JOURNAL OF CREATIVE INDUSTRY AND SUSTAINABLE CULTURE

https://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/jcisc

How to cite this article:
Asmahany Ramely, Hasan Mohamed Zakaria, Jeannete Ong Ea-Lyn Ahmad Edwin Mohamed. Crisis recovery and resilience in creative tourism: Evidence from expert webinars. *Journal of Creative Industry and Sustainable Culture,* 5, 353-375. https:/doi.org/10.32890/jcisc2026.5.20

CRISIS RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE IN CREATIVE TOURISM: EVIDENCE FROM EXPERT WEBINARS

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Received: 13/07/2026 Revised: 28/08/2026 Accepted: 11/09/2026 Published: 31/10/2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the recovery of creative tourism destinations from crises and the building of resilience in the midst of repeated disruptions. The research used publicly accessible webinars as a non-traditional source of qualitative data and examined expert discussions posted on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram from 2024 to 2025. From an initial pool of sixteen webinars, six met the predefined inclusion criteria, comprising thirteen speakers representing the public sector, private sector, tourism associations, academia, and technical expertise. Data analysis was undertaken using researcher-led thematic analysis with a structured analytical matrix and AI-assisted coding, with all AI outputs systematically checked against the original webinar transcripts. Results show that creative tourism is affected by interrelated crises associated with natural disasters, health crises, socio-political instability and organizational vulnerabilities. Recovery and resilience are built on four interconnected domains: leadership and trust; preparedness and planning; collaboration and partnerships; and community and capability building. The findings also show that resilience is not only about recovering after a crisis, but also about being prepared, adapting, taking coordinated action, learning and continuously developing capabilities before, during and after crises. This study contributes to the creative tourism literature by demonstrating how established resilience capabilities interact within the creative tourism context and by highlighting publicly available expert webinars as a valuable source of qualitative evidence. Methodologically, it also demonstrates the potential of researcher-verified AI-assisted thematic analysis to support qualitative tourism research. The findings offer practical implications for policymakers, destination managers, and tourism stakeholders seeking to strengthen long-term destination resilience.

Keywords: Creative tourism, Crisis management, Recovery, Resilience, Webinar analysis

INTRODUCTION

Creative tourism has been identified as one of the main strategies for destinations to diversify their tourism products, enhance competitiveness and offer more meaningful experiences to visitors. Creative tourism stands at the intersection of tourism and the creative industries. It encourages visitors to actively interact with local culture, heritage, and daily routine community instead of passively consuming cultural attractions (Benhaida et al., 2024). As travel preferences evolve, tourists increasingly seek personalised, authentic and immersive experiences that facilitate learning, creativity and interaction with local communities (Benhaida et al., 2024; Richards, 2010; Zazueta-Hernández & Herrera-Prado, 2024). Creative tourism is therefore a way to increase the attractiveness of destinations, while promoting cultural preservation, community participation and sustainable local development.

Unlike traditional cultural tourism that is usually focused on sightseeing and heritage appreciation, creative tourism puts more emphasis on active participation, co-creation and experiential learning. Visitors are encouraged to directly participate in local cultural activities such as arts and crafts, traditional cooking, music and performing arts, thus promoting meaningful exchanges between tourists and host communities (Zazueta-Hernández & Herrera-Prado, 2024). This participatory strategy not only improves the experience of the visitors but also creates economic opportunities for the local communities, strengthens the cultural identity, and enhances the distinctiveness of the destination (Dash & Samantaray, 2018). These characteristics mean that creative tourism contributes to destination competitiveness and sustainable local development by diversifying tourism products beyond the conventional tourism offerings.

Creative tourism is becoming more and more important in many destinations around the world. Some cities in Italy, like Naples, have rejuvenated cultural heritage through immersive storytelling experiences and creative interpretation supported by strategic cultural planning (Della Lucia & Trunfio, 2018). Similar initiatives have been taken in Florence, Milan, Rome and Venice, merging cultural authenticity and contemporary creativity to foster visitor participation and co-creation (Della Lucia & Trunfio, 2018). Similarly, community-led festivals in rural Japan have successfully combined local culture and artistic expression to revive communities and strengthen local identity (Qu & Cheer, 2021). Mojokerto City in Indonesia has promoted creative tourism as a sustainable development strategy that simultaneously stimulates economic growth, preserves local culture, and minimises environmental impacts (Christiawan et al., 2024). These examples together illustrate the growing importance of creativity as a resource to increase the competitiveness of tourism while contributing to the sustainable development of the destination.

In spite of these successes, creative tourism is very prone to crises and external disruptions. Natural disasters, health crisis, political instability, financial crises, and other unexpected crisis that threaten business continuity and destination sustainability are frequent occurrences in tourism destinations (Félix et al., 2024; Štetić & Trišić, 2022). Creative tourism is dependent on local community participation, cultural practices and visitor engagement. Therefore, any disruption could have an immediate effect on local livelihoods, cultural conservation and destination performance. Resilience thus became a core competency for tourism destinations and stakeholders to not only recover from crises but adapt, learn and improve their ability to withstand future disruptions (Marujo et al., 2021).

Although academic interest in resilience in tourism has increased, prior research has mainly approached resilience through surveys, interviews, case studies, documentary analysis, and systematic literature reviews (Chen & Li, 2022; Félix et al., 2024; Marujo et al., 2021). However, webinars have been relatively under-explored as a source of qualitative evidence, despite their potential to capture timely

discussions, practical experiences and expert reflections from tourism practitioners, policymakers, academics and industry leaders in various geographical contexts. Unlike the usual interviews that tend to reflect individual opinions, the webinars allow a multi-stakeholder conversation and researchers can explore the common interpretations of the experience of crisis, recovery practices and resilience-building strategies. Therefore, little is known about how tourism experts collectively conceptualise crisis recovery and resilience in the creative tourism sector through webinar-based discussions.

Closing this gap is important because webinars provide current and practical insights that may not yet be published in academic journals. Researchers can capture emerging industry perspectives and identify practical resilience strategies beyond conventional research approaches by systematically analysing expert discussions that are publicly available webinars. Thus, this study aims to analyze the crisis recovery and resilience of creative tourism through qualitative thematic analysis of experts' discussions in webinars. The study is designed to answer the following research question in particular:

What do tourism experts think about crisis recovery and resilience in creative tourism industry?

