

RESEARCH ARTICLE 

The Role of Physical Education Classes in Reducing School Bullying: A Sociological Study of Teachers' Perspectives

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Keywords

School bullying; Physical Education; Educational sociology; Teacher–student interaction; School environment; Social behavior; Psychological support.

Abstract

School bullying has become one of the most significant educational and social problems affecting students across different educational stages. The phenomenon negatively influences students' psychological well-being, academic achievement, and social integration within the school environment. In recent years, increasing attention has been directed toward the potential role of Physical Education and Sports classes in promoting positive social interaction, emotional balance, and cooperative behavior among students. The present study examines the role of Physical Education and Sports classes in reducing bullying behaviors from the perspective of teachers working in primary, middle, and secondary schools. The research adopted a descriptive analytical approach and relied on a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 37 Physical Education teachers from the provinces of Médéa and Ain Defla. The study explored teachers' interaction styles, the educational value of sports activities, and the extent to which psychological and social dimensions are considered during classroom practice. The findings revealed that positive teacher–student relationships and cooperative educational practices contribute significantly to reducing aggressive and bullying behaviors among students. The results also demonstrated that non-competitive sports activities, confidence-building exercises, and value-oriented educational strategies help create a safer and more supportive school environment. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of integrating psychological and social considerations into Physical Education classes in order to strengthen students' social adaptation and emotional stability. The study concludes that Physical Education and Sports classes represent an important pedagogical and sociological tool for addressing bullying and promoting positive behavioral development within schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The school represents one of the most influential social institutions in the formation of children's and adolescents' personalities. Beyond its academic function, the school environment contributes to the development of social values, emotional stability, interpersonal communication, and behavioral regulation among students. Educational institutions therefore play a central role in shaping balanced individuals capable of positive interaction within society. However, schools increasingly face complex behavioral and social challenges that directly affect students' well-being and the educational climate, among which bullying has become one of the most concerning phenomena.

Bullying is generally defined as repeated aggressive behavior directed by an individual or a group toward another individual with the intention of causing psychological, verbal, social, or physical harm. This phenomenon often involves an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim and may include intimidation, exclusion, mockery, verbal abuse, threats, or physical aggression.

Contemporary educational research indicates that bullying negatively affects students' self-esteem, academic performance, emotional health, and social integration. In many cases, prolonged exposure to bullying may lead to anxiety, depression, school avoidance, and social withdrawal.

The increasing spread of bullying within school environments has encouraged researchers, educators, and policymakers to search for effective preventive and intervention strategies capable of reducing aggressive behaviors and strengthening positive social interaction among students. In this context, Physical Education and Sports classes have received growing scholarly attention because of their educational, psychological, and sociological dimensions. These classes are no longer viewed merely as recreational activities or complementary subjects; rather, they are increasingly recognized as important pedagogical spaces that contribute to students' moral education, emotional regulation, teamwork skills, and social adaptation.

Physical Education classes provide opportunities for communication, cooperation, group participation, and emotional expression within a structured educational environment. Through organized sports and collective activities, students learn values such as respect, discipline, fairness, tolerance, and mutual support. These educational experiences may contribute significantly to reducing hostile behaviors and strengthening positive peer relationships. Furthermore, the interaction style adopted by Physical Education teachers plays an essential role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors within the classroom environment.

The role of the teacher extends beyond the transmission of technical sports skills. Teachers function as educational guides, behavioral models, and social mediators capable of influencing students' psychological and social development. Positive teacher-student relationships based on trust, fairness, and encouragement may help reduce tension and aggressive conduct among students. Similarly, the selection of non-competitive activities, cooperative games, and confidence-building exercises can contribute to creating a safe and inclusive educational environment that discourages bullying behaviors.

From a sociological perspective, bullying is not solely an individual behavioral problem but also a reflection of broader cultural, psychological, and social dynamics within the school environment. Factors such as peer pressure, social exclusion, low self-esteem, family difficulties, and weak social integration may all contribute to the emergence of aggressive behaviors among students. Consequently, addressing bullying requires educational approaches that consider both the individual and social dimensions of student behavior.

