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	<p>RESEARCH ARTICLE </p>	
	<h1>The Role of Self-Care in Promoting Psychological and Physical Well-Being: A Multidimensional Perspective</h1>	
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<p>Abstract Self-care constitutes a fundamental approach for maintaining both psychological and physical health in modern life. It involves conscious engagement in behaviors that enhance well-being, resilience, and quality of life. This study aims to examine the concept of self-care from a multidimensional framework encompassing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. It also explores the relationship between self-care, mental health, psychological well-being, and quality of life at work. Through a comprehensive analytical review of relevant literature, the article highlights the role of institutions—healthcare, educational, and professional—in fostering sustainable self-care practices. The findings underscore that self-care is not a mere luxury but an essential determinant of human balance and adaptive functioning in the face of contemporary pressures. In contemporary life, individuals face dense and overlapping demands arising from academic pressures, occupational workloads, family responsibilities, accelerated digital rhythms, and continuous connectivity. These conditions often fragment rest and disrupt attention, making sustained well-being more difficult to maintain. Within this context, self-care has shifted from being perceived as a personal preference to being recognized as a practical requirement for preserving functional capacity, psychological stability, and physical health. This shift reflects the reality that unmanaged stress and inconsistent health behaviors can accumulate gradually, eventually presenting as exhaustion, emotional dysregulation, reduced performance, or longer-term health complications.</p>		
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1. Introduction

Self-care can be understood as a deliberate set of practices through which an individual maintains and restores balance across core domains: bodily health, psychological stability, emotional regulation, social connectedness, and personal meaning. It is not limited to occasional rest or leisure; rather, it represents a systematic orientation toward managing energy, time, and internal resources. In this sense, self-care functions as a self-management framework that supports daily functioning, increases tolerance to pressure, reduces depletion risk, and strengthens recovery after demanding experiences. It also has direct implications for performance, as sustainable productivity depends on structured recovery and effective coping strategies.

Despite its conceptual clarity, self-care is often underestimated or misapplied. Many individuals associate it with luxury or comfort rather than discipline and prevention, particularly within academic and professional cultures that reward overextension and normalize chronic fatigue. In other cases, self-care is reduced to superficial actions—such as brief relaxation—while deeper drivers of stress remain unaddressed, including weak boundary-setting, inconsistent sleep routines, limited emotional processing, and persistent cognitive overload.

This gap is not merely the result of individual preference; it is shaped by structural and contextual constraints. Time scarcity, financial pressure, high workload expectations, and limited access to supportive services can restrict individuals' ability to maintain consistent routines. Psychological variables such as low self-efficacy, perfectionism, guilt associated with rest, or an externalized sense of control can further undermine adherence, even when the value of self-care is acknowledged. Social contexts also matter: family relations, peer support, workplace climate, and cultural norms may either reinforce self-care or weaken it through stigma and unrealistic expectations.

An additional challenge lies in the multidimensional nature of self-care. When it is framed primarily as physical maintenance, psychological and emotional components may be neglected; when it is framed only as emotional relief, routines may become inconsistent and poorly structured. Effective self-care requires integration across domains, ensuring that physical behaviors, psychological strategies, emotional skills, and social patterns function together rather than in isolation. Moreover, self-care increasingly intersects with institutional environments: many stressors originate within systems such as workplaces and educational settings, where workload design, role clarity, recovery opportunities, and autonomy strongly influence well-being. Self-care should therefore be understood as both an individual practice and an outcome shaped by institutional conditions.

Accordingly, the central problem guiding this article is the gap between the recognized importance of self-care and the inconsistent or ineffective ways it is practiced in daily life. This gap contributes to vulnerability to stress-related outcomes, including burnout, reduced resilience, and diminished psychological well-being. The article therefore addresses the following research question:

How does self-care, as a multidimensional construct, contribute to psychological and physical well-being, and what institutional mechanisms can enhance its application?

2. The Concept of Self-Care

2.1 Definition of the Self and Self-Care

The concept of the self forms the foundation of self-care, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions that shape individual identity (Markus & Wurf, 1987). The self represents a structured system of perceptions through which individuals interpret their experiences and interact with others.