This study makes two important contributions to the creative tourism literature. Firstly, it shows the methodological usefulness of webinars as a qualitative data source alternative to the traditional interviews and case studies in tourism research. Second, it provides a contextualized view of crisis recovery and resilience via an integration of expert views across different stakeholder groups and destination contexts, providing pragmatic insights for policymakers, destination managers and tourism practitioners in their endeavours to enhance resilience in the creative tourism sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creative Tourism

Creative tourism has been promoted as a different type of tourism that goes beyond sightseeing and allows tourists to actively participate in genuine cultural experiences (Ababneh & Masadeh, 2019). Creative tourism, unlike the traditional cultural tourism which largely focuses on the observation and appreciation of heritage attractions, puts more emphasis on participation, learning, creativity and interaction between visitors and host communities (Pratminingsih et al., 2025). Creative tourism has emerged as a key strategy for destinations to improve their competitiveness, diversify their tourism offerings, preserve local culture and promote sustainable development, as the tourism industry moves toward more experience-based travel (Benhaida et al., 2024).

Creative tourism is an emerging topic of interest in academic research. Although its definition is still emerging, the concept is rooted in diverse theoretical traditions such as cultural tourism, the creative economy, experience-based tourism and the creative industries. One of the earliest and most acknowledged definitions is from UNESCO (2006) which defines creative tourism as travel that provides authentic and participatory learning experiences related to the arts, heritage and the unique characteristics of a destination. These experiences stimulate meaningful interactions between visitors and local communities and help to preserve living culture.

Subsequent scholars have broadened the scope of creative tourism from the original conceptualization by UNESCO. Ababneh and Masadeh (2019) define creative tourism as active participation, experiential learning and co-creation between tourists and host communities, thus contributing to the local economic development and destination sustainability. Pratminingsih et al. (2025) , similarly pointed out that creative tourism is able to develop the creative potential of visitors through learning experiences at the destination that are specific to the identity of each locality. From a different perspective, Chen and Li

(2022) emphasize that creative tourism is more than participation, placing tourists in cultural spaces that integrate creativity, production, consumption, and the daily life of the community. These interactions generate symbolic, cultural and experiential value for both visitors and destinations.

Despite these differing definitions, there is a considerable agreement in prior studies regarding the essential elements of creative tourism. Firstly, creative tourism is about active participation and experiential learning and not about passive observation of attractions. Tourists are invited to learn new things, to gain practical skills and to participate in cultural activities within the whole travel experience. Second, creative tourism is based on co-creation. The tourism experiences are co-produced through interactions between visitors and local communities rather than being delivered only by tourism providers. Third, authenticity continues to be a defining characteristic, where visitors engage in place-based cultural activities that are reflective of the everyday lifestyles, traditions and identities of local communities (Richards, 2010). Taken together these features distinguish creative tourism from traditional cultural tourism and explain its growing importance when considering modern tourism development.

The growing popularity of creative tourism is also closely linked to changing expectations of tourists. Contemporary travelers are increasingly looking for meaningful, personalized and transformative experiences which enable them to learn, create and establish emotional connections with destinations rather than simply consume tourism products (Richards, 2010). Thus, creative tourism has emerged as a strategic tool for enhancing destination identity and promoting cultural preservation, community engagement and sustainable tourism growth. As destinations are competing in more and more dynamic tourism markets, creative tourism offers the opportunities to create unique experiences which cannot be easily replicated. Based on these defining features, previous research has identified several major types of creative tourism. Although these forms vary in terms of activities and visitor experiences, they all have the common goal of encouraging creativity, participation and meaningful interaction between tourists and host communities. Table 1 summarizes the major types of creative tourism found in the literature.

Table 1

Types of Creative Tourism Identified in Previous Studies

Types of Creative Tourism	Main Characteristics	Representative Studies	Examples
Knowledge-based	Focuses on learning, knowledge exchange, and intellectual engagement through local culture and heritage.	Richards (2010); Benhaida et al. (2024)	Heritage trails, creative workshops, geotourism, cultural learning programmes
Arts-based	Encourages artistic participation through creative expression and cultural performances.	Qu and Cheer (2021); Shahabi et al. (2022)	Painting, music, crafts, cultural festivals, performing arts
Technology-enabled	Integrates digital technologies to enrich creative and cultural tourism experiences.	Shahabi et al. (2022)	Smart museums, digital art exhibitions, immersive storytelling, photography tourism
Sport-based	Combines physical activities with local	Dash and Samantaray	Cycling tourism, hiking,

Types of Creative Tourism	Main Characteristics	Representative Studies	Examples
	culture, nature, and creative experiences.	(2018)	surfing, sport-themed cultural events
Community-based	Promotes co-creation and collaboration between tourists and local communities while strengthening social inclusion and cultural continuity.	Qu and Cheer (2021); Christiawan et al. (2024)	Village tourism, rural festivals, traditional cooking classes, local craft-making

Crises in Creative Tourism

A crisis is generally defined as a critical event that has the potential to cause significant disruption to an organisation's operations, finances, reputation and long-term sustainability. Crises, compared to everyday operational challenges, are characterized by unpredictability, rapid onset, and the potential for severe negative consequences that require immediate and strategic responses (Dominic et al., 2024). Crises tend to happen suddenly and develop quickly so organizations need to respond well to minimize the damage and restore stakeholder confidence. Tourism is particularly vulnerable to crises, which can have serious and long-lasting consequences, as the continuity of its businesses depends largely on the confidence of visitors, the image of the destination and stable operating conditions.

The rapid development and complexity of creative tourism make it particularly susceptible to crises because it has to constantly adapt to the changing needs of tourists, market requirements, technological advances and external environmental factors (Damiasih, 2025). Unlike traditional tourism, creative tourism relies on community participation, cultural exchange, experiential activities and collaboration between multiple stakeholders. Thus, disturbances of any of these components may have major impacts on tourism experiences, destination competitiveness and local community wellbeing. Different types of crises that have been identified to impact creative tourism and the tourism industry in general include reputational crises (Dominic et al., 2024; Sohn & Lariscy, 2014), personnel crises (Hwang, 2024), natural disasters (Chan et al., 2019; Estevao & Costa, 2020; Rindrasih, 2015; Ward & Mattern, 2020), health-related crises (Vong et al., 2021), and political crises (Musavengane & Zhou, 2021).