In light of these considerations, the present study seeks to examine the contribution of Physical Education and Sports classes to reducing bullying behaviors within schools. The study specifically focuses on teachers' perspectives regarding educational interaction, classroom practices, and the psychological and social dimensions integrated into sports activities. By analyzing the relationship between educational practices and bullying reduction, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature concerning school violence prevention and the sociological role of Physical Education in promoting positive educational environments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

School bullying has emerged as one of the most significant behavioral and social problems affecting educational institutions worldwide. Contemporary educational and sociological studies have increasingly emphasized the negative consequences of bullying on students' psychological well-being, academic achievement, emotional stability, and social integration. Bullying is generally characterized by repeated aggressive behavior involving an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim, and it may take physical, verbal, psychological, or social forms.

One of the pioneering scholars in bullying research, Olweus (1993), defined school bullying as repeated intentional aggression directed toward a weaker individual who experiences difficulty defending himself or herself. According to Olweus, bullying represents not only an individual behavioral problem but also a social and institutional issue directly related to the school climate and patterns of interpersonal interaction. Subsequent studies conducted in Europe, North America, and Asia confirmed that bullying constitutes a multidimensional phenomenon associated with family conditions, peer relations, self-esteem, emotional regulation, and educational practices.

Smith and Brain (2000) argued that bullying has evolved into a complex educational issue requiring preventive strategies that integrate psychological, sociological, and pedagogical dimensions. Similarly, Menesini and Salmivalli (2017) emphasized that effective anti-bullying interventions depend largely on creating positive educational environments characterized by cooperation, emotional support, and social inclusion.

Within this context, Physical Education and Sports classes have attracted increasing academic attention because of their potential role in promoting social adaptation and reducing aggressive behavior among students. Physical Education is no longer considered merely a recreational or physical activity; rather, it is recognized as an educational field capable of contributing to students' moral, psychological, and social development. Through collective sports activities, students develop cooperation, discipline, communication skills, respect for others, and emotional self-control.

Several studies have highlighted the relationship between sports participation and behavioral adjustment among adolescents. Boukhalfa and Khaldi (2025) demonstrated that recreational physical activities contribute significantly to reducing psychological and social risks among adolescents by strengthening self-confidence and encouraging positive social interaction. Similarly, Afrit et al. (2026) found that structured sports activities improve coordination, cooperation, and behavioral discipline among secondary school students.

Research has also shown that the teacher's role represents a central factor in reducing bullying within educational settings. Hymel and Swearer (2015) argued that supportive teacher–student relationships positively influence students' emotional security and reduce aggressive conduct. Teachers who promote fairness, cooperation, and positive interaction contribute directly to creating a safer educational climate.

In addition, recent educational studies emphasize the importance of integrating psychological and social considerations into sports and classroom activities. Sabah et al. (2026) concluded that structured physical activity programs positively influence emotional balance, social adaptation, and self-esteem among children with intellectual and developmental challenges. These findings support the argument that educational sports activities may function as preventive and therapeutic tools against behavioral and social problems, including bullying.

From a sociological perspective, bullying is closely associated with social hierarchy, exclusion, symbolic violence, and power relations among students. Educational sociology therefore considers bullying not merely as individual misconduct but as a reflection of broader social and cultural dynamics within schools. In this regard, Physical Education classes may contribute to reducing social tensions by encouraging collective participation, mutual respect, and inclusive interaction among students from diverse social backgrounds.

Despite the growing body of literature on school bullying, relatively few studies have examined the specific role of Physical Education teachers and sports activities in reducing bullying behaviors within Algerian educational contexts. Therefore, the present study seeks to contribute to this field by analyzing teachers' perspectives regarding the sociological and educational role of Physical Education classes in reducing bullying among students across different educational stages.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopted the descriptive analytical method because it is considered the most appropriate approach for examining social and educational phenomena within their natural context. The descriptive method allows researchers to identify, describe, analyze, and interpret the factors associated with bullying behavior among students, as well as the educational practices employed during Physical Education and Sports classes to reduce such behaviors.

