation, transaction cost minimization, and enhanced negotiating leverage for farmers operating within progressively integrated global value chains (Bragg, 2025). These developments correspond with strategic priorities articulated by the World Bank, which emphasizes rural transformation achieved through fortified market connectivity and the establishment of durable pathways linking agricultural producers with formalized market infrastructure (World Bank, 2024).

Within the specific Philippine context, research from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies has illuminated pressing issues surrounding food access and economic affordability, with particular emphasis on economically disadvantaged households exhibiting heightened susceptibility to price instability and supply chain interruptions (Galang, 2022). Such evidence reinforces the intrinsic connection between well-functioning agricultural marketing mechanisms and the attainment of national food security objectives.

Moreover, Domaob et al, (2025) identify substantial deficiencies in current research, observing that prevailing investigations tend to concentrate on discrete elements of agricultural value chains rather than embracing integrated analytical frameworks capable of illuminating the complex interdependencies spanning production, processing, distribution, and consumption activities. This compartmentalized scholarly orientation constrains the operational utility of research findings for governmental decision-makers and industry professionals pursuing holistic, empirically-grounded approaches to marketing system enhancement.

Addressing these identified limitations, the present study offers an extensive literature synthesis concerning the formulation and execution of marketing strategies within Philippine agriculture. The analysis tracks historical progression from conventional spot-market exchange mechanisms toward more sophisticated, collaborative value chain governance models, while scrutinizing the institutional, technological, and physical infrastructure determinants that condition strategic effectiveness. Through the integration of perspectives drawn from agricultural economics, marketing management, and development studies, this examination seeks to produce actionable insights conducive to improved farmer livelihoods, supply chain optimization, and enduring rural advancement. Subsequent sections provide critical assessment of theoretical underpinnings, empirical documentation of implementation obstacles, and prospective innovations anticipated to influence the trajectory of agricultural marketing practice in the Philippines.

2. Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design that utilized a literature review to identify existing research findings. It examined marketing patterns, including both established trends and existing knowledge gaps in agricultural marketing practices. This approach contributed to a better understanding of how marketing methods progressed through different stages of development and actual application in the agricultural sector. The research utilized secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, and institutional publications. Data and policy details were obtained from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and the Department of Agriculture (DA), while international perspectives were drawn from reports published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Bank. Relevant academic literature was sourced through Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and ScienceDirect to ensure reliability and credibility. The study referenced only verified data obtained from these widely used academic databases.

The literature selection process focused on sources that specifically addressed agricultural marketing, agribusiness strategies, value chain development, and market access. The study primarily utilized research published from 2015 onwards to capture current trends and developments, although earlier studies were also included to provide essential theoretical and contextual foundations. Only English-language publications with clearly defined research methodologies and sufficient analytical depth were considered to ensure credibility and academic rigor. The literature collection began with keyword searches such as “agricultural marketing strategies in the Philippines,” “agribusiness marketing,” “farm product value chain,” “marketing strategies,” and “agricultural market development.” Relevant articles underwent a review process to extract necessary information. The researchers applied thematic analysis to examine the collected literature by identifying and organizing recurring themes across studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis generated key thematic areas, including value chain development, digital marketing strategies,

cooperative marketing approaches, government support programs, and market linkages within the Philippine agricultural sector.

The research relied solely on published secondary sources and did not involve the collection of primary data from human participants. It adhered to academic ethical standards by properly citing all sources, thereby ensuring appropriate recognition of original authorship and preventing plagiarism. No ethical issues arose, as the study did not involve human participants and therefore did not require informed consent or confidentiality safeguards.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Agricultural Marketing in the Philippines

Agriculture remains an indispensable pillar of Philippine national development, but the sector is overwhelmingly populated by smallholder producers operating within fragmented and decentralized production systems. Research accounts consistently characterize the nation's agricultural marketing infrastructure as structurally deficient, wherein systemic inefficiencies emanate from the interplay of weak value chain coordination, inadequate physical infrastructure, and pronounced information asymmetries (Israel & Briones, 2013). These compounding constraints collectively erode producer bargaining power and compress farmgate returns, perpetuating cycles of rural poverty despite the sector's macroeconomic significance. The evolutionary trajectory of Philippine agricultural marketing has observed gradual, albeit uneven, transition from conventional spot-market exchanges toward more coordinated, market-oriented modalities (Department of Trade and Industry, 2017). This transformation has been spatially and sectorally incoherent, with a substantial proportion of smallholders remaining tethered to informal trading networks and intermediary-dependent arrangements. The persistence of these traditional exchange mechanisms underscores the exigency for inclusive, context-responsive marketing frameworks capable of accommodating diverse local institutional realities and agroecological conditions.

