

Statistical Analysis on Learning Inertia of Gender Differences Upon College English Study Emotion, Behavior and Sense of Achievement

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Abstract This descriptive study examined the phenomenon of learning inertia among College English (CE) students in Chinese universities. The questionnaire designed by Lian Yong was applied twice online via Wenjuanxing to four universities. The pilot survey sought to establish reliability and validity, while the actual data collection process in the post-test was conducted on 261 candidates. The data analysis was done using the Wenjuanxing platform. The result reveals gender differences are widened with different reflections towards study emotion, behavior and sense of achievement among College English learners in Chinese universities. Their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning inertia exists in CE learning and influences the result. It concludes that the male study emotion is easily affected in the examination-oriented atmosphere, and their study behavior turns out to be negative with a lower sense of achievement. More college students are involved in the dilemma of learning inertia which calls for the reform of CE teaching. At last, the limitations were proposed for further study.

Keywords: gender difference, learning inertia, study emotion, College English

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1. Introduction

1.1. Historical Development of English in China

English has been regarded as a major subject at school and as an important language deeply rooted in China's history and society since its national gate is forced to keep open in the nineteenth century. Historically speaking, modern education following the western educational system truly begins with some students who are given the opportunity to study overseas. Only those people from rich families or with social background can go outside to a foreign country to study science and technology by picking up learning a new foreign language.

Gradually, the study of foreign languages sprouts within the perimeter of Chinese territory from the top societal classes. From then on, more and more Chinese people willingly and actively study the foreign languages, which is an important way for modern Chinese people to see the world and develop new knowledge [1]. Among many foreign languages, English became more and more dominant inside of China, similar to the international lingual situation all over the world. Attaching more and more importance to English study, Chinese people learn to

speak and use it from Pidgin English to Standard British/American English at school, similar in the universities newly founded in China with many foreign teachers or some Chinese scholars who have the overseas study experiences [2,3,4]. Such English study has been maintained as a hot pursuit until the present age.

Contemporary speaking, English is set up as a main course, together with Mandarin Chinese, Mathematics, which are enlisted as the most important three main subjects cherished by all the parents, teachers and students and allotted with a larger share of attention and focus during the education years lasting from Kindergarten to college. College Entrance Examination, the most important examination to all the Chinese students determining their future fate and profession, contains the three main subjects, each given a full mark of 150, and the other minor subjects like physics, chemistry, biology geography, history, ideological politics, categorized into Art Synthesis Examination or Science Subjects Synthesis Examination, given a full mark of 300, positively responsive to the gradual improvement of reform measures of examination subjects and examination methods [5].

With Chinese reform-and-open-up being deepened and widened, all kinds of examinations and textbooks have been gone through Old College Entrance Examination to New College Entrance Examination [6]. Though there are

many changes and improvements to meet national requirement and social development, English position as a main subject has never been shaken, since China carries out the new development pattern of dual-circuit strategies separately named as the domestic circus and the international circus. Within Chinese territory, school education opens its gate to all the students without gender differences. All the boys and girls possess the legitimate right to learn science and technology, including learning the foreign languages based upon individual's determination and choice. At the same time, the extravert development policy leads to the promotion of English and other foreign languages, which is needed for the path of global governance, industrial internationalization [7].

1.2. English Study Pressure

Meanwhile all the Chinese have been concentrating upon learning English as a tool to communicate with the outer world, its study pressure simultaneously and automatically come into being among the policy makers and followers.

Government policymakers have to balance the relationship between indigenous languages and foreign languages during the reform-and-open-up process. It is well known that many nations and regions have adopted English as an official language, which squeezes the indigenous lingual survival space to become endangered or extinct languages during their attachment development [8]. As a sovereign country, China has been following the policy of independence and equality both at home and abroad. Chinese national language planning has followed the policy that all the coexisting languages/dialects are equal and free, and are protected by the Constitution and the law; Standard Chinese or Putonghua is carried out nation-wide; the indigenous language/dialects of the minorities (55 ethnicities) have their lingual autonomous areas [9,10,11].