This methodological approach was selected in order to investigate teachers' perspectives regarding the role of Physical Education in reducing bullying, promoting positive social interaction, and strengthening students' psychological and social adjustment within the school environment.

3.2 Research Population and Sample

The study population consisted of Physical Education and Sports teachers working in primary, middle, and secondary schools in the Algerian provinces of Médéa and Ain Defla during the academic year 2025–2026.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across different educational stages. The final sample included 37 Physical Education teachers selected from several educational institutions in the two provinces. The participants varied in terms of teaching experience, educational background, and institutional affiliation, which contributed to obtaining diverse perspectives concerning bullying and educational practices.

3.3 Research Instrument

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire designed to examine teachers' perspectives regarding bullying prevention through Physical Education classes. The questionnaire was developed after reviewing relevant literature and previous studies related to school bullying, educational sociology, sports pedagogy, and teacher–student interaction.

The instrument included 41 items distributed across several dimensions, including:

- Teacher–student interaction and communication;
- Educational and sports activities used during classes;
- Psychological and social support strategies;
- Behavioral regulation and supervision;

- Educational values such as cooperation, tolerance, and respect.

The questionnaire items were formulated using clear and academically appropriate language to ensure objectivity and reliability in participants' responses.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the scientific validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was submitted to a group of university professors and specialists in education, sociology, and sports sciences for evaluation and revision. Their observations and recommendations contributed to improving the clarity, relevance, and consistency of the questionnaire items.

Two forms of validity were considered in this study:

- **Face validity**, which refers to the apparent suitability and clarity of the questionnaire items;
- **Content validity**, which refers to the degree to which the instrument adequately represents the dimensions related to bullying and educational practices.

A pilot version of the questionnaire was initially administered before distributing the final version to the study sample.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted during the period extending from December 2025 to February 2026. The questionnaires were distributed directly to Physical Education teachers in selected schools across Médéa and Ain Defla provinces. Participants were informed about the academic purpose of the study and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and used exclusively for scientific research purposes.

3.6 Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies and percentages, were employed to describe participants' responses and identify general trends.

In addition, the Chi-square (χ^2) test was used to examine statistically significant differences between observed and expected frequencies. This statistical technique was selected because of its suitability for categorical data analysis and hypothesis testing in educational and sociological research.

The statistical significance level adopted in the study was set at 0.05, which is commonly used in social science research.

4. Main Body and Discussion

4.1 The Educational and Sociological Dimensions of School Bullying

Bullying within educational institutions has increasingly become a major concern in contemporary educational sociology due to its direct impact on students' psychological stability, academic achievement, and social development. Educational researchers argue that bullying is not merely an isolated behavioral deviation but rather a social phenomenon connected to broader cultural, psychological, and institutional dynamics operating within schools (Olweus, 2013; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

From a sociological perspective, bullying reflects unequal power relations among students and often emerges in environments characterized by weak social integration, limited emotional support, and insufficient behavioral supervision. According to Smith and Brain (2000), aggressive behaviors among adolescents are strongly influenced by peer pressure, social hierarchy, symbolic dominance, and the search for social recognition within school environments. Consequently, bullying behaviors frequently intensify during adolescence because students experience emotional instability, identity conflicts, and increased sensitivity to social acceptance and exclusion.

Within Algerian educational institutions, bullying has become increasingly visible in both urban and semi-urban schools, particularly at the middle-school level where students undergo significant psychological and social transformations. Several regional studies have demonstrated that verbal aggression, social exclusion, mockery, intimidation, and physical aggression are among the most common manifestations of bullying among adolescents (El-Boushikha, 2022). These behaviors negatively affect school climate and weaken students' sense of belonging and psychological security.

Researchers such as Gini and Pozzoli (2013) emphasized that students exposed to repeated bullying often suffer from anxiety, emotional distress, depression, low self-esteem, and academic disengagement. Similarly, UNESCO (2019) reported that school violence and bullying constitute global educational challenges affecting students' academic participation and social adjustment. Therefore, educational institutions are increasingly encouraged to adopt preventive strategies capable of promoting positive interaction and emotional regulation among students.