Multiple practical and accessible marketing strategies have emerged as short-term mechanisms to enhance market participation and stimulate demand for agricultural products. These include promotional approaches such as buy-one-take-one offers, discounted pricing schemes, and bulk selling strategies (Bhardwaj, A., et al, 2025, FAO 2004). Buy-one-take-one promotions can help farmers accelerate inventory turnover, particularly for perishable goods, thereby reducing post-harvest losses while attracting price-sensitive consumers. Discounted pricing, on the other hand, enables producers to remain competitive in saturated or intermediary-dominated markets, although it may compress profit margins if not carefully managed. Lastly, bulk selling strategies—where products are offered in larger quantities at relatively lower unit prices—can improve sales volume, reduce transaction costs, and appeal to institutional buyers or community consumers. While these approaches are often informal and short-term in nature, they demonstrate how smallholder farmers adapt marketing practices to immediate market constraints and consumer behaviour.

This literature emphasizes that effective agricultural marketing interventions must be adaptive to the structural vulnerabilities inherent in smallholder systems, including limited economies of scale, constrained capital access, and exposure to climatic and price volatility.

3.2. Market Access and Value Chain Integration

Market access emerges as a recurrent and determinative theme in the extant literature, exerting considerable influence on the efficacy of agricultural marketing interventions across diverse Philippine commodity systems. Smallholder producers routinely encounter prohibitive transaction costs, deficient transport connectivity, and constrained access to timely price and market information—factors that collectively curtail participation in premium market segments and reinforce dependence on low-value local exchanges (Reardon et al., 2019). These access barriers are particularly acute for geographically isolated communities where infrastructural investment has historically lagged, compounding existing socioeconomic disparities within rural landscapes.

The investigations of vegetable and high-value crop supply chains indicate that establishing formal linkages with institutional buyers can substantively enhance income stability and producer welfare. Cluster-based marketing configurations, in particular, enable aggregated supply volumes, quality standard compliance, and improved price negotiation capacity, while simultaneously fostering communicative channels between producers and purchasers that attenuate market uncertainty (Bellemare and Lim, 2018). Such coordinated arrangements are theorized to reduce the spatial and informational friction that traditionally separates smallholders from remunerative downstream markets.

Engagement with high-value market segments presupposes concurrent investments in logistics infrastructure, product quality assurance systems, and institutional standard adherence. Absent these enabling conditions, smallholders risk persistent exclusion from remunerative value chains, thereby perpetuating intra-sectoral inequities and reinforcing bifurcated market structures wherein commercial enterprises capture disproportionate value. The literature thus underscores the necessity of integrated interventions that simultaneously address production, post-harvest, and marketing capacity constraints rather than pursuing isolated, piecemeal reforms.

3.3. Collective Marketing and Farmer Clustering

Collective action mechanisms through producer cooperatives and spatially concentrated farmer clusters have garnered substantial scholarly attention as viable marketing strategies within the Philippine smallholder context. Recent theoretical and empirical analyses demonstrate that cluster-based and collective marketing arrangements generate economies of scale, reduce per-unit transaction costs, and enhance smallholder access to productive inputs, credit facilities, and extension services (Magakwe & Olorunfemi, 2024). These institutional arrangements further strengthen farmers' bargaining power and facilitate integration into higher-value markets by enabling aggregated supply and coordinated market participation (Kale et al, 2025). Such benefits are particularly salient in contexts where individual producers lack sufficient production volume, capital endowments, or market intelligence to independently engage downstream value chain actors.

Beyond immediate market access advantages, clustering arrangements enhance producer resilience to price volatility, strengthen collective bargaining positions, and cultivate knowledge diffusion networks that facilitate adoption of improved production and post-harvest practices. The collective fosters reciprocal learning and innovation dissemination, enabling members to navigate evolving market requirements and technological opportunities more effectively than atomized producers. Scholarly evidence further suggests that successful clusters engender positive spillover effects within their geographic proximities, catalyzing broader agrarian transformation processes.