Building upon this, self-care is defined by the WHO (2021) as *“the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider.”* Similarly, Chambers et al. (2006) emphasize that self-care involves personal decisions aimed at maintaining physical and mental health through responsible behaviors such as nutrition, exercise, and hygiene.

Self-care is therefore a multifaceted and proactive process, involving responsibility for one's physical, psychological, emotional, and social domains to sustain optimal functioning and well-being (Santos, 2020).

2.2 Dimensions of Self-Care

Drawing on Chambers et al. (2006) and WHO (2021), self-care can be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct in which several interdependent domains operate together to sustain health, stability, and day-to-day functioning. This multidimensional view is important because self-care is not a single behavior or a short-term response to stress; rather, it is a structured pattern of practices that supports the individual's capacity to maintain balance, recover from demands, and function effectively across changing life conditions. When these dimensions are addressed collectively, self-care becomes more consistent and more protective, as progress in one area tends to reinforce improvement in others. Conversely, neglect in one dimension can weaken the overall system, creating vulnerabilities that may appear as fatigue, emotional instability, reduced concentration, or diminished resilience.

A. Physical Dimension

Involves engaging in exercise, maintaining healthy nutrition, ensuring adequate sleep, and avoiding harmful habits (Hagger et al., 2020). The physical dimension is commonly treated as the most visible form of self-care, yet its significance extends beyond bodily appearance or short-term energy. It represents the biological foundation upon which psychological stability, emotional regulation, and cognitive performance depend. Regular physical activity supports functional endurance, reduces bodily tension associated with stress, and contributes to more stable daily energy. Healthy nutrition supplies consistent physiological input that supports concentration and mood stability, while sleep is central to recovery, memory consolidation, and restoring mental bandwidth for problem-solving and decision-making. Avoiding harmful habits is not merely a preventive measure; it also reduces "background strain" on the body, which otherwise accumulates and lowers the threshold for burnout. In practical terms, physical self-care can be understood as maintaining a stable operating environment that enables other forms of self-care—such as emotional regulation or productive learning—to occur with less friction.

B. Psychological Dimension

Includes stress management, mindfulness, and emotional regulation strategies that support cognitive balance and positive affect (Neff & Germer, 2018). The psychological dimension concerns how individuals manage internal pressures, mental workload, and the interpretive frameworks through which they appraise daily events. Stress is not only determined by external demands, but also by how those demands are perceived, prioritized, and processed.

Psychological self-care therefore includes developing strategies to reduce excessive rumination, stabilize attention, and prevent cognitive overload. Mindfulness functions as a practical mechanism for interrupting automatic stress cycles by shifting attention from threat-oriented thinking to present-moment awareness. Emotional regulation strategies within this dimension strengthen the individual's ability to respond deliberately rather than react impulsively, especially under pressure. Importantly, psychological self-care also includes planning and structuring routines in ways that reduce decision fatigue, clarify priorities, and create predictable recovery intervals. Over time, these practices increase psychological flexibility, strengthen perceived control, and support more adaptive responses to unpredictable challenges.

C. Social Dimension

Refers to the development of supportive interpersonal relationships that reduce loneliness and enhance belonging. The social dimension highlights that well-being is not sustained purely through individual effort; it is also shaped by the quality of interpersonal environments. Supportive relationships provide emotional reassurance, practical assistance, and a sense of being understood—factors that can buffer the impact of stress and reduce the likelihood of psychological isolation.

Social self-care involves nurturing relationships that are stable, respectful, and mutually supportive, while also setting boundaries that protect the individual from chronically draining interactions. This dimension includes communication

skills, conflict management, and the intentional allocation of time for meaningful connection. It also involves the capacity to seek support appropriately—recognizing when challenges exceed personal coping resources and when sharing concerns with trusted people is necessary. When social self-care is present, individuals often show greater resilience, improved mood stability, and stronger motivation to maintain other self-care practices.

D. Spiritual Dimension

Concerns seeking inner peace and meaning through prayer, meditation, or ethical reflection (Koenig, 2012). The spiritual dimension addresses the individual's relationship with meaning, purpose, and inner stability. It is not limited to formal religious practice, although prayer may be an important component for many individuals. More broadly, it includes activities that strengthen inner calm, clarify values, and support a coherent sense of direction.