Natural disasters are the most serious threats to tourism destinations. Tourism activities are becoming more vulnerable to disasters such as heat waves, wildfires, cyclones, hurricanes, floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, typhoons, tsunamis, droughts and insect or animal diseases. Such events often lead to damage to tourism infrastructure, disruption of transportation networks, decline in visitor arrivals and significant economic losses to tourism businesses and local communities (Chan et al., 2019; Estevao & Costa, 2020; Rindrasih, 2015; Ward & Mattern, 2020). Many creative tourism experiences are place-based and rely on local cultural assets. Therefore, the loss of physical environments and community resources may also threaten the authenticity and continuity of tourism products.

Health crises have also revealed the vulnerability of the tourism industry. The global outbreaks of COVID-19, H1N1, MERS, SARS, Ebola and avian influenza have had a serious impact on international travel by restricting population mobility, reducing the confidence of travelers and changing travel behavior fundamentally (Vong et al., 2021). In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the reliance of tourism destinations on free travel and face-to-face encounters, both of which are core to

many creative tourism experiences. Consequently, tourism destinations needed to quickly re-invent tourism products, implement health and safety procedures, and test new ways to engage visitors at times of reduced mobility. Political instability is another key source of tourism vulnerability, in addition to environmental and health disruptions. Political conflicts, civil unrest, terrorism, and geopolitical tensions create uncertainties which negatively impact destination image, tourists' perception of safety, and confidence in investment (Musavengane & Zhou, 2021). Tourism depends on stability and free movement of people, therefore long-term political crises can cause a substantial drop in tourist arrivals, which in turn can deter private investment and postpone the recovery of the destination even after the immediate crisis has been resolved. Likewise, organizational crises like reputational damage and personnel-related problems can erode stakeholder trust, reduce service quality, and affect organizational performance if not properly managed (Dominic et al., 2024; Hwang, 2024; Sohn & Lariscy, 2014).

The studies together demonstrate that the crises impacting creative tourism are diverse, interconnected and increasingly complex. Multiple crises may not be isolated, but rather interconnected with cascading effects that extend beyond economic losses and impact destination image, cultural sustainability, community livelihoods, and long-term tourism competitiveness. Therefore, effective crisis management in tourism requires tourism stakeholders to not only respond to immediate disruptions, but also to build capacity to anticipate, adapt to and recover from future crises. This is increasingly recognized and led to a change of academic attention from crisis response to the more general notion of resilience, now a major concern to ensure the long-term sustainability of creative tourism destinations (Félix et al., 2024).

Crises Resilience in Creative Tourism

Recovery and resilience are two different phases of tourism crisis management, but they are interconnected concepts. Recovery usually refers to the restoration of tourism activities and organizational functions to a pre-disruptive state after a disruptive event (Berbekova et al., 2021; Roik & Zanevych, 2024), whereas resilience is a term used to describe the general capability of organizations and destinations to anticipate, withstand, adjust to, and learn from future crises (Chen & Li, 2022). Therefore, resilience is not only about short-term recovery, but also about continuous adaptation and long-term sustainability during crisis.

Resilience is the capacity of an organization or system to adapt, learn and recover from external shocks or crises (Chen & Li, 2022; Sheppard & Williams, 2016). Similarly, Félix et al. (2024) define resilience as the capacity to withstand disturbances, to recover quickly, and to adapt to fluctuating environmental conditions over time. The definitions imply that resilience is not only the capacity of recovering to pre-crisis, but also the capacity of bouncing forward through learning, innovation and organizational adaptation.

In the tourism context, resilience is not only at the organizational level, but also at the destination, community and broader stakeholder network levels (Choi & Hyun, 2024). Resilient tourism systems rely on organizational flexibility and efficient information sharing, coordinated governance, supportive social and economic networks, and strong collaboration among multiple stakeholders in the crisis management process (Chen & Li, 2022; Félix et al., 2024). Such collaboration enables tourism destinations to better leverage resources, synchronize recovery efforts, foster public confidence and enhance long-term destination sustainability.

Several organizational capabilities related to successful crisis management were also identified in the existing literature on tourism resilience. These include adaptive leadership (Teo et al., 2025; Grefalde, 2026), proactive planning (Wang & Ritchie, 2012), stakeholder collaboration (Chen & Li, 2022),

knowledge sharing, organizational learning and community engagement that boost the capacity of tourism destinations to prepare for and respond to future disruptions (Félix et al., 2024). These capabilities are not separate, but interrelated dimensions that mutually reinforce each other and collectively feed into destination resilience and sustainable recovery.

However, the existing literature on tourism resilience has mainly used the traditional research methods of interviews with document analysis (Sheppard & Williams, 2016; Soltanabad et al., 2024; Faisal et al., 2026), surveys (Gottschalk et al., 2022; Ntounis et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2021), and case studies (Choi & Hyun, 2024). Conversely, expert discussions in webinars have been largely neglected as a source of qualitative evidence to explore how tourism practitioners conceptualize crisis recovery and resilience in contemporary practice. Therefore, there is a lack of understanding of the collective views of experts from different sectors and destination contexts, especially in the creative tourism industry. The gap is the basis of the present research, which utilizes webinar discussions as a source of naturally occurring qualitative data to explore expert perspectives of crisis recovery and resilience in creative tourism.

METHODOLOGY

Data Sources and Webinar Selection

To explore expert perspectives on crisis recovery and resilience in creative tourism, this study adopted a qualitative approach, using publicly available webinars as the primary data source. Webinars were preferred over traditional data sources such as surveys, interviews or statistical data, as they have the advantage of capturing timely expert interpretations and sectoral updates, professional experiences and practitioner-oriented reflections that are delivered to wider professional audiences. A webinar is defined as "a live web-based video conference that uses the internet to connect the individual hosting the webinar to an audience, the viewers and listeners from all over the world" (Moreau, 2017, p. 1). Presentations, demonstrations and discussions with invited experts from different geographical locations can also be part of webinars.