The durability of collective enterprises remains contingent upon endogenous social capital variables—including intra-group trust, leadership quality, and social cohesion—as well as exogenous institutional support from governmental and non-governmental actors. Governance deficiencies, free-rider problems, and coordination failures within clusters frequently precipitate operational inefficiencies and, in severe cases, organizational dissolution. Consequently, the literature cautions against romanticized conceptualizations of collective action, emphasizing instead the necessity of deliberate institutional design, capacity building investments, and sustained external facilitation to ensure long-term viability.

3.4. Role of Intermediaries and Market Structures

Intermediary actors encompassing middlemen, traders, and wholesale distributors are occupying a structurally central position within Philippine agricultural marketing channels, reflecting the historical evolution of exchange institutions in agrarian economies. While often critiqued for disproportionate value capture, recent literature underscores that intermediaries perform indispensable coordination functions, including produce aggregation, transport logistics, market linkage facilitation, and information dissemination (Dimitri & Gardner, 2018). Empirical evidence further indicates that these actors reduce transaction and search costs, provide liquidity and informal credit, and absorb market and price risks in contexts characterized by infrastructural deficits and information asymmetries (Chong et al., 2021; Bila et al., 2022). Consequently, their continued prominence reflects not merely institutional inertia but their functional necessity in enabling market participation among geographically dispersed and resource-constrained smallholders. These services are particularly vital in contexts where rural infrastructure remains underdeveloped and where smallholders lack the capital and coordination capacity to independently access distant markets.

These functional contributions, producer dependence on intermediary channels typically engenders adverse price asymmetries and profit margin compression, attributable to pronounced power differentials and limited producer access to alternative market outlets. Structural deficiencies particularly inadequate rural infrastructure and the absence of direct marketing infrastructure reinforce this dependency, constraining the feasibility of bypassing intermediaries even where direct marketing channels present theoretically superior returns. The literature documents how this structural entrapment perpetuates exploitative exchange relations, wherein producers receive prices substantially below prevailing market rates while absorbing disproportionate production risks.

Contemporary analyses of agribusiness contracting and vertical coordination further reveal that formalized arrangements with large-scale enterprises do not invariably redound to smallholder benefit. Asymmetrical power relations within contract farming schemes may precipitate participant exclusion, inequitable benefit distribution, or the imposition of unfavorable terms that transfer risks downward while concentrating rewards upstream (Barrett et al.,

2012). These findings accentuate the imperative for transparent, equitably designed marketing arrangements that incorporate producer representation, enforceable standards, and mechanisms for grievance redressal within emerging value chain governance structures.

3.5. Digitalization and Emerging Marketing Innovations

The incorporation of digital technologies into agricultural marketing—conceptualized under the rubric of Agriculture 4.0—represents an increasingly prominent area of scholarly inquiry as a prospective remedy for conventional marketing constraints. Digital platforms are theorized to enhance price transparency, improve market discovery mechanisms, and establish direct transactional linkages between producers and end buyers, thereby potentially circumventing intermediary-dominated exchange structures (Edward Mabaya & Jaron Porciello, 2022). These technological innovations are posited to reduce information asymmetries that have historically disadvantaged smallholders, enabling more informed production and marketing decisions.

Technology diffusion remains circumscribed by multifaceted barriers encompassing limited digital literacy among rural populations, prohibitive adoption costs, and insufficient telecommunications infrastructure in agricultural hinterlands. The digital divide between urban and rural spaces, coupled with generational disparities in technological proficiency, constrains the equitable distribution of digital agriculture benefits. Scholars caution that uncritical technology promotion risks exacerbating existing inequalities, as better-resourced producers and regions capture disproportionate advantages from digital transformation initiatives.

The COVID-19 pandemic further illuminated both the potential and the challenges of adaptive marketing modalities, including e-commerce platforms, decentralized distribution networks, and flexible supply chain governance structures (Ivanov, 2020). Producers and traders who demonstrated strategic agility in adopting innovative marketing approaches exhibited superior resilience to supply disruptions, mobility restrictions, and demand shocks, thereby underscoring the instrumental value of strategic flexibility in contemporary agricultural marketing. Post-pandemic scholarship advocates for institutional frameworks that support digital infrastructure investment, digital skills development, and the integration of online and offline marketing channels to enhance sectoral adaptive capacity.