Ethical reflection, contemplation, and practices that cultivate gratitude or hope can reduce emotional fragmentation and strengthen endurance during difficult periods. This dimension is especially relevant under persistent stress, because meaning functions as a stabilizing factor that prevents daily demands from being experienced as purely burdensome or empty. Spiritual self-care can therefore increase psychological integration by aligning actions with values and reinforcing a sense of purpose that supports long-term consistency in health-related behaviors.

E. Emotional Dimension

Involves identifying, understanding, and expressing emotions in constructive ways (Gross, 2015). The emotional dimension focuses on how individuals relate to their feelings and how they manage emotional intensity without suppression, escalation, or avoidance. Emotional self-care begins with accurate emotional awareness—recognizing what is being felt and why—followed by constructive expression and regulation.

Constructive emotional expression does not mean uncontrolled emotional release; rather, it involves communicating emotions appropriately, selecting healthy coping outlets, and preventing unresolved feelings from accumulating into chronic distress. This dimension also includes self-compassion and the ability to tolerate discomfort without turning to harmful behaviors or self-criticism. When emotional self-care is strengthened, individuals are generally better able to maintain stable relationships, reduce impulsive reactions, and recover more quickly from setbacks. Over time, this domain supports a more secure internal environment, which improves the effectiveness of psychological and social self-care.

F. Intellectual Dimension

Relates to continuous learning and engaging in stimulating mental activities that maintain cognitive vitality (Santos, 2020). The intellectual dimension frames self-care as a process that also involves cognitive growth and mental renewal. Continuous learning, reading, skill development, and engagement with stimulating ideas protect against stagnation and maintain a sense of progress.

Intellectual self-care is not limited to academic achievement; it also includes building practical mental tools such as critical thinking, problem-solving strategies, and structured planning. These capacities increase competence and self-efficacy, which reduces stress responses when facing complex tasks. Intellectual engagement can also serve as a psychologically protective factor by reinforcing identity and long-term goals, particularly during periods of uncertainty. When the intellectual dimension is supported, individuals often experience greater confidence, clearer direction, and improved adaptability—traits that strengthen overall well-being.

Together, these dimensions form an integrated framework that sustains holistic health and adaptive functioning. This integration is essential because real-life functioning depends on the interaction among biological stability, mental processing, emotional regulation, social support, personal meaning, and cognitive growth. For example, inadequate sleep (physical) can impair attention and increase irritability (psychological and emotional), which can strain relationships (social) and reduce motivation for meaningful practices (spiritual) or learning (intellectual). Conversely, improvement in one domain can initiate positive spillover effects—such as better sleep improving concentration, which supports learning

and reduces stress, which then improves emotional stability and relationship quality. Therefore, a comprehensive self-care model prioritizes balance across these dimensions rather than treating self-care as a single technique or isolated routine.

2.3 Factors Influencing Self-Care

The adoption of self-care behaviors is influenced by both internal and external factors (Malhi et al., 2005). In practice, self-care does not emerge solely from awareness of its benefits; it is shaped by a dynamic interaction between personal dispositions and the surrounding context. Individuals may recognize the value of self-care yet still fail to practice it consistently due to constraints such as time scarcity, limited support, or psychological barriers. Conversely, even modest self-care practices can become stable habits when internal readiness aligns with supportive environments.

- **Internal factors** include personality traits, health status, motivation, and self-perception. Internal factors determine how an individual evaluates personal needs, responds to stress, and sustains habits over time. Personality traits such as conscientiousness may support routine formation, while perfectionism may undermine self-care by promoting excessive workload and guilt associated with rest. Health status also influences self-care feasibility and urgency; individuals with chronic conditions may adopt structured self-care more readily, yet they may also face fatigue that reduces consistency. Motivation is central because self-care requires repeated effort; individuals with stronger intrinsic motivation often maintain routines more effectively than those relying solely on external pressure. Self-perception influences whether self-care is viewed as deserved and legitimate, or as secondary to obligations. Low self-esteem may lead to neglect of personal needs, whereas stable self-worth often supports boundary-setting and sustained engagement in health-promoting behaviors.