While the use of webinars as research materials has been employed, their application as qualitative data remains relatively underutilized in the areas of tourism studies. Based on Ramely et al. (2021) and Tiong and Fen, (2020), this study views the discussions that take place in webinars as a rich source of expert knowledge that can be systematically documented, analyzed and interpreted, rather than allowing the knowledge to remain as transitory digital content. The use of webinars is especially relevant for crisis and resilience research as webinars provide access to practitioner experiences and reflections shared in response to contemporary challenges faced by tourism destinations.

Webinars were identified and selected through a structured two-stage process. Initially, a structured search was conducted with the keywords "crisis management" AND "creative tourism industry" AND "resilience". The initial search yielded sixteen potentially relevant webinars. Second, the identified webinars were screened based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria concerning the publication timeframe, language, duration, topic relevance, sector or context, data type, accessibility, and platform (see Table 2). Following the screening process, six webinars were selected for final qualitative analysis.

The years 2024-2025 were chosen as this is a critical period for the recovery of the global tourism sector post major disruptions. International tourism rebounded strongly in 2024, driven by increased post-pandemic travel demand (UN Tourism, 2025). This period therefore offers a relevant backdrop to explore how tourism stakeholders reflect on past crises while simultaneously articulating strategies for recovery, preparedness and longer-term resilience. The final dataset comprised six webinars featuring thirteen

distinct speakers/panellists from a range of professional backgrounds, including public-sector leaders, private-sector practitioners, tourism association representatives, academics, and technical experts. The diversity of stakeholder representation enabled the study to capture a range of professional perspectives on crisis experiences, recovery responses, resilience strategies, and sectoral challenges. Further details on the selected webinars and speaker profiles are presented in Table 3.

Ethical Considerations

All data analyzed in this study were collected from publicly available webinars disseminated in professional contexts by international organizations, tourism boards, academic institutions, tourism-related organizations and media platforms. The study was limited to information placed in the public domain intentionally. No private, confidential, restricted or pay-walled materials were accessed or analyzed.

The speakers in the webinar participated in professionally disseminated discussions, and their contributions were analyzed only against the professional perspectives expressed in those discussions. Speakers were assigned codes (P1–P13) when reporting and comparing findings to maintain an appropriate level of analytical focus and to minimize unnecessary personal identification. The analysis was therefore focused on the content and patterns of expert perspectives, not an assessment of individual speakers.

Data Analysis Procedure

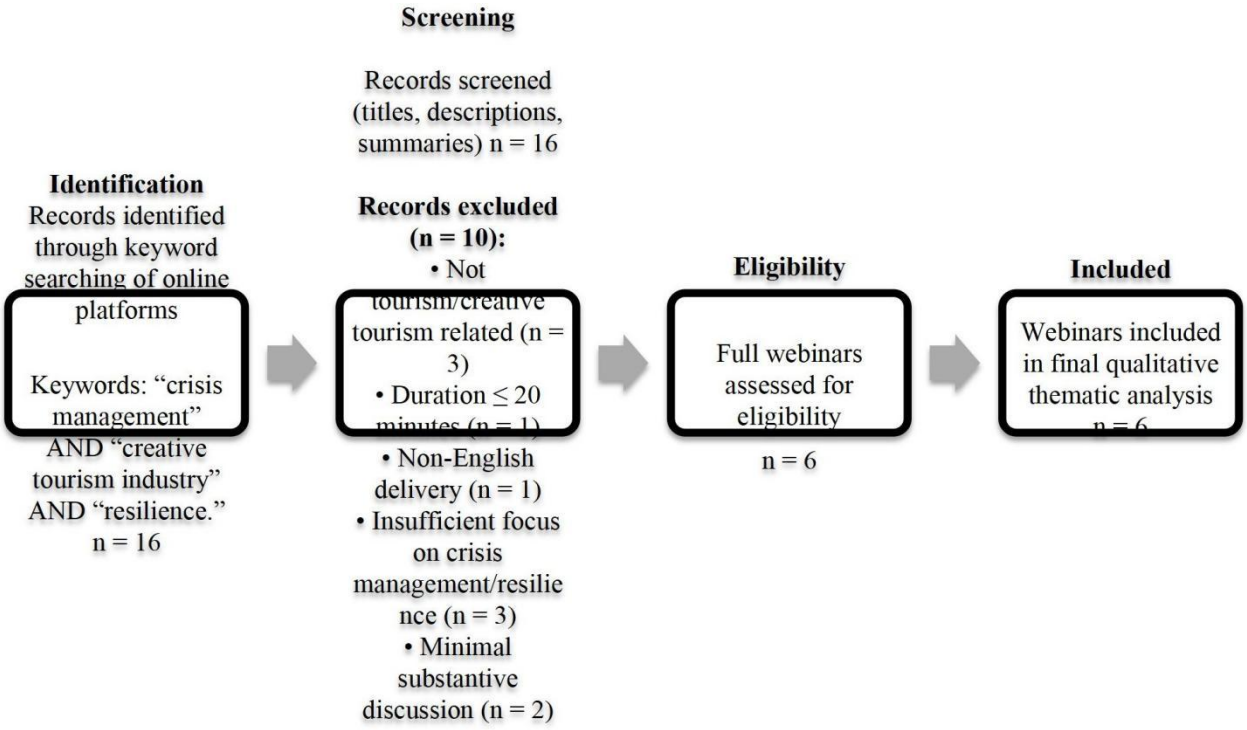
Data analysis was performed using an iterative four-stage process: webinar identification and selection, transcription and matrix creation, thematic analysis with AI-assisted coding, and final theme development. We incorporated AI-assisted analysis to enhance analytical efficiency and support pattern recognition, but interpretation and ultimate analytical decisions were researcher-led. The use of AI tools including ChatGPT to support qualitative synthesis and thematic analysis has been increasingly documented in recent research (Cevik & Abu-Zidan, 2025; Goyanes et al., 2025; Naeem et al., 2025; Nguyen-Trung, 2025; Turobov et al., 2024).

Step 1: Webinar Identification and Selection

We systematically identified and screened webinars relevant to the study objective according to the selection process depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Flow Diagram of Identification and Selection of Webinar



The initial search yielded sixteen potentially relevant webinars which were then screened using the pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria as shown in Table 2. The screening process resulted in six webinars retained for final analysis. The final dataset consisted of six webinars with thirteen individual speakers / panelists from public-sector leadership, private-sector practice, tourism associations, academia and technical expertise. This diversity offered a range of professional views on crisis experiences, recovery actions, resilience approaches and sector challenges for creative tourism.

