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Organisational Creativity Barriers: Implications for Information Systems Design

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Abstract:

Purpose: *To examine organisational barriers to employee creativity and develop a framework linking these barriers with information-system functions, managerial conditions and expected process outcomes.*
Design/Methodology/Approach: *The study combines a descriptive analysis of existing aggregate survey results with a literature-based conceptual synthesis. The survey covered 125 respondents (62 non-managerial employees and 63 managerial respondents) from 89 purposively selected creative-sector enterprises in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland, and was administered using CAWI and PAPI. The analysis focuses on open-ended questions about barriers to creativity and a separate yes/no item on monitoring the outcomes of employees' creativity development.*
Findings: *Inadequate management (44%) and insufficient time, excessive duties and pressing deadlines (42%) were the most frequently reported barriers, followed by routines and rigid rules (24%), workplace atmosphere (22%) and stress (12%); the categories are not mutually exclusive. On the separate monitoring item, 97 of the 125 respondents (77.6%) reported no monitoring of outcomes associated with the development of employees' creativity.*
Practical Implications: *The framework links managerial diagnosis with transparent idea evaluation, structured feedback, knowledge sharing and workflow integration, and identifies the responsibilities and resources that these functions require.*
Originality/Value: *The study proposes a barrier–function–outcome framework that brings organisational diagnosis into information systems design. The framework makes the rationale for each proposed function explicit and sets out criteria for its future evaluation in organisational settings.*

Keywords: *Idea management, digital collaboration, knowledge sharing, workflow integration, managerial practices.*

JEL Codes: *M10, M15, O31.*

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1. Introduction

Creativity is an important input to innovation, but creative ideas do not translate automatically into organisational performance. Gong *et al.* (2013) show that the relationship between employee creativity and firm performance depends on organisational conditions. Digital transformation likewise involves changes in how organisations coordinate work and create value, not merely the adoption of technology (Vial, 2019; Verhoef *et al.,* 2021). The organisation of creative work is therefore relevant to the selection and use of information systems (IS).

Organisational creativity emerges from interactions between individual characteristics and the conditions in which people work. Managerial practices, autonomy, resources and opportunities for knowledge exchange influence creative contributions (Woodman *et al.,* 1993; Oldham and Cummings, 1996; Anderson *et al.,* 2014; Hughes *et al.,* 2018). The practical question is how a reported organisational difficulty can be connected with a useful digital function and with the managerial arrangements needed to use it.

Research on creativity support tools provides an established foundation for this task (Shneiderman, 2007; Gabriel *et al.,* 2016; Frich *et al.,* 2019), and idea management research explains how contributions move through organisational processes (Westerski *et al.,* 2011; Gerlach and Brem, 2017).

The design challenge addressed here is not the availability of digital tools in general, but their selection in response to specific work-related problems: an idea repository, for example, supports a different process from a feedback mechanism or a workload-planning function.

Building on these foundations, this article develops a barrier–function–outcome framework from aggregate survey results obtained in creative-sector enterprises in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship. Research on Polish cities provides context by examining creative services in relation to city size and local administrative support (Wolniak and Jonek-Kowalska, 2022). The empirical material identifies recurring concerns, while the literature informs possible responses.

The framework adds a diagnostic step between a broad barrier category and a proposed function, identifies the managerial conditions for its use and specifies outcomes for future evaluation.

Three research questions guide the article:

RQ1: Which organisational barriers to creativity have the highest reported frequencies in the survey findings?
RQ2: How can these barriers inform the selection of functions in information systems supporting creativity?
RQ3: Which managerial conditions and evaluation criteria should accompany the proposed functions?
RQ1 is addressed descriptively, while RQ2 and RQ3 are addressed through a literature-based conceptual synthesis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organisational Creativity and Work Conditions

Creativity is commonly understood as the generation of ideas that are both novel and useful (Runco and Jaeger, 2012). Innovation additionally involves their implementation (Anderson *et al.,* 2014). This distinction directs attention both to conditions for generating ideas and to the processes through which organisations assess and develop them.

The componential perspective identifies domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, motivation and the social environment as important to creativity (Amabile, 1988). Its later development emphasises progress, meaning and the dynamics of the work environment (Amabile and Pratt, 2016). The interactionist perspective similarly places individual behaviour within group and organisational contexts (Woodman *et al.,* 1993).

