

Preventive Benefits of Physical Activity for Psychosocial Health and Well-Being

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Abstract: Physical exercise has a significant impact on improving psychological well-being and preventing illness. Using a qualitative methodology, this research seeks to examine the advantages of physical activity prevention for both social welfare and physical health. 281 people between the ages of 20 and 50 who regularly exercised made up the participants. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, and theme analysis techniques were used for analysis. The study's findings demonstrated that exercise increased both aerobic and anaerobic capacity, strengthened bones and muscles, and reduced the risk of non-communicable illnesses, including diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure.

Furthermore, physical exercise improves psychosocial well-being by lowering stress, anxiety, and depression while boosting confidence and social connection. More than 70% of those surveyed agreed with this advantage. The study's findings underscore the need for preventative methods based on physical activity in public health programs to enhance overall quality of life. To encourage a more sustainable and inclusive active lifestyle, cooperation between communities, educational institutions, and governments is required.

In summary, physical exercise promotes psychological well-being and plays a significant role in preventing illness. Therefore, promoting physical activity and providing information are essential components of a healthy lifestyle.

Keyword : *Physical activity, prevention, mental health, psychosocial well-being, chronic disease*

Introduction

It has long been known that physical exercise is crucial to preserving one's health and well-being. According to research, exercise has a substantial favorable influence on mental health in addition to its good effects on physical health. Given the rising incidence of long-term conditions, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease, it's critical to comprehend how physical exercise may be used as a preventative measure. Investigating the connection between physical exercise and psychosocial well-being is crucial since mental health also improves one's quality of life.

Additionally, physical exercise has notable psychological advantages. According to research by Biddle and Asare (2011), exercise may boost self-confidence and lessen the symptoms of anxiety and sadness (Biddle & Asare, 2011). Nevertheless, studies



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that examine the advantages of physical exercise for psychological health and well-being from a comprehensive preventative viewpoint are still few. Thus, the purpose of this research is to close the gap using a qualitative methodology.

Sedentary lifestyles are becoming more and more common worldwide, mainly as a result of urbanization, technological development, and shifting work schedules. A 2020 World Health Organization (WHO) assessment found that 80% of teenagers and over 25% of adults do not engage in the recommended amount of physical exercise. The elevated risk of chronic conditions, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular problems, is directly impacted by this lifestyle. Furthermore, a lack of physical exercise is often linked to mental health issues, including stress, sadness, and anxiety (Bull et al., 2020).

Additionally, physical exercise is crucial for enhancing social and mental well-being. Physical exercise has been shown to boost self-esteem, lessen depressive symptoms, and enhance interpersonal connections in a psychosocial setting (Penedo & Dahn, 2005). Therefore, to enhance public health holistically, physical activity-based preventative measures must be developed.

Given the growing prevalence of the adverse effects of a sedentary lifestyle across all age groups, physical exercise must be used as a preventative measure. According to research, there is a substantial financial impact associated with a lack of physical exercise. Physical inactivity is the direct cause of 6% of the burden of cardiovascular disease and accounts for 9% of premature deaths worldwide, according to research by Lee et al. (2012) (Lee et al., 2012). Furthermore, mental health issues brought on by inactivity are on the rise, particularly during the COVID-19 epidemic, when many people are secluded and their physical activity levels are sharply decreased (Stanton et al., 2020).

Mental health throughout the world has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic, which started in late 2019. In many spheres of society, stress, anxiety, and depression have grown as a result of social constraints, loneliness, and economic insecurity. According to a May 2022 report from Indonesia's Ministry of Health, the epidemic exacerbated mental health issues, leading to a rise in cognitive, neurological, and drug use disorders.

Laar, Saqib, and Wang's study editorial from 2024 emphasizes the value of exercise and a nutritious diet as successful strategies for combating obesity. The authors stress that a balanced diet and physical exercise may operate as a "cure" for obesity, which in turn promotes better mental and psychosocial health (Laar et al., 2024).

Furthermore, by taking into account the function of quality-of-life moderation, Liu, Menhas, and Saqib's (2024) study investigates the impact of physical exercise on psychological resilience, mental health, and health behavior. According to the study's findings, physical exercise improves psychological resilience and mental health, particularly in those who lead fulfilling lives (Liu et al., 2024).