Table 2

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Webinar Selection

Category	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Timeframe	Webinars published between 2024 and 2025.	Webinars published before 2024.
Language	Delivered in English.	Delivered in a language other than English.
Duration	More than 20 minutes.	20 minutes or less.
Topic relevance	Focuses on tourism-related crisis management and resilience, including creative tourism where applicable.	Does not address tourism management or resilience, or focuses on unrelated general crisis discussions.
Sector/context	Relevant to tourism, creative tourism, events, or associated stakeholders.	Focuses on unrelated sectors with no clear tourism application.
Data type	Webinar format involving substantive expert discussion, such as a panel, talk, briefing, or expert discussion.	Non-webinar or limited-content materials, such as promotional clips, reels, or advertisements.
Accessibility	Publicly available and accessible for analysis.	Private, restricted, paywalled, or unavailable at the time of screening.
Platform	Any publicly accessible platform, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and organisational websites.	Platform itself was not used as an exclusion criterion unless the content was inaccessible.

Stage 2: Transcription and Matrix Development

Selected webinars were transcribed and later organized in a structured matrix table for systematic documentation and comparison across webinars. The matrix recorded relevant metadata, including webinar title, speaker, platform, and date, together with relevant content related to the study objective. It was manually developed by the researcher and used as an analytical tool for consistent organization of the dataset. The matrix also allowed comparison across webinars and enabled systematic exploration of recurring issues, shared perspectives, differences in viewpoints, experiences of crisis and resilience strategies proposed. This process gave an organized analytical basis for the subsequent coding and thematic analysis.

Stage 3: Thematic Analysis and AI-Assisted Coding

Thematic analysis was conducted through a combination of manual review and AI-assisted support. First, transcripts were read repeatedly to familiarise the researcher with the data and to identify preliminary codes. Next, transcripts were processed using ChatGPT to support pattern recognition and theme development across the dataset. Specifically, the tool was used to:

1. identify recurring patterns across webinars,
2. assist in clustering related ideas and organising candidate themes, and
3. summarize relevant speaker insights and structure key discussion sections for further researcher review.

Crucially, AI-generated outputs were not treated as final codes, themes or interpretations. The suggestions generated by the AI-assisted analysis were all manually compared to the original webinars' transcripts. Candidate themes were retained, changed, combined, or dropped depending on their consistency with the source material and their relevance to the study objective. The researchers had the final responsibility for decisions regarding coding, developing themes, interpretation and reporting. This procedure was designed to combine the efficiency of AI-assisted pattern recognition with researcher-led contextual interpretation.

Stage 4: Reporting and Synthesis of Themes for Academic Purposes

Finally, the validated themes were synthesised into an integrated narrative for academic reporting. Findings were organised by theme and interpreted beyond description by linking the webinar evidence to crisis-management and resilience discussions within the creative tourism and events literature. This approach enabled the study to produce both theoretical contributions and practical implications relevant to post-crisis resilience-building in the sector. In the final phase the validated codes and thematic categories were integrated into an interpretation of crisis recovery and resilience in creative tourism. Instead of considering each webinar as an isolated case, the analysis aimed to identify recurring patterns and common or contrasting views across the six webinars. The cross-webinar synthesis allowed the study to explore how various tourism stakeholders conceptualized crisis impacts, recovery processes, resilience indicators, strategies and lessons learned.

Trustworthiness and Researcher Reflexivity

Several procedures were implemented to enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis, particularly in terms of credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through ongoing engagement with the webinar transcripts and ongoing comparison of preliminary codes, AI generated suggestions and emerging themes with the original source material. This process ensured that the interpretations remained grounded in the perspectives expressed by webinar speakers rather than being driven solely by AI-generated outputs. To enhance dependability, a structured analytical matrix was used to provide consistent documentation and comparison across the six webinars. The matrix formed an analytical chain between webinar information, speaker perspectives, relevant content, preliminary coding and emerging thematic categories. The analytical process, which consisted of four systematic stages, further increased the transparency of how the findings were generated from the original webinar material.

Confirmability was addressed through researcher oversight of the analytical process. ChatGPT functioned solely as an analytical support tool for identifying patterns, clustering related ideas, and organising relevant content. Consistent with recent applications of AI-assisted thematic analysis (Cevik & Abu-Zidan, 2025; Goyanes et al., 2025; Naeem et al., 2025), AI-generated interpretations were not automatically accepted as research findings. Rather, they were cross-checked with original transcripts, and final decisions regarding coding, theme development, interpretation, and reporting remained led by the researcher.

Researcher reflexivity was maintained by revisiting the original webinar transcripts during coding and theme development and considering whether emergent interpretations were supported by what the speakers actually discussed. Reflexivity is important in qualitative research because researchers' assumptions and perspectives may influence the interpretation of data (Berger, 2013). Great care was taken to avoid imposing any pre-conceived notions of crisis resilience on the data set. This was particularly important because the study aimed to find trends that emerged from the expert discussions, rather than testing a pre-conceived theoretical model.

The study did not employ an independent inter-coder assessment. Therefore, the analytical process should be viewed as researcher-driven qualitative interpretation, supported by systematic checking against the original webinar materials. This methodological limitation is acknowledged when interpreting the findings and further discussed in the limitations and future research section.

RESULTS

The analysis included six webinars (Webinars 1–6) that fulfilled the inclusion criteria and provided meaningful discussions on crisis management and resilience in tourism destinations. We identified and coded thirteen unique speakers and stakeholder representatives across the six webinars. These speakers represented the public sector, private sector, tourism industry and associations, technical expertise in health and climate, and academia. Table 3 summarises the host country context, the broad speaker positions represented in each webinar, and the number of speakers included for analysis, providing transparency on the empirical base of the findings.

Table 3

Summary of webinars and speakers included in the analysis.