Under the great changes unseen in this century, facing new tasks and challenges, its foreign policy concepts are also being inherited and developed towards open internationalization [12]. Therefore, Mandarin Chinese is regarded as the only official language all over China, both spoken together with the other indigenous minorities' languages and foreign languages including English. From some degree, the autonomous independence enhances Chinese language(s) to develop and maintain their lingual entity and ontology, which weakens the dominant position of English internationalization.

In all kinds of schools, due to special historic reasons, English has been developing into an internationalized language, which is studied by the Chinese people on the path of national development for the internationalized talent cultivation [13,14]. Then the urgent education questions, like what kind of high-quality talents is to educate and what courses are necessary, come into view for the education system from K-12 to higher education institutions. Chinese traditional education agencies are different from those in the west and begin to decline and decrease to give place to modern westernized schooling-system [15,16]. In the first leg of reform-and-open-up

development, the examination-oriented English teaching and learning used to be over-dominated, which means that students learn English by deadily reciting the textbook contents, particularly the grammars, to get a higher mark in the examinations.

This kind of English teaching leads to Dumb English, which means the students can recite the contents while they cannot speak English and communicate with others fluently [17]. With several higher education internationalization initiatives introduced, students have to learn English with a dual aim: to learn discipline content and to improve students' academic English proficiency [18]. The baton of College Entrance Examination and the different tiers of universities varying from Project 985 top universities, Project 211 universities in the past to Double-Tier universities at present have driven all the education stakeholders to the compulsory subjects, including English, one of the major ones.

More and more internationalization opportunities for an opener China are closely tied to greater internationalization of the curriculum in all the educational organizations [19]. Therefore, under the pressure of the fast pace of development of the world, all the schools, particularly all levels of colleges, are facing the urgent and crucial task to raise the qualified talents to meet the needs of Chinese modernization and internationalization with nonstop exploring efficient educational conceptions, abundant textbooks, and practical teaching methods. Though the universities have achieved considerable progress in pushing science and technology forwards, and in cultivating the talents to push the society forwards, they cannot still avoid the social criticism, so that they have to keep pace with the time and reform with active and powerful drive power to optimize education and constantly innovate [20].

Furthermore, Chinese parents have a common goal: the longing for their children to become a dragon or phoenix, which means hoping their children to have a brighter future. This education ideology belongs to higher expectation of education in Chinese families [21]. There was a period of time that China used to lack of materials and had to fight for everything to survive in hard time [22]. The farmers in the countryside tend to end the lifestyle of facing-yellow-dirt-fields-and-backing-the-sky, and educate their children to study hard to walk out to the cities to get rid of poverty, while the citizens in the cities face the problems of housing, medical treatment, income and pension [23]. As a result, all the parents have a shared feature: to push their children to study hard to upturn their original life statement, which leads to the strong utilitarian purpose spreading among the students with shortsightedness [24]. Even with more and more competitive pressure, there are "45-degree youth" [25] and "lie-flat generation youth" [26], which all indicate that students' study at school comes at the bottleneck point of school education and family education based upon the incentivisation not only from favorable workload adjustment, career opportunities, and monetary rewards [27], but also from intrinsic value like academic rewards [28]. With expectations different from boys and girls, who are more cherished as a biased gender value in some families, this problem arouses more and more attention.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Study Emotion in College English Study

The contiguous and coherent recognition of emotion goes deeper into the micro mental domain together with physiology and psychology in a wider range of cross-disciplinary philosophic and scientific development. The desiderata of emotion draw special attention to affective science and experimental philosophy, which separately try to define its sound definition from multi-dimensional heterogeneities [29,30]. Emotion is internalized with propositions varying from fear, sadness, to happiness, gratitude to reply to what emotions are [31,32]. With the enlightenment on the nature and function of emotions' tradition, emotions are sub-branched into feeling, evaluation and motivation [33]. A specific emotion is correlated to the subject's feeling in spite of the obvious differentiation from the meanings of connotation and denotation. Additionally, there is a comparative gap between emotion and mood, the former being short-lived than the latter in an experience, in which emotions come from human's brain or body and cause changes of emotion components in sensory, perceptual, motor, and physiological outputs during a social communication [29].