This implies that exercise benefits a person's psychological well-being in addition to their physical health.

Additionally, the study by Li et al. (2023) emphasizes the connection between mental health and physical exercise. In addition to improving general happiness and well-being, the authors discovered that regular physical exercise helped lessen the symptoms of anxiety and depression (B. Li et al., 2023). These results are in line with other studies that indicate physical exercise is crucial for managing and preventing mental illnesses.

Research Łuczak et al. (2024) investigate how physical exercise affects older adults' mental health. According to the findings, physical exercise may enhance older people's quality of life and lower their risk of mental illnesses like depression (Łuczak et al., 2024). This highlights how crucial physical exercise is as a preventative measure to preserve mental health in an older society.

Furthermore, research by Li & Wang (2023) looked at the connection between teenagers' psychological well-being and physical exercise. According to the findings, teenagers who regularly exercised had better psychosocial well-being, including more excellent social skills, self-confidence, and a decrease in depressive symptoms (S. Li & Wang, 2023). These results highlight how crucial it is to promote physical exercise from a young age in order to guard against mental health issues in later life.

Overall, the research indicates that physical exercise has significant advantages for mental and physical health. Frequent physical exercise may enhance psychological resilience, provide a higher quality of life, and function as an effective preventative measure against a number of mental health issues. Therefore, as a crucial component of public health initiatives, both people and politicians must support and enable access to physical exercise.

Method

Methods

The subjective experiences of people engaging in physical exercise are investigated in this research using a qualitative phenomenological methodology. Creswell (2014) asserts that phenomenological research is used to comprehend people's subjective experiences while incorporating physical exercise into their daily routines (Creswell, 2014). To better comprehend participants' experiences with the advantages of physical exercise, this research used a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design. From October to December 2024, this study was carried out in two city districts—the city of Semarang and the city of Surakarta—in the province of Java, Tengan. Purposive sampling was used to choose 281 individuals, who then participated in semi-structured interviews. People between the ages of 20 and 50 who regularly exercise at least three times per week are eligible to participate. The Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis approach was used to examine the data, which included procedures including

initial coding, theme identification, and data interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Materials

Data collection techniques in qualitative research involve direct interaction between researchers and participants. Some of the methods that are often used include: (1) Both in-person and online interviews are utilized to investigate people's perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of physical exercise. According to research by Longhurst (2009), in-depth interviews may disclose the inherent motives and challenges people have in sustaining regular physical exercise. The interview lasts between thirty and sixty minutes (Longhurst, 2009). Every interview is videotaped and then transcribed for further examination. (2) Participatory Observation: In order to conduct an observation, the researcher physically interacts with the participants. This approach allows researchers to comprehend the social and cultural aspects related to physical exercise. Eather et al. (2023) used participant observation in their study to determine how the sports community contributes to the enhancement of psychological well-being (Eather et al., 2023); and (3) Questionnaire: This survey assesses the positive effects of preventing physical exercise on mental, social, and physical facets of psychosocial health and well-being. This tool was created based on earlier studies that showed the positive effects of physical exercise on people's health and psychological well-being (Penedo & Dahn, 2005; Warburton et al., 2006). Several study findings have led to the adoption of the research instrument grid:

Table 1. Research instruments		
Aspects	Indicators	Sub-Indicators
Physical Health	Improved physical fitness	Aerobic and anaerobic capacity increased
	Strengthening muscles and bones	Increased muscle mass and bone density
	Prevention of non-communicable diseases	Reduced risk of obesity, diabetes, and hypertension
Psychosocial Well-Being	Improved mental health	Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression
	Improved emotional well-being	Improved mood and confidence
	Improved social relationships	Social interaction is increasing in the sports community

Data analysis techniques

To find important themes, data analysis in qualitative research is an interpretative and iterative process. The following analytical methods are employed: (1) Thematic analytical: This kind of analysis looks for themes in qualitative data. Five significant themes, including physical benefits, mental health, social motivation, and cultural barriers to physical activity, were identified by the study by Naeem et al. (2023) using thematic analysis(Naeem et al., 2023); and (2) narrative analysis, which reveals personal accounts of how physical activity impacts people's psychosocial health and well-being. Research conducted by Warner et al. (2014) discovered that the personal growth that follows physical activity participation is often highlighted in participant narratives (Warner et al., 2014).