Webinar	Host Country	Speaker Code	Speaker Position
Webinar 1	Grenada (Caribbean)	P1	Director of Tourism (public sector)
Webinar 2	Thailand	P2	Senior business leader (private sector)
Webinar 3	Australia	P3	Tourism media / podcast host
		P4	Tourism association leader
		P5	Tourism association leader
Webinar 4	Caribbean (Regional)	P6	Tourism association leader
		P7	Tourism association leader
		P8	Health expert
		P9	Climate expert
Webinar 5	Kenya	P10	Government tourism official
	Kenya	P11	Tourism funding body
	Kenya	P12	Tourism federation
Webinar 6	Australia	P13	Academic / professor

The analysis produced four major findings: (1) types and impacts of crises, (2) indicators of recovery and resilience, (3) strategies for recovery and resilience, and (4) key lessons for crisis management in creative tourism. The following sections discuss these results.

Types and impact of Crises in creative tourism

Across the six webinars, creative tourism industry was presented as being highly vulnerable to many types of crises, with impacts often extending beyond immediate operational disruption to destination image, visitor confidence, community livelihoods and environmental resources. The nature and effect of these crises depended on the context of the destination.

Hurricane Beryl in Grenada was related to physical damage to tourism assets like resorts and villas and a decline in bookings. The 2011 floods and COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand were associated with economic downturn, business disruption and leadership and workforce management issues. Similarly, the Australian webinar showed how bushfires and the pandemic caused major losses in bookings, damage to destination brand and disruption to operations and reputation.

The regional Caribbean discussions also brought out the interrelations in crisis impacts. Damage to tourism infrastructure, increased exposure to heatwaves and storms and seasonal disruption were associated with hurricanes, pandemics and climate change. Challenges were also associated with health risks such as disease transmission during climate-related events and environmental consequences such as reefs of coral degradation that further impacted tourism activities. Political violence and safety and security concerns in Kenya and the pandemic were reported to damage the national image, weaken tourist confidence and negatively impact tourism dependent communities. Finally, the Australian webinar confirmed that natural disasters, pandemics and political conflicts can interrupt tourism activities, damage infrastructure and cause large-scale travel disruption.

Taken together, three broader categories of crisis impact came out of the evidence of the webinar. First, crises had operational and economic effects through damage to infrastructure, cancelations of bookings, interruption of operations and loss of business. Second, they generated reputational and market effects by undermining the destination's image and the visitors' confidence. Third, they had wider social, health and environmental effects, especially for tourism-dependent communities and vulnerable destination

ecosystems. The findings therefore suggest that creative tourism crises are multidimensional and may lead to cascading effects across the wider destination system rather than affect tourism businesses in isolation.

Recovery and Resilience indicator derived from webinar

Four interrelated domains emerged from the thematic analysis through which recovery and resilience were expressed across the webinar discussions: leadership and trust, preparedness and planning, collaboration and partnerships, and community and capability building (Figure 2). The domains suggest that recovery and resilience were not perceived as a single response to crisis, but as a combination of organizational, relational and destination-level capabilities (Chen & Li, 2022).

Leadership and trust: Leadership and trust were identified as an important foundation to navigate crisis conditions. P2 highlighted that different crises require different responses and leaders have to be prepared to make decisions under uncertainty: *"Different crises need different responses. Sometimes the leader does not know whether the decision is good or bad. "Be the leader, don't give up, and deliver immediate solutions".*

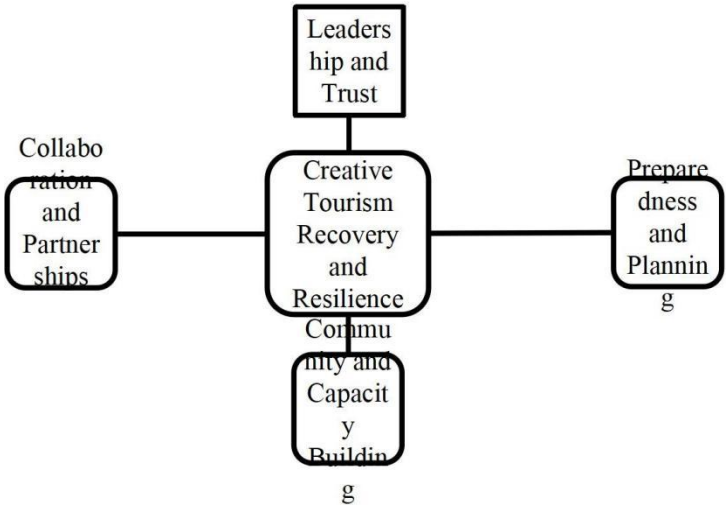
P2 also linked resilient leadership to honesty, protecting employees, honoring commitments to the organization, and being willing to make personal or organizational sacrifices in times of crisis. The speaker suggested temporary salary reductions with repayment as a means of keeping people employed and maintaining trust in the organization, rather than focusing on immediate workforce reduction. Leadership was therefore depicted not just as decision-making power but as the capacity to sustain confidence, workforce commitment and organizational stability during disruption. *"A good leader should see problems as opportunities, be honest with the team and the situation, and be willing to make sacrifices. Leaders must build trust, fulfil promises to staff, avoid retrenchment for quick recovery, and instead implement temporary salary cuts, with repayment once the economy improves".*

Preparedness and planning: The second domain of resilience was planning and preparedness. P3 stressed the importance of being proactive in preparing for operational continuity, stating: "*proactive planning is significant for operational continuity."* Likewise, P4–P7 highlighted the significance of practical preparedness resources, such as crisis toolkits, manuals, guidelines, and continuity plans. Another perspective that P9 contributed was the ability to anticipate, the need for tourism operators to be able to recognize emerging threats before they became major disruptions: *"It is critical for operators of tourism destinations to be prepared with skills to forecast the potential crisis, so that they can… be aware of the potential crisis".*

The evidence therefore suggests that preparedness is more than just the existence of emergency procedures. This includes building forecasting capability, situational awareness, practical resources for crisis and organizational readiness prior to disruption.

Figure 2

Recovery and Resilience indicators in the Creative Tourism Industry



Partnerships and collaboration: The partnerships and collaboration were particularly visible across destination contexts. The speakers consistently described resilience as a collective outcome, not merely organizational. P1 stressed the importance of *"strong partner networks,"* while P4–P7 highlighted the importance of coordinated action and shared responsibility among tourism stakeholders.

This pattern was also identified in Kenya where P10–P12 underlined multi-agency engagement and institutional support from tourism governance, funding bodies and industry networks. Together, these perspectives suggest that the ability to recover is enhanced when stakeholders coordinate resources, responsibilities, information, and institutional support rather than acting independently.