When it comes to study experiences, study emotion is subcategorized as a salient concentration for fruitful achievements into strong motivation, special intention and rich components. Particularly in today's internationalized world, English is widely spreading all over the planet and treated as a tool to be utilized for communication, which leads to the result that it is spoken and learned as an international language. In many international social activities, its international status as an official language has driven the world to pick up learning it. So it is in China. English as a foreign language has been intrigued to learn for a long period of time, which lasts nearly two hundred years, in which positive emotions and negative ones move hand in hand among hundreds of millions of English learners. Positive emotions vary from learning pleasure, interest, to activeness, healthiness, while negative ones contain study anxiety, concerns, plus laziness and limited emotional intelligence [34]. Positive emotions run with vulnerability into daily studies confined only to the classrooms with difficulties confronted from time to time, which are gradually defeated and decline to negative ones [35].

Then, urban and rural English learning has been widened onto different paths of learning English since urban schools are well equipped with all the hardware and software needed in EFL teaching and learning while the rural schools are not given enough attention and investment, which fasten the appearance of students' boredom in the boring foreign language classroom with the oversimplified tasks, or with the dull PPT set-up/presentation situation and the overloaded homework-assigning situation [36]. Even though in the cities' schools and universities, there are many situations in which the teachers copy or directly use the PPT lectures, or design the PPT contents without refreshing ideas and innovative points, nor teacher-student interactive communication, which leads to the loss of students' English learning.

Even in some classroom, there appear the burnouts of

students with negative response to learning English for English as a second language is very different from the first/mother language in terms of cultural background, vocabulary structure and pronunciation, so that a considerable number of students cannot adapt to learn English well. Many closed-looped repeatedly-drilled examinations at schools and unsatisfactory English test results lead to the learners' helplessness and anxiety about learning English [37].

2.2. Study Behavior of EFL Learners

Study emotions have a close and direct relationship with study behavior which is an important part of the structure of human behaviors, running through the whole process of human society, and permeating every field of social life for improvement of people's quality and efficiency [38]. Study behaviors vary based upon the study emotion and run through all the procedure of learning [20]. When students are absorbed in learning knowledge with the clear intention to master it, their study emotions are so intensified with strong motivation, which leads to the changes or adjustment of study behavior. By contrast, they can subconsciously or unconsciously show out the negative study behavior with unwilling or reluctant reaction if they are forced to learn some courses. The learning process is essentially the interaction between learners, knowledge points and post-learning responses. If learners have a positive response towards knowledge points, they have a positive learning process to acquire the knowledge. Otherwise, they have a negative learning process in which they forget what they have studied. In order to integrate the learning process and study behaviors, it is necessary to capture a deep knowledge tracking model [39].

Study behaviors are various according to gender differences too. Boys and girls have different stimulations of hormone and progesterone [40]. Boys incline to have higher testosterone secretion, which is regarded as an anabolic steroid and the principal sex hormone in males [41]. Testosterone can improve the development of spatial motor perception in boys and the application of the right brain center. Boys have more testosterone than girls, which leads to a result that the brains of adolescent boys and girls are different. At this time, the girls' hormones estrogen and oxytocin are increasing language development in the left frontal lobe, while the boys' hormones are driving the male brain's physical experience of aggressive behavior, spatial-mechanical and muscle movement perception, and different speech act behaviors [42].

2.3. Sense of Achievement of EFL Learners

A sense of achievement is usually considered to be a psychological feeling of happiness or success generated by the balance between desire and reality when a person undertakes a thing. Concretely speaking, it is closely linked to the psychological feel of accomplishment produced by the good result after some action [43]. To EFL learners, sense of achievement is the subjective and internal psychological drive to reach study goals [44], which plays a positive role in College English teaching and learning with better study emotion and behavior.

With much pressure in English learning, teachers and students both encounter the situation of lower sense of achievement. Particularly under the examination-oriented teaching conception deeply rooted in Chinese stakeholders, English has to be forced to learn as a foreign and major language to pick up with the range of application confined to campus or paper work without relevance to practical life. Through the decades of educational reform, efforts have been committed without satisfactory progress in English achieved by thousands of millions of Chinese students though there is some remarkable progress in economic development. Some scholars have already aroused their interest in the positive function of sense of achievement to improve self-efficacy and stimulate English learning ability [45] and college satisfaction happiness and belongings [46].