3.6. Policy Environment and Institutional Support

Governmental policy interventions and institutional arrangements constitute critical structuring forces within Philippine agricultural marketing systems, shaping the incentives, constraints, and opportunities confronting diverse market actors (Aquino et al., 2015). Programs oriented toward infrastructure provision, human capital development, and market linkage facilitation demonstrated potential for enhancing market access and supply chain operational efficiency when implemented with coherence and adequate resourcing (Hossain et al., 2025). Historical analyses indicate that periods of sustained policy commitment to agricultural marketing development have correlated with measurable improvements in producer welfare and sectoral competitiveness.

Significant implementation challenges persist, particularly regarding the equitable distribution of programmatic benefits to smallholder constituents who constitute the demographic majority within the sector. Coordination failures among governmental agencies, private sector entities, and producer organizations frequently yield fragmented intervention landscapes, duplicated efforts, and suboptimal developmental outcomes. The literature documents how bureaucratic inertia, political economy considerations, and weak monitoring and evaluation systems undermine the transformative potential of otherwise well-conceived policy initiatives.

The consensus converges on the necessity of integrated policy that harmonize production, marketing, and value chain development objectives within coherent, long-term strategic frameworks (Go & Brummer, 2023). Such integrated approaches must transcend siloed departmental mandates to engender a more inclusive and internationally competitive agricultural sector. Scholars further emphasize the importance of participatory policy design processes that incorporate producer voices, local knowledge systems, and contextual specificities, thereby enhancing policy relevance, legitimacy, and implementation fidelity in diverse agrarian settings.

4. Results and Discussion

Marketing strategy development and implementation for Philippine agricultural products remains in a transitional and uneven stage, characterized by gradual policy reforms, increasing but inconsistent digital adoption, and persistent structural inefficiencies. Although government initiatives and development partner interventions have established foundational frameworks for agricultural modernization, their implementation outcomes vary significantly across regions and commodity systems, particularly in geographically isolated and resource-constrained rural areas. This

unevenness reflects deeper structural issues within Philippine agricultural value chains, where fragmentation continues to limit smallholder integration into formal and higher-value markets.

A dominant and recurring pattern across the literature is the persistence of disintegrated value chains, which constrains smallholder farmer's market participation and bargaining power. The World Bank (2020) highlighted that farmers continue to rely heavily on middlemen due to inadequate transport infrastructure, insufficient post-harvest and storage systems, and weak market linkages. While collective organization through farmer groups has demonstrated potential to improve access to institutional buyers such as supermarkets, processors, and exporters, participation rates remain low in many rural communities (Alimoden & Bandera, 2025). This indicates that although organizational and institutional solutions exist, their diffusion remains limited by structural and socio-economic constraints.

Policy evolution within the Philippine agricultural sector reflects a gradual shift from input-based support toward market-oriented and value chain-driven development strategies. The Department of Agriculture's policy orientation were increasingly emphasized market connectivity and infrastructure investment rather than traditional subsidy-based interventions (World Bank, 2020). A key example is the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP), implemented in 2015 with World Bank support, which has demonstrated measurable success in strengthening farm-to-market linkages through infrastructure development and value chain support mechanisms. However, the scalability of these interventions remains a significant challenge, as benefits have not been uniformly distributed across regions (World Bank, 2024). This highlights a structural gap between policy design and nationwide implementation capacity.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated structural shifts in agricultural marketing systems by catalyzing the adoption of digital and hybrid marketing channels. Farmers are increasingly engaged in e-commerce platforms and direct-to-consumer arrangements as alternative distribution mechanisms during mobility restrictions. While these innovations temporarily enhanced market access and resilience, adoption across the sector remains uneven and highly stratified (World Bank, 2020). The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) reports that digital agricultural tools are still in early stages of diffusion, with limited institutionalization within mainstream marketing systems (Briones et al., 2023). Empirical data further indicate that as of 2017, only 13% of agricultural enterprises maintained an online presence and merely 12.1% engaged in e-commerce, significantly below national averages (Briones et al., 2023). Despite the Department of Agriculture's digital agriculture roadmap and broader policy commitment to technological integration (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2020), structural constraints remain evident. These include limited ICT literacy, infrastructure deficits, and uneven access to digital tools. National ICT capacity data reveal that only around 40% of Filipinos possess basic digital competencies, with rural and older populations exhibiting significantly lower proficiency levels, placing the Philippines behind most ASEAN counterparts (Grow Asia, 2025; Briones et al., 2023).