Community and capability building: The fourth domain expanded the notion of resilience from individual tourism organizations to the capacities of the tourism workforce and the wider community. P10 and P13 stressed the importance of skills development and readiness of tourism actors, including employees and local communities, in enhancing crisis-management capacity. P11 also added a continuous investment in human capital and recovery resources. P12 said the importance of industry networks in providing guidance and coordination. P8 also identified health-related capability as an important component of resilience, especially in terms of health and safety preparedness and coordinated response mechanisms during crisis events.

Together, the four domains show that resilience in creative tourism works through interconnected capabilities. Leadership provides direction and builds trust in a time of disruption, preparedness supports anticipatory action, collaboration enables coordinated mobilization of resources and community and capability building nurtures the human and institutional capacities needed for longer term adaptation. So, recovery and resilience are the product of the interplay of these capabilities and not of the practice of any one organization.

Recovery and Resilience Strategies derived from webinar

Further analysis identified six major strategies used to support recovery and strengthen resilience across destination contexts: leadership-led stabilisation, operational continuity,and risk management, structured preparedness and anticipatory readiness, partnership-based recovery and coordination, governance and capability strengthening, and health and safety protection. Table 4 synthesises these strategies, the speakers associated with each strategy, the challenges addressed,and examples of corresponding actions and practice.

Table 4

Analysis of recovery and resilience strategies across speakers

Strategy Category	Speaker Code(s)	What the Strategy Addresses	Example Actions / Practices
Leadership-led stabilisation	P2	Internal stability, trust, and decision-making during crisis	Honest leadership; fulfilling promises; avoiding retrenchment through temporary salary adjustments; rapid practical solutions; leadership sacrifice
Operational continuity and risk management	P3	Business continuity and reduction of operational risk	Emergency response planning; insurance coverage; staff cross-training; reputation management; resilience-oriented practices such as accreditation
Structured preparedness and anticipatory readiness	P4, P5, P6, P7, P9	Moving from reactive response to planned preparedness	Crisis communication toolkits; preparedness manuals; crisis planning; investment in preparedness; early warning systems; seasonal forecasting; hazard calendars; scenario-based planning
Partnership-based recovery and coordination	P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P11, P12	Coordinated action and resource mobilisation across stakeholders	Local, regional, and international partnerships; public-private partnerships; shared resources; joint response planning; multi-agency coordination; partnerships to rebuild confidence
Governance, capability and system strengthening	P10, P11, P12, P13	Long-term capacity building and institutional resilience	Crisis management centres; risk-management and emergency-response capacity building; communication strategies; technology and security adoption; training subsidies; research and marketing budgets; community preparedness and education
Health and safety protection	P8, P10	Visitor and community safety to enable reopening and trust	Health and safety protocols; vector control; public-health coordination; communication of safety measures

The strategies suggest different, but complementary, orientations to resilience. The immediate organizational consequences of crisis are mainly addressed by leadership-led stabilization and operational continuity, while preparedness and anticipatory readiness aim at reducing exposure to future disruption. Partnership-based recovery focuses on the relational dimension of resilience, especially the mobilization of resources and expertise across organizational boundaries. Governance and capacity strengthening is more long-term, focusing on institutional learning, skills, technology, research and community preparedness. Protection of health and safety is another enabling condition for building confidence with visitors and the community.

It was noticeable that many speakers, in a variety of destination contexts, talked about partnership-based recovery and structured preparedness. This pattern suggests that resilience was mainly conceived as a coordinated and anticipatory process. Destinations need mechanisms that can respond to immediate disruption, and build relationships, resources, knowledge and capabilities that increase readiness for later crises.

Key Lessons Learned for Crisis Management in Creative Tourism

Cross-webinar analysis uncovered additional lessons on how to manage crises over time, although the previous section identified specific strategies for recovery and resilience. Six interrelated lessons

emerged: adaptive leadership, readiness for changing risks, strategic communication, coordinated alliances and governance, continuous capability development, and health and safety readiness.

Firstly, the story of P2 was about adaptive leadership. This means that the response to a crisis should be adapted to the disruption and not a one-size-fits-all response.

Second, preparedness against recurring and emerging risks was highlighted by P3, P4–P7, and P9 to indicate the importance of proactive planning, staff preparedness, forecasting, and timely intervention.

Third, strategic communication was highlighted as an important mechanism for mitigating long-term damage and restoring confidence, particularly in the conversations of P4-P7 and P10-P12.

Fourth, partnerships and coordinated governance were repeatedly identified as necessary for sustaining continuity and mobilizing resources during recovery (P1, P4–P7, P10–P12).

Fifth, speakers spoke to the importance of ongoing capability building, including investment in skills, technology, research, rebuilding markets, and community preparedness (P10, P11, P13).

Finally, health and safety readiness was acknowledged as a prerequisite for the resumption of tourism activity and confidence, especially where environmental and climate-related disruptions present further public-health risks (P8).

Figure 3

Summary of key lesson themes



These lessons, taken together, suggest that there isn't a universally applicable approach to successful crisis management in creative tourism. Instead, it calls for a set of complementary capacities that include adaptive leadership, forward planning, strategic communication, coordinated partnerships, health and safety planning, and sustained capacity development. Importantly, findings also suggest that resilience should be built before, during, and after a crisis, and not only as a post-crisis recovery activity.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated crisis recovery and resilience in creative tourism via expert insights captured from publicly available webinars. The results show that resilience in creative tourism is multidimensional and not limited to restoration of tourism activities after a crisis. The findings demonstrate that resilience in creative tourism is multidimensional and extends beyond the restoration of tourism activities following a crisis. Four interrelated domains emerged from the analysis: leadership and trust, preparedness and planning, collaboration and partnerships, and community and capability building. Together, these

domains demonstrate that resilience involves not only the ability to recover from disruption but also the capacity to anticipate risks, adapt to changing conditions, coordinate responses, learn from crises, and strengthen capabilities for future disruptions.