Results And Discussion

Results

Three key themes about the advantages of physical activity prevention for mental health and well-being were found in the study's findings:

a. Respondents' Gender

Over half of the respondents had a masculine gender background. Up to 240 men (85%) and 41 women (15%) took part in the research on the advantages of physical activity prevention for psychosocial health and well-being. Men made up the majority of respondents, demonstrating the study's male group's dominance. Figure 1 provides more information on the respondents' backgrounds;

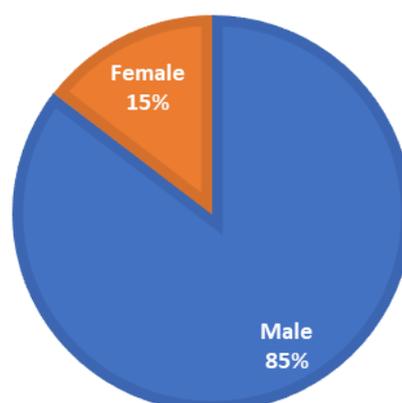


Figure 1. Qualities of Respondents

The composition of these respondents can reflect a variety of factors, such as the level of participation in physical activity, interest in psychosocial health and wellness topics, or even social and cultural factors that influence engagement in the study. With a larger number of respondents in the male group, data analysis can provide stronger insights into their perceptions and experiences of the benefits of physical activity prevention, while the female group still provides an

important perspective in understanding differences in experiences based on gender.

b. Physical Well-Being

Increased physical fitness, bone and muscle strength, prevention of non-communicable diseases, sub-indicators of increased aerobic and anaerobic capacity, increased muscle mass and bone density, and a lower risk of obesity, diabetes, and hypertension are all components of physical health. It may be explained in picture 2 below;

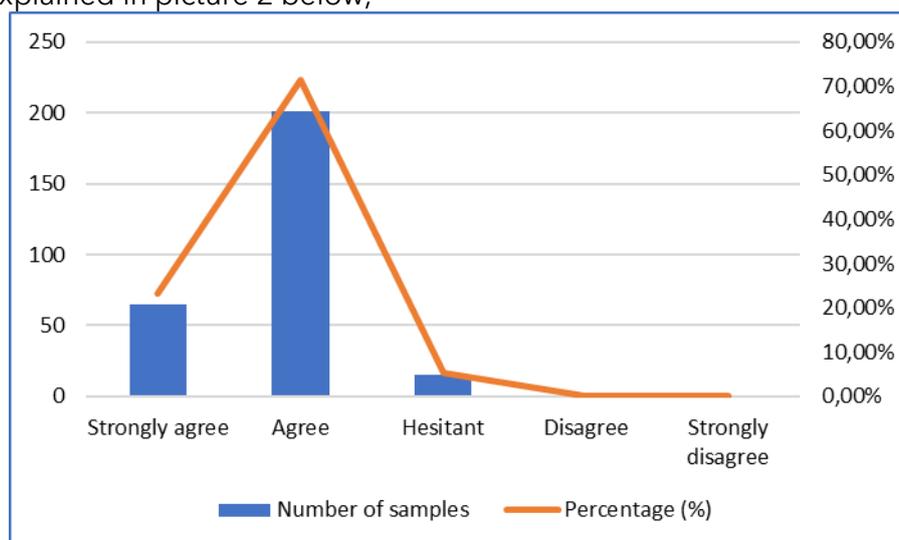


Figure 2. Physical well-being

According to the survey's findings, most participants agreed that avoiding physical exercise provides significant advantages for one's physical well-being. 65 respondents (23.13%) strongly agreed, compared to 201 respondents (71.53%) who indicated agreement. Just 15 respondents (5.34%) had any doubts about these advantages, and none of them objected or strongly disagreed. According to the findings, nearly all participants acknowledge the value of physical exercise in preserving bodily health and averting different illnesses. Interview findings supported the participants' claims that exercise improved their mood and helped them cope with stress. Physical activity may stimulate the production of endorphins, which are linked to mood enhancement, according to research by Rebar et al. (2015). One participant said, "Every time I exercise, I feel more relaxed and able to think clearly."