Oppositely, the negative influence of lower sense of achievement is also noticed, like the phenomenon of English learning burnout in some application-oriented colleges [47] and English learning burnout with grades [48,49]. Therefore, sense of achievement makes a difference in EFL teaching and learning as a keystone of a powerful drive force for teachers and students.

3. Methodology

3.1. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire with an aim to comb study interest of EFL in Chinese universities is applied based upon College Students Study Burnout Questionnaire by Lian Rong. Since the original version of questionnaire is operated in China with Chinese, the newly-adopted one is revised with English-and-Chinese bilingual form, in which the first part is about the basic information of participants including age, gender, grade, major classification, and place of hometown; the second part is about study emotion with 8 issues; the third part is about study behavior with 6 issues, and the last part is about sense of achievement in learning College English.

3.2. Data Collection

After the questionnaire was completed fully, it was uploaded onto the flatform of Wenjuanxing, according to which the questionnaire has to be redesigned from its form and requirements. There were some details needed to be paid attention to, like the explanations of each part separately floating away from its contents; the differences between multi-choice of Part 1 and the rest parts; the special design and input of scale information, and so on. After the questionnaire was input, the platform produced a net site or a QR code, which played the identical function for the participants to open and fill the questionnaire. The participants were college students who were learning College English right the way, and were mainly from Xinyang Normal University, and some from Xinyang College, Hunan University of Arts and Science, Hunan Application Technology University which were familiar to the researchers.

The questionnaire survey was under operation for two phases. Phase One: there was the pretest of the

questionnaire for its reliability and validity; Phase Two: there was the post-test for further analysis. There were 121 participants available as the first feedback information from October 1, 2023 to November 1, 2023. The post-test lasted from November 8, 2023 to January 10, 2024.

3.3. The Questionnaire's Reliability and Validity

In order to prove the questionnaire proper to be applied in this research, its reliability and validity had to be carried out in the pilot survey. The analysis tool is SPSS 28.0 with the result presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. The questionnaire's reliability and validity

Reliability & Validity Analysis			
Sample Size	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	EMO
121	20	0.811	0.830

Table 1 demonstrates that there are 121 participants who took part in this survey and answered the questions/items meeting the requirements. The result of Cronbach's Alpha of all the scales is 0.811, which is bigger than 0.65, meaning that the questionnaire is suitable for the reliability testing. It also presents the validity 0.830, which is acceptable [50].

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Discussions

4.1.1. The Profiles of Participants

In total there were 261 participants who answered the questionnaire and uploaded the corresponding choices, in which there were 47 boys occupying the percentage of 18.01% and 214 girls with 81.99%.

The numbers of boy-college-students and girl-ones present that there is a gender difference of students in college: there are more girls than boys who get the opportunity to go to college, at least in the interviewed schools in this survey.

4.1.2. The Comparisons Between the Profiles of Gender and Study Emotion

The first profile of participants is Gender.

The males and the females toward "study methods/plan" reach the similar agreements: most of them, the males (36.17%) and the females (43.93%), have no clear recognition about their study methods/plans, while the fewest of them, the males (6.38%) and the females (1.87%), completely disagree to this item. What is the gap is that the males (23.40%) are quite higher than the females (8.88) in their own divisions.

About the uselessness of College-English study, the majority of them strongly disagree to it: the males 44.68% and the females up to 53.27%; even so, there are still a small number of students owning the positive idea: 6 boys and 23 girls in which 4 boys (8.51%) and 7 girls (3.27%) strongly agree to this item.

The degree of mastering their professional knowledge, about half of them, 25 (53.19%) boy students and 99

(46.26%), are not sure of this point. The obvious contrast of boys and girls is that more boy students: 4 (8.51%) boys are more than 2 (4.26%), think it's easy to master the professional knowledge, while more girls, 15 (7.01%) girls to 5 (2.34%), think it is hard to master it.

About incoming study exhaustion, 20 boy students (42.55%) and 81 girl-students think they have such problems. Additionally, there are 9 boys and 40 girls with stronger such a study emotion about exhaustion. On the contrast, 10 boys (21.28%) and 26 girls (12.15%) do not completely agree to such a point.