Leadership, autonomy and work design are relevant to employees' creative contributions (Oldham and Cummings, 1996), and Hughes *et al.* (2018) review evidence that leadership is related to both creativity and innovation, which they distinguish as the generation and the implementation of ideas. Constraints have varied consequences: Acar *et al.* (2019) explain how their effects depend on the type of constraint and on the mechanisms through which it operates.

Time pressure illustrates this contingency, as Baer and Oldham (2006) found a curvilinear relationship between experienced creative time pressure and creativity among employees who were open to experience and received support for creativity. For the framework developed here, this suggests distinguishing useful coordination from excessive procedural restriction, and a motivating deadline from workload pressure that leaves little time to explore alternatives.

Interpersonal conditions are equally relevant. Edmondson (1999) relates psychological safety to interpersonal risk-taking and team learning, and meta-analytic evidence links psychological safety with information sharing and learning behaviour (Frazier *et al.,* 2017).

This provides a rationale for considering feedback and participation arrangements when workplace atmosphere is reported as a concern, although a broad description of atmosphere cannot substitute for measuring a specific construct such as psychological safety. Stress-related conditions are similarly heterogeneous: Byron *et al.* (2010) found that the relationship between stressors and creativity depends on the type and intensity of the stressor.

2.2 Information Systems Supporting Creative Work

Creativity support research examines how digital tools assist exploration, the development of ideas and collaboration (Shneiderman, 2007; Gabriel *et al.,* 2016; Frich *et al.,* 2019). Gabriel *et al.* (2016) highlight the concentration of many systems on idea generation and the need to consider the creative process more broadly.

Knowledge-management systems support the creation, storage, transfer and application of organisational knowledge (Alavi and Leidner, 2001). Idea management systems organise contributions through an idea life cycle that links community input with enterprise processes (Westerski *et al.,* 2011), and Gerlach and Brem (2017) derive guidance for implementing idea management in companies.

Studies of internal crowdsourcing show why the organisational side of such systems matters: the attention an idea receives, including positive comments from colleagues, is associated with its survival through selection (Di Vincenzo et al., 2021), and introducing crowdsourcing can create new roles and responsibilities for employees (Ruiz and Beretta, 2021). These perspectives inform functions such as searchable repositories, shared development spaces, evaluation records and feedback mechanisms, each supporting a distinct stage of creative work.

Digital innovation research shows how reprogrammable components and distributed knowledge change the organisation of innovation (Yoo *et al.,* 2010; Yoo *et al.,* 2012), and Leonardi (2010) directs attention to the relationship between software and organisational practice. Applied to creativity support, this makes the allocation of responsibility as important as the availability of information: recording an idea and assigning authority to act on it are separate design decisions.

Evaluation should capture more than system use. Cherry and Latulipe (2014) developed the Creativity Support Index to assess the perceived support provided by digital tools, and Cox *et al.* (2025) argue for broader evaluation encompassing output quality, user experience and user-centred benefits.

2.3 Linking Organisational Diagnosis and IS Design

A barrier category identifies an area for investigation, whereas a design proposal responds to a particular difficulty within that area. Inadequate management, for example, may involve delayed feedback, unclear priorities or limited decision authority, and each of these diagnoses suggests a different combination of organisational action and digital support. The framework therefore connects a reported barrier, a process-level interpretation, a system function, the managerial conditions for its use and an expected outcome.

Artificial intelligence can extend selected functions, for example through assistance with knowledge retrieval or the organisation of ideas. Haefner et al. (2021) discuss AI in innovation management, and Raisch and Krakowski (2021) examine the relationship between automation and augmentation, which makes human judgement and responsibility relevant considerations for AI-supported idea management. Doshi and Hauser (2024) found that access to AI-generated ideas improved evaluations of individual short stories while increasing their similarity, which suggests that gains in individual performance should be assessed alongside the diversity of outputs.

3. Research Methodology

This article combines a descriptive analysis of existing aggregate survey results with a literature-based conceptual synthesis. The analysis focuses on organisational barriers to employee creativity and their potential relevance to the design of information systems.