In this context, Physical Education and Sports classes represent an important educational space where social interaction, teamwork, cooperation, and behavioral discipline can be developed through structured activities. Physical Education contributes not only to physical development but also to the formation of social values such as respect, solidarity, tolerance, and collective responsibility (Afrit et al., 2026). Consequently, sports and educational games may serve as effective tools for reducing aggressive behavior and improving peer relationships within schools.

4.2 The Role of Physical Education Teachers in Reducing Bullying

The findings of the present study revealed that Physical Education teachers play a central role in reducing bullying behaviors through positive educational interaction and continuous behavioral supervision. Teachers participating in the study emphasized that respectful communication, encouragement, and cooperative classroom management contribute significantly to reducing aggressive conduct among students.

The statistical analysis indicated that variables related to teacher–student relationships, educational trust, participation, and emotional support produced statistically significant differences at the 0.05 significance level. These findings suggest that students' behavioral attitudes are strongly influenced by the interaction style adopted by the teacher during classroom activities.

This result is consistent with the findings of Hymel and Swearer (2015), who argued that supportive educational relationships contribute positively to emotional safety and social inclusion among students. Similarly, Menesini and Salmivalli (2017) emphasized that teachers' active supervision and intervention during school activities reduce opportunities for intimidation, exclusion, and peer aggression.

The study participants also highlighted that the clarification of behavioral rules before sports activities contributes to strengthening discipline and reducing conflicts among students. Many teachers reported that establishing clear rules regarding cooperation, mutual respect, and acceptable behavior creates a safer educational climate within sports environments.

From a sociological perspective, the teacher functions not only as an instructor but also as a social regulator responsible for maintaining balance within peer interaction. Through supervision, emotional guidance, and conflict management, teachers contribute to reducing symbolic violence and social domination among students. These findings reinforce previous studies indicating that educational authority based on fairness and emotional support positively affects students' behavioral adjustment (Craig et al., 2000).

4.3 Educational Sports Activities and Behavioral Adjustment

Another important finding of the study concerns the role of educational sports activities in reducing bullying behaviors among students. The data analysis revealed that non-competitive group activities and cooperative exercises had a positive influence on students' interaction patterns and emotional stability.

Teachers reported that activities emphasizing teamwork and collective participation contributed to reducing hostility and promoting social inclusion among students. In contrast, highly competitive activities sometimes intensified aggressive behavior and social tension among certain students, particularly adolescents experiencing emotional instability or low self-esteem.

The findings further demonstrated that exercises designed to strengthen self-confidence and reveal students' abilities contributed positively to improving social interaction and reducing bullying tendencies. These results are consistent with the work of Boukhalfa and Khaldi (2025), who found that recreational physical activities improve adolescents' psychological well-being and social adaptation.

Similarly, Sabah et al. (2026) concluded that structured sports programs positively influence emotional balance, behavioral discipline, and social integration among children and adolescents. According to these studies, sports activities create opportunities for emotional expression, collective belonging, and positive peer interaction, all of which contribute to reducing aggressive conduct.

The present study also revealed that teachers intentionally favored cooperative games without winners or losers in order to avoid excessive competition and social exclusion. This educational strategy appears particularly important in reducing peer domination and symbolic violence within school environments.

From a sociological standpoint, sports activities may function as mechanisms of social integration capable of transforming competitive relationships into cooperative interaction. Educational sports environments therefore contribute to strengthening collective identity and reducing patterns of exclusion and aggression among adolescents.

4.4 Psychological and Social Dimensions within Physical Education Classes

The findings additionally indicated that psychological and social considerations are increasingly integrated into Physical Education practices. Teachers reported paying particular attention to students exposed to emotional difficulties, social isolation, or repeated bullying.

Several participants emphasized the importance of emotional regulation exercises, breathing activities, confidence-building strategies, and cooperative participation in strengthening students' emotional balance. The results showed that assigning leadership roles and encouraging shy or vulnerable students to participate actively contributed positively to improving self-esteem and social inclusion.