About hardship to keep a long passion, nearly the same number of participants agrees to the item: hard to keep a long passion, in which there are 22 (46.81%) males and 97 (45.33%) females. What are more obvious contrasts is that more girl students (39.26% larger than 23.4% in total) disagree to such a point, and more boys (17.02% larger than 2.8%) agree to it.

To calmly deal with the emotional problems, the majority of the participants agree to such an issue. On the contrast, there are 4 males (8.51%) and 30 females (14.02%) disagree to it. From each scale, more males than females lie sharply against each other at the both ends of this item: 6.38% vs 1.4%, and 29.79% vs 7.94%.

After a day's study, the majority of the participants feel exhaustive: 65.96% of the males and 68.23% of the females. On the other side, there are 16 males (34.04%) and 68 females (31.77%) holding that they disagree to the exhaustive emotion after a day's study. The rest of males and females are similarly parallel to each other about the agreement to such an issue. Particularly the details of their scales vary from one to the other: more females up to 43.46% holding the neutrality and fewer females lower to 4.21% compared to the identical scale of 12.77%.

About individual's full demonstration of College English study, near to the half of the participants of both genders basically agree to this item, the bigger gap lies in the two ends: 8.51% of the males totally disagree to it, 10.64% partially disagreeing, while 4.21% of the females totally disagree to it, 29.44% of the females partially disagreeing; 23.4% of the males totally agree to this item while 2.34% of the females agree.

From the mean scores, only the responses to Item 7, boys and girls have the identical number. About the other 7 items in Variable 1, male participants achieve higher scores than females. The comparative bigger mean differences come from Item 8, 5 and 6, which are 0.47, 0.43 and 0.38.

4.1.3. The Comparisons Between the Profiles of Gender and Behavior

The next is the relationship between Gender and Variable 2.

The result presents that about the tiredness of studying CE, 29.79% of the male participants and 30.37% of the females almost occupy the same amount of shares of all the participants who totally disagree to it. Additionally more girl students (up to 36.45% compared to 21.28% of the males) partially disagree to this issue. The rest (31.91% + 10.64% + 6.38% of the males and 27.1% + 4.67% + 1.4% of the females) agree to it varying from different degree. This column can present that half of the participants have the feel of study tiredness, which leads to their negative

study behavior in CE.

About study after class, 42.56% of the boy students and 54.67% of the girls completely or partially disagree to it; while the rest agree to it. What is obvious is that more males (12.77% compared to 2.8% of the females) completely agree to this issue. More boys than girls have the experience of studying CE after class.

About the capability of CE, more males (10.64% and 14.89%) than females (3.74% and 5.14%) completely disagree and agree to this issue, while more girls (50.93% compared to 31.91% of the males) hold the neutral position to such an issue. In total, 23.41% of the males and 25.70% of the females hold the negative opinion towards this issue, the rest of them hold the position opinion.

About napping while studying, nearly the same amount of participants strongly disagrees to it: 29.79% of the males and 28.97% of the females. In total, 55.32% of the males and 66.76% of the females disagree to it. The rest of the participants hold the positive ground. The number of participants have a nap during CE study is still alerting. Nearly half of the boy students once or occasionally have a nap in the study.

About the interest in a major, the majority of the participants are interested in their own major while some have no interest more or less (10.64% of the males and 21.50% of the females). There are more participants without interest of learning their major, particularly among the girl students occupying more shares.

About study patience, only 12.77% of the males and 17.76% of the female think that they have enough patience while the rest of them think they have no enough. This indicates that most of the college students lack the patience in their study of CE.

From the Mean scores, the biggest gender difference lies in Item 10, and Item 9 and 11 follow it. Their corresponding mean differences are 0.36, 0.33 and 0.27.

4.1.4. The Comparisons between the Profiles of Gender and Sense of Achievement

The last is the relationship between Gender and Sense of Achievement, which presents that about the graduation with the Bachelor's Degree, 20.28% of the males and 42.05% of the females completely or partially disagree to this issue. More males than the females (79.72% of the males compared to 57.95% of the females) think it's easy about this issue. A part of the participants think that it's not easy to gain the degree while most of them think it's easy to gain it.

To read the books for examinations, up to 55.32% of the boy students and 44.4% of the girls have experienced, while 44.68% of the males and 55.60% of the females do not have such a sense. There are still a number of students with the examination-oriented study goal so that their sense of achievement in study CE is based on the result of examinations.