Purposive sampling was applied to include enterprises in which creative work constituted an important component of value creation. A total of 307 eligible enterprises were invited to participate, of which 89 agreed to take part. The final sample consisted of 125 respondents, including 62 non-managerial employees and 63 managerial respondents. The participating enterprises represented publishing and media, advertising, design, architecture, cultural activities and other creative services.

The survey was administered using computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) and paper-and-pencil interviewing (PAPI). The questionnaire included closed-ended, rating-scale and open-ended questions concerning work organisation, managerial practices, organisational climate and conditions affecting employee creativity. This article examines the open-ended questions concerning barriers to creativity and a separate yes/no item on whether the enterprise monitored outcomes associated with the development of employees' creativity.

The open-ended responses were reviewed by the lead researcher and grouped into five recurring thematic categories. A response could be assigned to more than one category when it referred to several barriers; consequently, the reported percentages

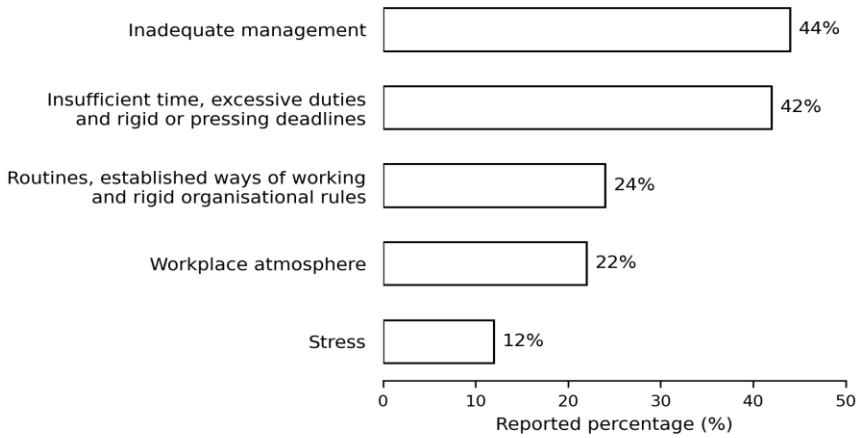
are not additive. The article uses the documented aggregate results and does not recode individual responses. These findings are subsequently combined with the literature to develop propositions concerning information-system functions, managerial conditions and expected process outcomes. The proposed connections should therefore be interpreted as evidence-informed design propositions rather than empirically tested causal relationships.

4. Research Results and Discussion

4.1 Organisational Barriers and Monitoring Practices

All 125 respondents answered the open-ended barrier questions. Inadequate management (44%) and insufficient time, excessive duties and rigid or pressing deadlines (42%) were reported most often, while the remaining categories (routines, established ways of working and rigid rules; workplace atmosphere; stress) were reported less frequently (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Reported Organisational Barriers to Employee Creativity*



Source: *Authors' elaboration based on the survey results. N = 125; the barrier categories are not mutually exclusive, so the percentages do not sum to 100%.*

The interpretations below draw on the literature reviewed in Section 2; they are analytical propositions that guide organisational diagnosis, not additional survey findings.

Inadequate management: This category directs attention to how creative contributions are handled, not only to whether employees are invited to suggest ideas. Additional opportunities to submit ideas would do little for an employee whose proposal is still awaiting a decision. This reading is consistent with evidence that leadership affects the implementation of ideas as well as their generation (Hughes *et al.,* 2018).

Time, duties and deadlines: This category combines pressure from existing work with the time needed for exploration and may indicate a mismatch between expectations of creativity and the capacity allocated to it. The relevant question is whether the obstacle is insufficient time overall, competing commitments or poorly coordinated handovers. Because time pressure is not uniformly harmful to creativity (Baer and Oldham, 2006), the diagnostic target is pressure that crowds out exploration, not deadlines as such.

Routines and rigid rules: This category concerns the scope for departing from established ways of working. One possible difficulty is requiring an early idea to meet the same information and approval requirements as a fully developed project. The diagnostic task is to identify where a procedure supports coordination and where it prematurely narrows exploration (Acar *et al.,* 2019).