The results support and extend the existing understanding of tourism resilience. The emphasis on adaptation, learning and recovery is in line with Chen and Li (2022) and Sheppard and Williams (2016), and the importance of sustained disruption and adapting to changing conditions is in line with Félix et al. (2024). In the meantime, the results support the differentiation of recovery and resilience as found in previous studies. Recovery means restoring tourism activities and organizational functions after disruption (Berbekova et al., 2021; Roik & Zanevych, 2024). However, the webinar evidence indicates that resilience involves a longer-term emphasis on preparedness, adaptation, learning and capability development.

In particular, the four domains identified in this study provide empirical support for a number of capabilities highlighted in the tourism resilience literature. Leadership and trust correspond with the importance of adaptive leadership in crisis conditions (Teo et al., 2025; Grefalde, 2026) and preparedness and planning reaffirm the value of proactive crisis planning (Wang & Ritchie, 2012). The importance of collaboration and partnerships confirms previous research highlighting stakeholder collaboration and coordinated networks as key to tourism resilience (Chen & Li, 2022). In addition, community and capability building refers to the importance of organizational learning, knowledge sharing, community engagement and continuous capacity development in enhancing the durability of destinations to future disruption (Félix et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings also support the view that tourism resilience operates not only at the organisational level but across destination, community, and stakeholder-network levels (Choi & Hyun, 2024).

Crucially, these findings contribute to the literature by showing how these capabilities are linked together within the framework of creative tourism. Leadership provides direction and trust during uncertainty, preparedness helps tourism actors anticipate and respond to emerging risks, collaboration mobilizes knowledge and resources across stakeholder networks, and community and capability building strengthens the human and institutional resources for longer-term adaptation. Resilience in creative tourism is therefore not to be considered as a singular organizational capability or a post-crisis phenomenon. Rather, it is an ongoing, interconnected process that takes place before, during and after crises through which tourism stakeholders prepare for disruption, respond in a collective way, recover essential functions, learn from experience and enhance their capacity to face future uncertainty.

Theoretical Contribution

The study contributes to the literature by offering a context-sensitive understanding of how resilience is operationalized within creative tourism. The contribution is not that the four domains are proposed as entirely new dimensions of resilience, but that established resilience capabilities identified in previous literature converge and interact within the creative tourism context. The results combine organizational capabilities such as leadership and preparedness with relational and destination level capabilities such as stakeholder collaboration and community capacity building. The study thus reinforces the conceptualization of tourism resilience as a system-level phenomenon that depends on interactions among organizations, communities, institutions and wider stakeholder networks.

This study further contributes to this by pointing out the shift from crisis management for recovery to anticipatory resilience. Resilience begins before the disruption occurs, as the importance of forecasting, early warning systems, crisis toolkits, scenario planning, partnership networks, skills development and community preparedness would suggest. Therefore, the capacity to “bounce back” from a crisis should

include the capacity to learn, adapt and strengthen the tourism system in preparation for future disruptions.

Methodological Contribution

Another contribution concerns the methodological approach of the study. Most of the existing research on tourism resilience has used interviews and documentary analysis (Sheppard & Williams, 2016; Soltanabad et al., 2024; Faisal et al., 2026), surveys (Gottschalk et al., 2022; Ntounis et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2021) and case studies (Choi & Hyun, 2024). This paper demonstrates how publicly available webinars can serve as an alternative source of naturally occurring qualitative data to explore contemporary expert perspectives across different stakeholder groups and destination contexts. The webinars offer discussions that provide an opportunity to learn practical knowledge and shared professional insights that may not yet be fully covered in academic publications.

The study also shows the potential of AI-assisted thematic analysis as an analytical support in qualitative tourism research. AI was used to support the recognition of patterns, clustering and organization of qualitative material, rather than replace researcher interpretation, in line with the development of methodological research (Cevik & Abu-Zidan, 2025; Goyanes et al., 2025; Naeem et al., 2025; Nguyen-Trung, 2025; Turobov et al., 2024). The verification of the data by the researchers against the original transcripts was central throughout the analysis. It demonstrates how AI-assisted analysis can complement researcher-led qualitative interpretation, provided that appropriate procedures for verification, transparency, and reflexivity are maintained.

Practical Implications

The findings also have practical implications for destination managers, tourism organizations, policymakers and creative tourism stakeholders. First, crisis-management strategies should not only be about immediate response and recovery but should also involve proactive preparedness measures such as crisis plans, early-warning systems, scenario planning, practical communication tools and regular preparedness training. Second, tourism organizations should strengthen adaptive leadership and trust in the workforce, especially through transparent communication, protection of employees and flexible decision-making during times of uncertainty.

Third, resilience-building must include the establishment of partnership networks before crises occur. Public agencies, tourism businesses, industry associations, local communities and other relevant organizations should establish mechanisms for sharing information, mobilizing resources and co-ordinating decision-making that can be activated rapidly in the event of disruption. Last, but not least, ongoing investment in human capital, technology, research, health and safety systems and community preparedness is needed to enhance the long-term adaptive capacity of creative tourism destinations.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations need to be acknowledged. The study was based on six publicly available webinars with thirteen speakers, so the results are not intended to be representative of all creative tourism destinations or stakeholders. Second, the study was based on existing webinar discussions and the researchers had no control over questions asked, topics discussed or stakeholder makeup of each webinar. This means that some views may have been given more attention than others. Third, the analysis was researcher-led and did not involve independent inter-coder assessment, although AI-generated suggestions and developing interpretations were systematically checked against the original webinar transcripts.

Future research could extend this study by including a larger and geographically more diverse sample of webinars and a wider range of stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, creative entrepreneurs, cultural organizations and local communities. Future research could also triangulate expert perspectives by combining webinar analysis with interviews, focus groups, surveys or documentary evidence, and to test whether the four resilience domains identified in this study are stable across different methodological approaches. Further comparative research across different types of crises and destination contexts may shed more light on the relationship between leadership, preparedness, collaboration and capability building under different forms and intensities of disruption.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge the Kajian Kes Grant (SO Code: 21763), entitled *The Art of Crisis Leadership: Lessons from 55 Years in Business*, which provided the conceptual inspiration for the development of this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Ramely, A. designed the study, developed the methodology, analysed the data, and wrote the manuscript. Zakaria, H. M. contributed to conceptual development and interpretation of the findings. Ong Ee-Lyn, J. contributed to the literature review and interpretation of the findings. Mohamed, A. E. contributed to the methodology and interpretation of the findings. All authors critically reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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