- **External factors** encompass family environment, culture, socioeconomic status, and institutional support. External conditions can either enable or constrain self-care implementation. Family environment shapes early habits and normative beliefs about rest, health, and emotional expression. Cultural expectations may encourage endurance and self-sacrifice, potentially discouraging help-seeking or rest, while other cultural norms may normalize preventive health behaviors and balanced lifestyles. Socioeconomic status affects access to resources such as nutritious food, safe spaces for physical activity, healthcare services, and time flexibility. Institutional support—within schools, workplaces, and healthcare systems—can be decisive by providing wellness initiatives, psychological services, flexible scheduling, and health education that reduces barriers to consistent self-care.

Social feedback also plays a critical role, as positive reinforcement from significant others enhances self-esteem and adherence to self-care routines (Bandura, 1997). In particular, supportive feedback can strengthen perceived self-efficacy and normalize self-care behaviors. Conversely, criticism or minimization from others may lead to self-doubt, concealment of personal needs, and reduced adherence to routines, even when self-care is objectively necessary.

3. The Importance of Self-Care

3.1 Self-Care and Mental Health

Numerous empirical studies confirm that practicing self-care is strongly associated with reduced psychological distress and improved well-being. Importantly, this relationship is not limited to symptom reduction; self-care also contributes to long-term psychological functioning by strengthening resilience, improving mood stability, and enhancing the capacity for adaptive coping under recurring stressors.

- Relaxation techniques such as meditation and yoga significantly lower cortisol levels and anxiety (Pascoe, Thompson, & Sloan, 2017). Beyond immediate calming effects, these practices may improve emotional regulation over time by helping individuals detect stress signals earlier and respond more deliberately.

- Regular exercise enhances mood and resilience (Rebar et al., 2015). Physical activity often supports mental health through improved self-efficacy, increased behavioral activation, and a stronger sense of control over one's daily functioning.
- Adequate sleep improves emotional regulation and cognitive performance (Krause et al., 2017). Sleep quality affects attention, memory, impulse control, and tolerance for frustration—mechanisms that directly shape how individuals cope with pressure and interpersonal demands.

Hence, self-care constitutes a preventive mechanism against depression, burnout, and anxiety, reinforcing self-efficacy and adaptive coping (Maryam Al-Balushi & Saeed Al-Dhafri, 2019). It also supports early intervention by reducing the likelihood that stress accumulates into clinically significant distress.

3.2 Self-Care and Stress Management

Self-care practices are among the most effective tools for managing psychological stress, which is defined as the body's reaction to perceived threats or demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In this context, self-care strengthens both physiological regulation (reducing bodily arousal) and cognitive-emotional regulation (improving appraisal and response strategies). Rather than eliminating stress, effective self-care improves stress tolerance and reduces the intensity and duration of stress reactions.

Through activities such as mindfulness, breathing techniques, and regular physical activity, individuals can regulate physiological arousal and maintain mental equilibrium (Allsasmah & Al-Quran, 2017). These practices help reduce chronic hyperarousal, improve concentration, and prevent stress from generalizing across domains (e.g., from work into family life).

Moreover, emotional regulation and social connectedness enhance one's ability to cope with adversity. Establishing clear boundaries and prioritizing rest further prevents burnout, a condition prevalent in high-pressure professions (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In applied terms, boundary-setting functions as a workload management tool: it reduces role overload, protects recovery time, and limits sustained exposure to stressors that exceed coping capacity.

3.3 Self-Care and Quality of Work Life

The concept of quality of work life (QWL) refers to the degree to which employees are able to satisfy personal and professional needs within their work environment (Sirgy et al., 2001). QWL is not solely determined by salary or job security; it also includes perceived fairness, autonomy, workload manageability, psychological safety, and opportunities for growth. Self-care complements QWL by supporting internal resources that allow individuals to remain engaged, productive, and psychologically stable within workplace demands.

Studies show that organizations that encourage self-care initiatives—such as wellness programs, flexible schedules, and counseling—report higher productivity and lower absenteeism (Grawitch et al., 2006). Such initiatives reduce the “hidden costs” of chronic stress, including presenteeism, errors, interpersonal conflict, and turnover intention.