Workplace atmosphere: This category shifts attention from the availability of a submission channel to the conditions under which people use it. Follow-up questions may concern how disagreement is handled, whose feedback receives attention and whether unfinished proposals can be discussed, which turns a broad interpersonal concern into observable practices associated with psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; Frazier *et al.,* 2017).

Stress: Although stress was reported least often, frequency alone does not determine its practical importance. Pressure associated with workload needs to be distinguished from uncertainty or interpersonal tension, since different stressors relate to creativity in different ways (Byron *et al.,* 2010). Where conflicting priorities are the problem, clearer work allocation may help; where the concern lies elsewhere, workload alerts may be poorly matched.

On the separate yes/no item, 97 of the 125 respondents (77.6%) reported that their enterprise did not monitor outcomes associated with the development of employees' creativity, and 28 (22.4%) reported that it did (Table 1). The proportions were similar for non-managerial employees and managerial respondents. The item concerns monitoring practice, not the presence of a particular digital system.

Table 1. *Monitoring of Creativity-Development Outcomes by Respondent Group*

Respondent group	**N**	**Yes, n (%)**	**No, n (%)**
Non-managerial employees	62	14 (22.6)	48 (77.4)
Managerial respondents	63	14 (22.2)	49 (77.8)
Total	**125**	**28 (22.4)**	**97 (77.6)**

Source: *Authors' calculations based on the survey results. All 125 respondents answered the item; percentages are rounded to one decimal place. The results refer to respondents, not enterprises.*

4.2 A Barrier–Function–Outcome Framework for IS Design

Table 2 connects the empirical categories with proposed information-system functions, managerial conditions and expected process outcomes. The diagnostic focus in the second column is informed by the literature and guides the choice of a function once a corresponding difficulty has been identified in an organisation. Figure 2 summarises the design logic and keeps managerial conditions alongside technological functions.

For management-related barriers, the design focus is the progression of employee ideas. A contribution should have a retrievable record, an identifiable reviewer and a visible next step, and feedback should explain the decision and indicate whether a proposal can be revised, combined with another idea or developed further. Such functions make responsibility and communication part of the design (Westerski *et al.,* 2011), and the association between the attention an idea receives and its survival (Di Vincenzo *et al.,* 2021) supports treating feedback as a substantive function.

For time-related barriers, the focus is integration with existing work. Linking creative tasks to project schedules and workload information may help managers compare commitments and allocate capacity, provided that time for exploration is recognised within employees' responsibilities. Otherwise, a separate idea platform risks becoming an additional task without corresponding resources.

For rigid routines, the framework proposes configurable review routes and shared development spaces, so that early ideas can be explored before they enter more demanding approval procedures. For concerns involving atmosphere or stress, access rights, feedback channels and workload information require particular attention to confidentiality, staff participation and action on the underlying problem.

The monitoring result motivates a distinction between process visibility and the measurement of creativity. Idea-progression records can show what happened to a proposal, which decisions remain outstanding and what resources are needed next, whereas assessing creativity also requires attention to originality and usefulness. A reporting function should therefore serve a defined decision need instead of establishing individual idea-count quotas.

4.3 Discussion

The management-related result can be read alongside Oldham and Cummings (1996), who linked creative performance to creativity-relevant personal characteristics, challenging work and supportive, non-controlling supervision, and alongside the evidence on leadership reviewed by Hughes *et al.* (2018). Whereas these studies examined creative performance and its antecedents, the present survey captures management as a perceived obstacle.