Government-led marketing interventions such as farm-to-market roads, trading centers, and the KADIWA ni Ani at Kita program reflect an increasing emphasis on direct market facilitation and price stabilization. Implemented through the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service (AMAS), these initiatives aim to reduce dependency on intermediaries and improve farmer income (Philippine News Agency, 2022). The KADIWA program, in particular, recorded approximately PHP 1.23 billion in total sales through its network of fixed and mobile outlets, demonstrating its potential as a direct marketing mechanism (Briones et al., 2022). Despite of these gains, structural inefficiencies persist, particularly in farmer's access to credit, bureaucratic transaction processes, and extension service delivery (World Bank, 2020). Furthermore, weak coordination among national agencies, local government units, and farmer organizations continues to limit the effectiveness and sustainability of these interventions.

Sustainability and climate resilience have also emerged as increasingly important considerations in agricultural marketing systems, although their integration remains limited in practice. The OECD (2021) emphasizes that inclusive and cooperative marketing models, such as collective marketing and community-supported agriculture, can significantly enhance rural development outcomes. These approaches are not yet systematically embedded in mainstream agricultural marketing frameworks. This gap is particularly concerning given the sector's high vulnerability to climate-related shocks. The Food and Agriculture Organization (2024) reports that agriculture accounts for approximately 22% of economic losses from natural disasters, underscoring the urgency of integrating climate adaptation into market systems. Additionally, while the sector employs around 22% of the workforce, it contributes only about 9% of GDP (OECD, 2025), revealing persistent inefficiencies in value capture and productivity.

The evidence indicates that Philippine agricultural marketing systems are constrained by a combination of structural fragmentation, institutional inefficiencies, technological disparities, and environmental vulnerabilities. Enduring challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, weak institutional coordination, limited financial access, exposure to climate risks, and persistent digital inequality continue to impede the full realization of inclusive and efficient

agricultural markets. Addressing these constraints requires a comprehensive and coordinated transformation strategy that integrates infrastructure development, digital capacity building, institutional strengthening, and climate-resilient market design. While policy reforms and programmatic interventions have generated important progress, their uneven implementation underscores the need for a more coherent, scalable, and integrated agricultural marketing framework capable of supporting long-term sectoral transformation in the Philippines.

5. Conclusion

This comprehensive analysis demonstrates that agricultural marketing strategy development in the Philippines constitutes an evolving domain marked by considerable policy ambition yet constrained by persistent implementation deficits. While government-led initiatives—including the KADIWA direct marketing program, cooperative and collective marketing arrangements, and emerging digital commerce platforms—establish viable pathways for integrating smallholder farmers into formal markets, their impacts remain geographically concentrated and limited in scale. The sector continues to confront fundamental structural barriers: inadequate transport and post-harvest infrastructure, institutional fragmentation among stakeholders, deficient digital literacy, and insufficient integration of climate resilience into marketing systems. These constraints substantially impede the translation of strategic frameworks into measurable welfare improvements for agricultural producers. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic functioned as a critical accelerant for digital adoption, illuminating the transformative capacity of technology-enabled marketing channels and indicating that targeted investments in rural connectivity, skills development, and public-private collaboration could generate significant returns in market access expansion and income stability for farming households.

Furthermore, cultivating a cohesive, inclusive, and globally competitive agricultural marketing ecosystem demands sustained commitment to scaling validated interventions, strengthening cooperative institutions, and embedding sustainability considerations throughout value chain operations. The evidence suggests that isolated programmatic successes—such as the Philippine Rural Development Project—must be systematically expanded across underserved regions, while simultaneous efforts to enhance digital infrastructure and climate adaptation capabilities will prove essential for long-term sectoral resilience. Ultimately, the efficacy of marketing strategy implementation hinges upon surmounting the historical fragmentation that has long characterized Philippine agricultural development. This necessitates fortified coordination mechanisms among national government agencies, local government units, private sector enterprises, and farmer organizations to fully actualize the sector's potential as a catalyst for rural economic transformation and national food security.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the results, interpretation, or presentation of this study.

Statement of ethical approval

This study is based on a review of secondary data from published literature, government reports, and institutional documents. No human or animal participants were involved; therefore, ethical approval and informed consent were not required. The study adhered to standard academic ethical practices, including proper citation of all sources to ensure intellectual honesty and avoid plagiarism.

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