About the issue one wants to study, but feels study is very boring, the numbers of participants who strongly disagree and agree separately are 23.4% and 6.38% of the males while 12.62% and 3.27% of the females. More boy college-students think study is boring than girls.

About Energetic study, more males with 8.51% than the females with only 0.93% strongly disagree to this issue. Up to 19.15% of the boy college students strongly agree to

it, compared with the girls with only 6.54%. More girls hold the neutral ground about energetic study, neither too strong nor too weak.

About study schedule, there are 42.56% of the males and 50% of the girls who disagree to this issue. The rest of them choose to agree to it more or less. Most of the participants can make up the study schedule while some of them have no study schedule, particularly the females.

Examinations always make me feel annoyed. The scales varying from Strongly Disagreement to Strongly Agree of the males are 12.77%, 12.77%, 38.3%, 21.28% and 14.89%, while the corresponding scales of the females are 7.94%, 31.31%, 41.58%, 13.55%, and 5.61%. The numbers of the two ends of the scales from the males are bigger than the females. The total shares of disagreement and agreement are 25.54% and 74.46% of the males while 39.25% and 60.75% of the females. Annoying examinations influence the students to develop the sense of achievement in CE study.

From the mean scores, the table presents that gender differences clearly demonstrate in Item 15, 20 and 18, with the separate numbers of 0.45, 0.35 and 0.29.

4.2. Implications

Through the discussions of collected data, there are some implications springing out:

1. The compared shares of boys and girls indicate that the majority of college students in the targeted universities are the female, which meets the social reality that more and more Chinese girls and women are willing to take part in the normal universities and become a teacher in the future, which indicates that the targeted universities are the integrated universities with all levels of students aiming for traditional academic teaching and transitional vocational training.

2. China is a country with a serious gap between cities and villages though the urbanization is in progress rapidly which means rural and urban areas have a big difference in the process of development, so that the students have different paths to pick up learning English with various investment and inputs, which inevitably leads to the students from different places have different outputs of learning English.

3. There are some students still holding the idea that to study CE is useless, so that the reform of CE teaching is urgent, including teaching contents, methods, theoretical and practical switching their study emotion. The teachers have up set up the right attitude of students during the CE teaching.

4. Some students think it is easy or too hard to master the professional knowledge, which easily influence their study emotion of learning College English, so that during their professional knowledge study, teachers need to teach it following the principle of gradual improvement: from the easy one to the difficult one, firstly cultivating their learning activeness and interest.

5. More than half of the participants have the feel of study exhaustion which means that the students have a

comparatively negative study emotion about College English.

5. Conclusions

Based on the statistics, the conclusions coming from the data analysis into beings:

1. Gender differences exist in study emotion during College English learning: male college students hold the positive attitude towards college study which makes study capacity gain a full demonstration, and they can calmly deal with emotion problems while studying.

2. Gender difference towards Study Behavior implies that more male college-students than females feel tired of studying College English and seldom study after class though they are capable of college courses.

3. More males than females agree to easiness of degree-gaining, energetic study and annoying examinations.

4. More males than females have a study emotion affected by the conception that it's useless to study knowledge, their exhaustion facing much study and it's hard to keep a long passion.

5. The important influential elements in males study behavior mainly lie in the bored feel of students and their naps in class and limited study after class. Study patience of males becomes more serious and urgent.

6. What influences the sense of achievement in studying College English lies in the idea of examination-orientation learning habit. More males than females choose to read books for examinations, and seldom arrange study schedule.

7. More and more college students are losing their interest and confidence in learning College English with more naps during class and without much energy for their sense of achievement is falling with the examination-oriented conception and believing the uselessness of knowledge

8. The present situations of teaching College English in the majors of Humanities and S&E meet their bottleneck which needs to be reformed urgently.

6. Limitations

From the survey, there are some limitations as follows:

1. The questionnaire was cast into four targeted universities, which are not enough to collect data from a wide range of areas;

2. There are only two participants from Batch-3 universities, which makes the data less convincing in such a batch of universities;

3. There are no participants from the third college year;

4. There is limited data collected from the major students of Arts (Music, Art, and PE, etc.) and Medicine.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary materials, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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