Table 2. *Barrier–Function–Outcome Framework*

Reported indicator	**Diagnostic focus and literature**	**Proposed IS functions**	**Managerial condition and expected process outcome**
Inadequate management 44%	Feedback and decision responsibility. Westerski et al. (2011); Hughes et al. (2018); Di Vincenzo et al. (2021).	Idea-status records; assigned reviewer; documented decisions and feedback.	Condition: reviewer with authority and time. Outcome: clearer responsibility and more consistent responses.
Insufficient time, excessive duties and rigid or pressing deadlines 42%	Time for exploration and coordination of commitments. Baer and Oldham (2006); Acar et al. (2019).	Workload visibility; links between creative tasks and project schedules.	Condition: agreed priorities and allocated capacity. Outcome: better visibility of commitments and time for development.
Routines, established ways of working and rigid rules 24%	Flexibility in developing and reviewing alternatives. Gabriel et al. (2016); Acar et al. (2019).	Configurable review paths; shared repositories and development spaces.	Condition: permission and resources to explore alternatives. Outcome: fewer avoidable procedural delays.
Workplace atmosphere 22%	Conditions for dialogue and participation. Edmondson (1999); Frazier et al. (2017).	Feedback channels; shared discussion spaces; appropriate access controls.	Condition: credible response to concerns and protection of confidentiality. Outcome: clearer routes for participation.
Stress 12%	Workload and priority clarity, where overload is identified. Byron et al. (2010); Acar et al. (2019).	Visibility of assigned work and priorities; proportionate workload alerts.	Condition: management action on identified pressures. Outcome: clearer priorities without additional reporting burden.
No monitoring of outcomes* 77.6%	Visibility of the idea-development process. Westerski et al. (2011); Gerlach and Brem (2017); Cox et al. (2025).	Idea-progression records; decision history; process-level reporting.	Condition: clear reporting purpose and limited data collection. Outcome: more visible bottlenecks and next steps.

Note: *The monitoring result comes from a separate item, is not an additional barrier category and refers to respondents, not enterprises.*

Source: *Authors' synthesis of the survey results and the literature cited in the table. Functions and outcomes are design propositions that require future evaluation.*

Figure 2. *From Organisational Diagnosis to IS Design and Evaluation*

1. ORGANISATIONAL DIAGNOSIS Reported barrier → specific process difficulty
↓
2. INFORMATION-SYSTEM FUNCTIONS Capture and retrieve ideas; share knowledge; provide feedback; coordinate work
↓
3. MANAGERIAL CONDITIONS Decision responsibility; allocated time; participation and access rules
↓
4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION Clearer idea progression, better feedback and fewer avoidable delays Assess alongside originality, usefulness and user experience

Source: *Authors' conceptual synthesis. Arrows indicate the reasoning behind the proposals, not estimated causal relationships.*

Read together, they raise a design question: how can decision and feedback arrangements support employees' contributions without turning the system into an instrument of control? The framework responds through assigned decision responsibility and explainable feedback.

The prominence of time-related concerns and the presence of rigid routines are consistent with research on the contingent effects of constraints (Acar *et al.,* 2019) and of creative time pressure (Baer and Oldham, 2006). This favours selective redesign: retaining procedures that coordinate interdependent tasks while reconsidering requirements that consume development time or close down alternatives too early.

Workplace atmosphere and stress add an interpersonal dimension. The association between psychological safety and team learning (Edmondson, 1999; Frazier *et al.,* 2017) and the role of progress and meaningful work in the dynamic model of Amabile and Pratt (2016) suggest that the experience of receiving feedback may matter as much as its speed. A plausible design response is feedback that acknowledges the contribution and identifies a next step, including when an idea requires revision.

The results also complement the creativity-support literature: whereas many of the systems examined by Gabriel *et al.* (2016) concentrate on idea generation, the management- and time-related concerns motivate examining support across the creative process, including feedback, further development and resource allocation after idea generation. Continuity, accountability and integration therefore become complementary criteria for configuring digital support: an accessible repository

supports continuity, an authorised reviewer supports accountability, and links to project schedules support integration.

The monitoring result also raises an evaluation issue: combining perceived support, as captured by the Creativity Support Index (Cherry and Latulipe, 2014), with output quality and user-centred benefits (Cox *et al.,* 2025) would allow process improvements to be assessed alongside their consequences for creative work.

4.4 Theoretical Contribution

The barrier–function–outcome framework contributes a process-level connection between organisational creativity theory and information systems design. Its conceptual unit is a configuration comprising a specific work difficulty, a plausible mechanism, a digital function, the accompanying managerial action and an outcome for assessment. Following the problem-oriented logic of design science (Hevner *et al.,* 2004), the framework takes the form of a conceptual model (Jaakkola, 2020) and corresponds to an abstract level of design knowledge, not to a situated implementation of an artefact (Gregor and Hevner, 2013).

The framework makes three distinctions. First, it separates a reported symptom from its possible mechanism: the same management complaint may call for better information, additional decision authority or changed priorities, while one feedback function may be relevant to several complaints. This many-to-many mapping discourages the automatic assignment of one technology to each barrier.