This demonstrates that self-care contributes directly to occupational health and institutional efficiency (Malhi et al., 2005). When employees maintain consistent self-care routines, they often demonstrate better emotional regulation, improved teamwork, and higher sustainable performance—outcomes that directly benefit organizational functioning.

3.4 Self-Care and Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is defined by Ryff (1989) as encompassing autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and positive relations with others. Self-care facilitates these dimensions by strengthening personal control, emotional stability, and life satisfaction (Masoudi, 2017). In this sense, self-care is not only a protective factor against distress; it is also a developmental mechanism that supports human flourishing.

Activities that promote self-reflection, gratitude, and meaning—such as journaling or spiritual engagement—are especially beneficial for sustaining long-term mental health (Fredrickson, 2001). These practices help individuals organize experiences into coherent narratives, reinforce purpose, and broaden the range of positive emotions that support resilience. Over time, consistent self-care contributes to a more stable sense of identity and an improved capacity to navigate challenges without significant loss of psychological equilibrium.

4. Methods and Institutional Support for Practicing Self-Care

4.1 Individual Strategies

Self-care becomes more effective when it is approached as a structured system rather than an occasional response to fatigue. Practicing self-care sustainably requires two complementary layers: (1) individual strategies that can be implemented consistently in daily life, and (2) institutional conditions that reduce barriers and normalize health-preserving behaviors. When both layers are present, self-care transitions from a personal intention into a stable routine with measurable outcomes in well-being, performance, and resilience.

4.1 Individual Strategies

According to Neff and Germer (2018), effective self-care strategies include:

- **Mindfulness and meditation, to heighten self-awareness:** Mindfulness-based practices strengthen the ability to notice early signals of stress (mental overload, irritability, tension) before they escalate into burnout. They also help individuals interrupt automatic reactions and shift toward more deliberate, adaptive responses. Over time, this supports clearer thinking under pressure, improved emotional regulation, and a more balanced relationship with daily demands.
- **Regular physical activity to balance neurochemical processes:** Physical activity serves as both a preventive and restorative intervention. It supports energy regulation, reduces physiological arousal associated with stress, and increases overall functional capacity. Importantly, consistency is more decisive than intensity: moderate, repeatable routines often produce better long-term adherence and less psychological resistance than extreme, short-lived programs.
- **Adequate sleep and balanced nutrition to optimize performance:** Sleep and nutrition are “high-leverage” behaviors because they influence almost every other dimension of functioning: attention, mood stability, decision-making, and impulse control. Sustainable self-care requires treating sleep as a non-negotiable recovery mechanism and nutrition as a continuous input supporting stable energy rather than fluctuating peaks and crashes.
- **Self-compassion, which reduces self-criticism and fosters resilience:** Self-compassion improves recovery after failure and reduces the psychological cost of perfectionism. It supports realistic goal-setting and protects motivation by preventing minor setbacks from turning into self-blame and avoidance. This is particularly relevant in academic and high-pressure settings where internal criticism can become a chronic stressor.
- **Digital moderation, limiting screen time to preserve attention and mental rest:** Digital moderation is increasingly central to self-care because excessive notifications, fragmented attention, and prolonged exposure to rapid content consumption can contribute to cognitive fatigue. Moderation supports deep focus, better sleep hygiene, and mental clarity. It also creates space for restorative activities that require sustained attention (reading, reflection, meaningful conversation).
- **Seeking professional help when psychological burdens exceed coping capacity:** A critical component of mature self-care is recognizing limits. When distress becomes persistent, functionally impairing, or resistant to self-directed strategies, professional support becomes a rational escalation step rather than a last resort. This includes

psychological counseling, clinical evaluation when necessary, and structured interventions aligned with the individual's needs.

These strategies form the foundation of sustainable personal well-being. In applied terms, they should be operationalized into a routine with specific triggers and schedules (e.g., fixed sleep window, planned recovery blocks, weekly social connection, planned digital boundaries), because self-care tends to fail when it remains dependent on fluctuating motivation.

4.2 Institutional Role in Promoting Self-Care

Institutions significantly influence individuals' capacity to practice self-care (Al-Waqadani, 2023). Self-care is often framed as an individual responsibility, yet institutional structures can either enable or undermine it. When institutions reduce constraints (time pressure, stigma, limited access), self-care becomes more feasible, consistent, and socially acceptable.