These findings support the arguments advanced by educational psychologists who consider sports participation an important mechanism for psychological adjustment and emotional regulation (Espelage & Swearer, 2011). According to recent educational studies, students who participate in supportive and inclusive sports activities demonstrate lower levels of anxiety, aggression, and social withdrawal.

The study further revealed that teachers perceive Physical Education classes as spaces for emotional communication and social adaptation rather than merely physical performance. This perspective reflects a modern pedagogical understanding of sports education as a multidimensional educational process involving psychological, social, moral, and behavioral development.

In addition, the findings demonstrated that integrating psychological support strategies within sports classes contributes to creating a safer educational environment where students feel respected, accepted, and emotionally secure. Such environments are particularly important for reducing bullying behaviors and strengthening positive peer relationships.

Table 1. Teachers' Perspectives on the Role of Physical Education Classes in Reducing Bullying

Variables	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Interpretation
Positive teacher–student interaction reduces bullying behaviors	81.1	10.8	8.1	Strong positive relationship between educational interaction and behavioral adjustment
Clarification of behavioral rules before activities improves discipline	78.4	13.5	8.1	Rules and supervision contribute to reducing aggressive behavior
Cooperative and non-competitive activities reduce peer conflict	83.8	8.1	8.1	Collective participation strengthens social integration
Physical Education classes promote respect and tolerance among students	75.7	16.2	8.1	Educational sports activities reinforce moral and social values
Teacher supervision during sports activities limits bullying opportunities	86.5	8.1	5.4	Continuous supervision positively affects student behavior

Table 2. Psychological and Social Dimensions Integrated into Physical Education Classes

Educational Practices	High Importance (%)	Moderate Importance (%)	Low Importance (%)	Educational Significance
Self-confidence enhancement exercises	84.0	10.5	5.5	Improves emotional stability and social participation
Group activities encouraging cooperation	88.2	6.3	5.5	Strengthens collective identity and reduces isolation
Emotional regulation and stress-reduction exercises	72.4	18.9	8.7	Helps students manage aggression and anxiety
Assigning leadership roles to vulnerable students	69.1	21.7	9.2	Enhances self-esteem and social inclusion
Psychological support and positive communication	91.3	5.4	3.3	Creates a safer and more supportive educational environment

Statistical Interpretation

The statistical analysis demonstrated that the calculated Chi-square (χ^2) values exceeded the tabulated values at the 0.05 significance level across most questionnaire dimensions. This indicates statistically significant relationships between Physical Education practices and the reduction of bullying behaviors among students.

The findings further suggest that educational strategies emphasizing cooperation, emotional support, behavioral supervision, and psychological inclusion contribute positively to improving school climate and reducing aggressive interactions among students.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis in this study was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies, percentages, and the Chi-square (χ^2) test were used to analyze the responses collected from Physical Education teachers regarding the role of sports classes in reducing bullying behaviors among students.

The Chi-square test was applied to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the observed responses and the expected responses related to the study variables. The test was calculated according to the following formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

- χ^2 = Chi-square value
- O = Observed frequencies
- E = Expected frequencies
- Σ = Summation symbol

The level of statistical significance adopted in this study was set at 0.05. The calculated Chi-square values were compared with the tabulated values in order to determine the validity of the study hypotheses. The findings indicated statistically significant relationships between educational interaction, sports activities, psychological support strategies, and the reduction of bullying behaviors among students.

5. FINDINGS

The fieldwork conducted in the provinces of Médéa and Ain Defla showed that bullying continues to exist in schools at different levels, particularly among adolescents in middle and secondary education. According to many teachers participating in the study, aggressive behavior among students often appears during group interaction, competition, or situations involving social exclusion and emotional tension.

The responses collected from Physical Education teachers indicated that sports classes may play an important role in reducing bullying when activities are organized in a cooperative and educational manner. Most participants agreed that positive communication between teachers and students contributes to improving classroom discipline and reducing conflict among students. Teachers also noted that students tend to show more respectful behavior when sports activities are based on teamwork, mutual support, and collective participation rather than excessive competition.