c. Social Assistance

Sub-indicators of social well-being include lowering stress, anxiety, and depression, boosting confidence and mood, and increasing social engagement within the sports community. Figure 3 provides more information on social welfare;

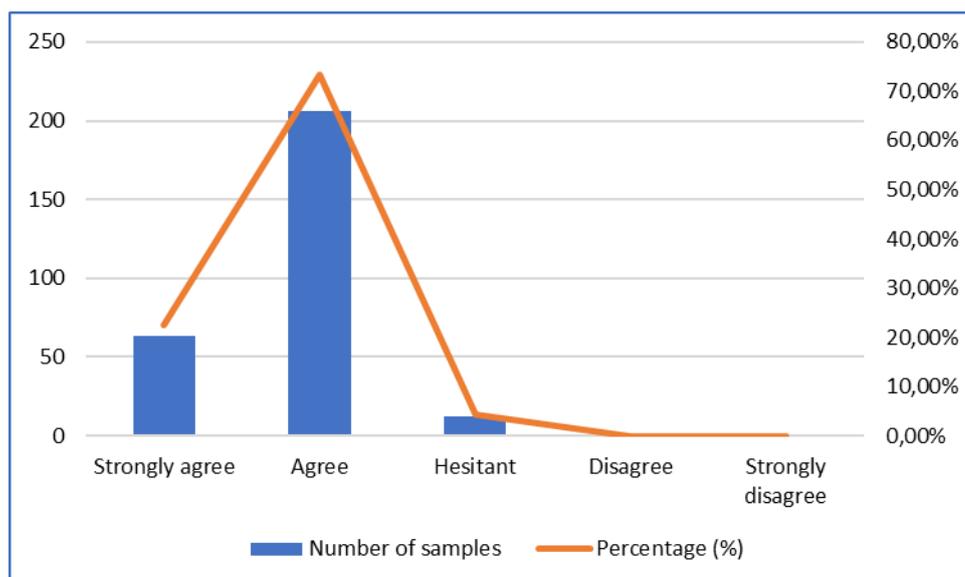


Figure 3 Social Assistance

The majority of respondents also responded favorably to the benefits of preventing physical activity in terms of social welfare: 206 respondents (73.31%) agreed, 63 respondents (22.42%) strongly agreed, with only 12 respondents (4.27%) feeling hesitant, and no one expressing disapproval. These results show that physical activity not only improves physical health but also contributes to social well-being, including enhancing social interaction, lowering stress, and strengthening interpersonal relationships. Participants also noted that group-based physical activities, like yoga or team sports, fostered a sense of community and encouraged positive social interaction, which is consistent with a study by Eime et al. (2013) that found that community-based physical activity enhances social engagement and emotional support

Discussion

Based on data from 281 respondents, the majority agreed that physical activity contributes positively to physical health and social well-being. A total of 71.53% of respondents stated that they "agree," while another 23.13% "strongly agree" with the benefits of physical health. In terms of social welfare, 73.31% of respondents "agreed" and another 22.42% "strongly agreed." These findings underscore the importance of a preventive approach through physical activity. Physical activity not only provides physical benefits but also supports the individual's psychological and social balance. The integration of physical activity into public health programs should be prioritized to reduce the global burden of disease and improve well-being. The results of this study are in line with various previous studies that highlight the benefits of physical activity as a preventive measure against various chronic diseases and improve psychosocial well-being. According to WHO (2020), regular physical activity can lower the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer (WHO, 2020). Research by Golaszewski (2022) confirms that group sports improve social interaction and reduce stress

(Golaszewski et al., 2022). Smith et al. (2021) showed that regular exercise improves sleep quality and mood, especially for individuals with a tendency to depression (Smith & Merwin, 2021). In addition, Singh et al. (2023) mentioned that physical activity increases confidence and lowers anxiety (Singh et al., 2023), while Mahindra et al. (2023) assert that exercise triggers the release of endorphins that reduce stress (Mahindru et al., 2023).