- **Healthcare institutions should integrate preventive and educational programs that emphasize stress reduction, physical activity, and balanced living:** Beyond treatment services, healthcare systems can strengthen self-care by offering health literacy programs, preventive screening, psychoeducation on stress and sleep, and practical guidance on lifestyle modification. Accessible counseling pathways, community workshops, and clear referral systems also reduce delay in care-seeking and improve early intervention.
- **Educational institutions can embed self-care concepts in curricula to help students develop lifelong coping skills:** Educational settings are critical because many self-care habits are formed during adolescence and early adulthood. Universities and schools can institutionalize self-care through student support services, psychological counseling, training in time management and emotional regulation, and policies that reduce harmful academic overload. Creating predictable breaks and supportive environments can normalize balanced achievement rather than chronic exhaustion.
- **Professional organizations must foster supportive environments through counseling, wellness initiatives, and work-life flexibility:** Workplaces can support self-care through explicit workload management, flexible scheduling where possible, protected breaks, and access to mental health support. Policies that encourage recovery (rather than reward overwork) reduce burnout risk and improve long-term productivity. In addition, leadership practices that model boundary-setting and encourage help-seeking can shift workplace culture toward sustainability.
- **Governmental agencies play a macro-level role in formulating policies that promote mental health literacy and public well-being:** Governments can strengthen self-care indirectly by improving access to healthcare, regulating occupational health standards, funding community mental health services, and supporting public campaigns on stress management, sleep hygiene, and preventive care. Policy-level interventions matter because they address structural determinants that individuals cannot solve alone (service access, affordability, availability).

Empirical evidence confirms that organizational support enhances employees' engagement and reduces psychological strain (Grawitch et al., 2006). In practice, institutional support functions as a "multiplier": it increases the likelihood that individuals will initiate self-care and sustain it over time by reducing friction and reinforcing healthy norms.

4.3 Self-Care in Medical Emergencies

Basic self-care knowledge during medical emergencies can mitigate damage and save lives. Emergency self-care is not a substitute for professional treatment; it is a time-sensitive set of immediate actions that stabilize a situation and reduce harm until specialized support arrives.

The American Red Cross (2022) emphasizes that first-aid awareness—such as bleeding control, CPR, or managing minor burns—forms an essential component of community health literacy. These competencies empower individuals to act swiftly while awaiting professional medical assistance. In addition, emergency self-care includes decision-making under pressure: recognizing danger signs, calling emergency services promptly, avoiding harmful interventions, and applying

basic safety measures (e.g., protecting the scene, preventing further injury). Strengthening emergency literacy at the community level can reduce preventable complications and improve outcomes in critical situations.

5. Conclusion

Self-care is a multidimensional construct that integrates physical, mental, emotional, and social practices aimed at achieving personal balance and resilience. The analysis demonstrates that self-care enhances mental health, mitigates stress, and improves overall quality of life and work productivity. It is therefore not a form of indulgence but an essential determinant of holistic well-being.

Institutional engagement—through education, workplace policies, and public health initiatives—remains a cornerstone for embedding self-care in modern culture. When self-care is supported structurally, individuals are more capable of practicing it consistently, and societies benefit through reduced burnout, improved public mental health, and stronger long-term productivity.

6. Recommendations

- _ Integration of self-care education into academic and health curricula to cultivate awareness from early stages.
- _ Development of institutional wellness programs that promote physical and psychological health.
- _ Encouragement of research exploring cultural and contextual determinants of self-care behaviors.
- _ Governmental support for community initiatives that enhance accessibility to mental health services.
- _ Promotion of digital hygiene and balanced technology use to prevent cognitive fatigue.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based on a comprehensive analytical review of previously published literature and does not involve human participants, personal data collection, clinical intervention, or experimental procedures. Therefore, ethical approval from an institutional review board was not required. All sources were used and cited in accordance with international standards of academic integrity, transparency, and responsible research practice. The study was conducted in compliance with accepted ethical principles for scholarly research and publication.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently, and the results were not influenced by any financial or institutional relationships.

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