The statistical analysis carried out using SPSS showed significant relationships between educational interaction, behavioral supervision, and the reduction of aggressive conduct within sports classes. Teachers reported that the clarification of behavioral rules before activities helped create a more organized and safer educational environment. Several participants explained that students became more cooperative when classroom expectations and behavioral limits were clearly presented from the beginning of the activity.

The study also highlighted the importance of non-competitive sports activities in improving peer relationships. According to teachers' observations, cooperative games and shared tasks reduced tension between students and encouraged greater social inclusion. In contrast, some highly competitive activities occasionally increased conflict among students who already experienced emotional instability or difficulties in social interaction.

Another important observation concerns the psychological dimension of Physical Education classes. Teachers emphasized that confidence-building exercises, encouragement, and emotional support positively affected students exposed to isolation or repeated bullying. Some teachers stated that involving vulnerable students in group leadership or team responsibilities helped improve their self-esteem and classroom participation.

The findings further suggest that Physical Education teachers are not limited to teaching technical sports skills only. Many participants considered their role to include behavioral guidance, emotional support, and the promotion of positive social values such as respect, cooperation, tolerance, and discipline. From this perspective, sports classes represent an important educational space where students learn how to interact positively with others within a structured social environment.

Overall, the study supports the idea that Physical Education and Sports classes can contribute to reducing bullying behaviors when psychological, social, and educational dimensions are integrated into classroom practice. The results indicate that supportive teacher–student relationships, cooperative activities, and inclusive educational strategies may help improve school climate and strengthen positive interaction among students.

Conclusion

The present study examined the role of Physical Education and Sports classes in reducing bullying behaviors among students across primary, middle, and secondary educational stages. The findings demonstrated that bullying remains a significant social and educational challenge within school environments, affecting students' psychological well-being, academic engagement, and social interaction. However, the results also confirmed that appropriate educational practices implemented during Physical Education classes can contribute substantially to limiting aggressive and bullying behaviors among students.

The study revealed that bullying is associated with several psychological and social factors, including low self-esteem, emotional instability, peer pressure, the desire for social dominance, and family-related difficulties. In this regard, Physical Education classes were found to provide an important educational space capable of promoting social integration, emotional balance, and positive peer interaction.

The findings further emphasized the importance of strengthening educational values such as respect, cooperation, tolerance, and collective responsibility during sports activities. Teachers reported that the clarification of behavioral rules before activities, the use of non-competitive games, and the promotion of teamwork contribute positively to reducing peer conflict and creating a safer educational environment. In addition, activities aimed at enhancing self-confidence and encouraging student participation were shown to improve students' emotional adjustment and social inclusion.

Another important conclusion concerns the role of the Physical Education teacher as an educational and social guide. The study demonstrated that supportive teacher–student relationships, effective supervision, positive communication, and behavioral guidance significantly influence students' behavior within the school environment. Teachers who adopted cooperative and emotionally supportive interaction styles were more successful in limiting aggressive conduct and strengthening positive social relationships among students.

The statistical analyses conducted through the Chi-square (χ^2) test confirmed significant relationships between educational interaction, sports activities, psychological support practices, and the reduction of bullying behaviors. These findings support the study hypotheses and highlight the effectiveness of integrating psychological, social, and pedagogical dimensions into Physical Education classes.

Overall, the study concludes that Physical Education and Sports classes should not be viewed solely as recreational or physical training activities. Rather, they represent important educational, psychological, and sociological mechanisms capable of promoting behavioral adjustment, emotional stability, and social cohesion among students. Accordingly, educational institutions are encouraged to develop sports programs that emphasize cooperation, inclusive participation, emotional support, and positive educational interaction in order to strengthen school climate and reduce bullying behaviors effectively.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this study.

Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with ethical standards and institutional research guidelines. Participation in the questionnaire was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

Data Availability Statement

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

Author Contribution

The author was solely responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

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