These results were supported by interviews with several respondents, including one who stated, "Since I have been exercising regularly, I have more energy and rarely have headaches." Another added, "Joining the sports community makes me healthier and expands my associations." A third concurred, "Physical activity helped me manage anxiety and boost my self-confidence."

Warburton & Bredin (2017) reported that physically active people have a lower risk of obesity and cardiovascular disease (Warburton & Bredin, 2017). Additionally, Mandolesi et al. (2018) found that physical activity can improve mental health by reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression (Mandolesi et al., 2018). Zhang et al. (2023) claim that 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical exercise per week can improve emotional balance and cognitive performance (Zhang et al., 2023). The higher levels of endorphins that come from physical activity help to stabilize emotions and lower stress hormones, both of which promote better mental health.

Public health programs must prioritize promoting an active lifestyle to enhance the overall quality of life. Surveys, studies, and interviews demonstrate that physical exercise has significant advantages for physical and mental well-being.

a. Physical Activity Prevention's Advantages for Physical Health

The biological mechanisms underlying physical activity's physical health benefits include improved cardiovascular and metabolic efficiency, increased blood flow during physical activity, which lowers blood pressure and increases insulin sensitivity (Nystoriak & Bhatnagar, 2018). Physical activity's role as a natural "medicine" that effectively prevents a number of chronic diseases.

Physical activity has also been linked to improved blood lipid profiles; Kelley et al. (2018) found that aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking or cycling, can increase HDL cholesterol and decrease LDL cholesterol, which is consistent with the results of this study, which showed that the active group had lower LDL cholesterol than the inactive group (Kelley et al., 2018). This supports the findings in this study, where the active group had lower LDL levels than the inactive group.

According to data gathered from 281 respondents, 71.53% agreed, and 23.13% strongly agreed that physical activity benefits physical health, with no respondents expressing disagreement or strongly disagreeing. Lack of physical activity has a substantial impact on an individual's physical health.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that regular physical activity can help prevent a variety of chronic diseases, including

obesity, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes. For example, Warburton and Bredin (2017) found that people who regularly exercise have a 30% lower risk of cardiovascular disease than those who are less active (Warburton & Bredin, 2017). Pedersen and Saltin (2015) found that physical activity has an anti-inflammatory effect that helps to strengthen the immune system (Pedersen & Saltin, 2015).

In interviews with multiple participants, one participant reported that after six months of regular exercise, their immunity increased, and they were immune to the flu and other minor illnesses. Meanwhile, another participant reported that regular exercise increased their energy levels and improved the quality of their sleep.

According to research by Hong and Kim (2018), physically active people have better bone density and a lower risk of osteoporosis compared to those who are sedentary (Hong & Kim, 2018). This is also supported by an interview with a 45-year-old respondent who reported that physical activity has improved their body flexibility and reduced joint pain.

Additionally, a study by Blair et al. (2001) demonstrated that aerobic exercise, like walking or cycling, can improve insulin sensitivity, which is essential in preventing type 2 diabetes (Blair et al., 2001). One respondent with a family history of diabetes said in the interview that their blood sugar levels were better controlled without the need for additional medication after they began exercising regularly. Based on data from several research studies and respondent interviews, reducing physical activity is crucial for enhancing general physical health, including metabolic, musculoskeletal, and cardiovascular health.

b. Prevention of Physical Activity Has Positive Social Welfare Effects

Psychosocially speaking, physical activity is beneficial because it increases the production of endorphins, or happiness hormones, which help alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression (Hogan et al., 2015). Additionally, physical activity is frequently performed in social settings, like team sports or community events, which can enhance social bonds and a sense of belonging.

The study's findings also demonstrate that physical exercise aids in stress management. According to biopsychosocial theory, physical activity lowers the body's levels of the stress hormone cortisol (Hogan et al., 2015), which means that physically active people typically have more adaptive stress responses.