Second, authority, time and participation arrangements are treated as components of the proposed intervention instead of background conditions; a status record paired with an authorised decision-maker is a different organisational configuration from a status record alone (Leonardi, 2010).

Third, the framework distinguishes the immediate process outcome from the broader creative outcome. More consistent feedback may be the first expected change, whereas originality and usefulness concern what is developed through that process. This distinction makes the proposal open to stepwise evaluation and helps locate where an intervention works or stalls.

4.5 Relation to Idea Management Systems

The proposed framework does not replace the life-cycle capabilities of idea management systems, which already include feedback and links to enterprise processes (Westerski *et al.,* 2011; Gerlach and Brem, 2017); it supplies a diagnostic rationale for choosing and configuring them in a particular setting. It begins before product selection, allows a managerial response without new software when the difficulty concerns authority or capacity, and can be applied to an existing platform

by judging a proposed change against the diagnosed barrier and the expected outcome.

5. Conclusions, Proposals and Recommendations

The study connects organisational barriers to creativity with the design of supporting information systems. Management and time-related concerns were the most frequently reported barriers, and most respondents reported no monitoring of outcomes associated with the development of employees' creativity.

These findings provide the empirical starting point for the barrier–function–outcome framework, which directs attention to idea-status tracking and feedback, shared knowledge and development spaces, workflow integration and proportionate process reporting, supported by decision authority, allocated time, participation and controlled access to information.

5.1 Managerial Implications: From Diagnosis to Evaluation

Diagnosis: Managers should start with a specific episode of creative work, such as a proposal awaiting review or a development task repeatedly displaced by routine duties. They should establish where progress stopped, ask the people involved what prevented the next action and record an initial measure of the difficulty. The output is a short problem statement rather than a general objective to increase innovation.

IS function: The next step is to select the smallest useful change to the existing workflow. For unanswered proposals, this might be a shared review queue with status and decision history; for competing commitments, a link between development tasks and the team schedule. Existing applications should be considered before adding another platform, especially when duplicate reporting would reproduce the time barrier.

Responsibility: Before use, a business-process owner should be assigned authority, time and escalation arrangements. An IT administrator may maintain a queue, but a manager must determine who reviews proposals and how accepted work is resourced. Participants should know who can see their contributions, how they can request clarification and when a substantive response can realistically be expected.

Outcome evaluation: An initial, limited-scope implementation should compare performance with the starting position and check the effort it creates. In the review-queue example, useful measures include time to substantive feedback, the proportion of submissions receiving a reasoned next-step decision and the number awaiting an assigned reviewer. Automatic acknowledgements should not count as substantive feedback. A sample of proposals and staff accounts can help assess whether faster handling also supports useful development. If more ideas are processed but accepted

proposals still receive no time for development, the next change should address resource allocation instead of accelerating submission.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

The findings concern self-reported perceptions in a purposively selected regional sample. Unequal numbers of respondents per enterprise limit firm-level interpretation, including for the monitoring item.

The analysis relies on documented aggregate percentages, which do not allow the overlap between barrier categories to be examined. The regional setting and fieldwork context should be considered when examining the transferability of the framework. The framework is a conceptual synthesis whose effects on creative work have not yet been evaluated.

A natural next step is an ex ante evaluation with managers and information systems practitioners, for example expert interviews assessing the relevance and completeness of Table 2, followed by naturalistic evaluation in organisations (Venable *et al.,* 2016).

Comparing a managerial change alone with the same change supported by a digital function would help identify the contribution of the technology, and repeated observations could assess process quality alongside independently evaluated creative outputs, user experience and workload.

Declarations:
Conflicts of Interest: *The authors declare no conflicts of interest.*
Data Availability Statement: *The aggregate results analysed in this study are reported in the article. Individual survey responses are not included.*
Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process: *During preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Claude (Anthropic) for language and structural editing, bibliographic checks, refinement of the presentation of the conceptual framework, preparation of tables and figures based exclusively on author-supplied aggregate data, and consistency checks of reported values. The tools did not collect data, code individual survey responses or generate empirical observations. All outputs were critically reviewed and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality and integrity of the final manuscript.*

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