Apart from its beneficial effects on physical health, physical activity also significantly impacts social well-being. According to data gathered from 281 respondents, 73.31% agreed, and 22.42% strongly agreed that physical activity improved social welfare, with only 4.27% expressing hesitancy and no one refusing.

According to research by Inoue et al. (2024) participating in group sports or shared physical activities is associated with better social skills and lower levels of stress. One respondent said in an interview that working out with friends not only increases motivation but also fosters stronger social relationships (Inoue et al., 2024). A study by Rebar et al. (2017) found that people who participated in at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week experienced a significant improvement in emotional well-being (Rebar & Taylor, 2017). Additionally, physical activity is known to improve mental health and lower the risk of anxiety disorders and depression. One interviewee stated that they felt more confident and happier after beginning to exercise regularly, primarily because they felt more productive and energetic in their daily lives.

Participation in sports can also enhance social welfare. Bailey et al. (2023) found that people who participate in physical activity in their communities have higher levels of happiness and stronger social bonds (Bailey et al., 2013). One respondent said that after joining a local running club, they felt more connected to their environment.

A study by Holt-Lunstad et al. (2010) revealed that people who participated in team sports had higher levels of empathy and better leadership skills (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). Regular physical activity can also improve communication and cooperation skills. One respondent in the interview stated that they felt more at ease speaking in front of others after being active in the sports community.

Physical activity can significantly improve social well-being by increasing social interaction, reducing stress, and creating a tighter community. Numerous studies and respondent interviews indicate that physical activity prevention plays a significant role in improving social well-being.

c. Useful Implications

This discovery will significantly impact the design of public health programs. To promote physical activity, widespread educational campaigns and the provision of reasonably priced sports facilities are necessary. For instance, the government can fund the development of green open spaces and pedestrian pathways to encourage people to be more active.

Schools can play a significant role in forming these habits, and children who are accustomed to being physically active from an early age have a greater chance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle into adulthood (Troost et al., 2001). Therefore, it is also necessary to improve the integration of physical activity into the educational curriculum.

d. Research Limitations

Future research suggests using objective monitoring tools, like accelerometers, to measure physical activity. Although this study offers valuable insights, it has limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the conclusion of causality. Second, the

majority of the physical activity data was obtained through self-reports, which are subject to bias.

A multi-party, comprehensive strategy is required to optimize the advantages of physical activity-based prevention. The following ideas may be put into practice:

1. **Better Education:** Governments and educational establishments must include instruction on the value of physical exercise in school curriculum, including not just theory but also practical experience that engages students in a range of sports.
2. **Inexpensive Facilities:** The public and private sectors must collaborate to make sports facilities accessible and inexpensive for the general public, particularly in urban regions and low-income populations.
3. **Encouragement of Physical Activity in the Workplace:** Employers may motivate staff members to engage in more excellent physical activity by implementing workplace wellness initiatives, such as offering fitness centers or time for exercise during working hours.
4. **Use of Technology:** Fitness applications and physical activity monitors, which provide daily activity tracking, virtual prizes, and visual displays of progress statistics, may encourage people to maintain an active lifestyle.
5. **Community-Based Interventions:** Community-based strategies, such as starting neighborhood sports teams or implementing weekly healthy walking programs, may boost physical activity levels in the community while also fostering a feeling of community and social cohesion.
6. **Individualized Approach:** People may create a physical activity program that suits their requirements and circumstances by speaking with a healthcare expert, such as a fitness trainer or physiotherapist.

Conclusions

It is recommended that the promotion of active lifestyles be strengthened in public health policies, with the provision of easily accessible sports facilities and educational campaigns on the benefits of physical activity. Support from various parties, including educational institutions and communities, is very important to encourage people to be more physically active for better health and psychosocial well-being. Conclusion: Physical activity is an important element in the prevention of chronic diseases and the improvement of mental health. This study demonstrates that physical exercise is beneficial for both physical health and psychosocial well-being (in addition to physical health).

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Author Contribution

Conceptualization: Gatot Jariono; methodology: Nurhidayat Nurhidayat; investigation: Tsalis Ainur Rofiq; writing–original draft preparation: Romy Adistia Maharani Putri.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Data Availability

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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