



LANGUAGE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

ISSN: [3026-7196](https://doi.org/10.70211/ltsm.v2i2.98)

Impact of English Language Coaching Classes in Pakistan: Bridging Educational Gaps and Socioeconomic Challenges

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To cite this article. Z. H. Sain, H. Geng, and Y. Song, “Impact of English Language Coaching Classes in Pakistan : Bridging Educational Gaps and Socioeconomic Challenges,” *Lang. Technol. Soc. Media*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 116–127, 2024.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70211/ltsm.v2i2.98>

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Received: 17 August 2024

Revised: 25 October 2024

Accepted: 2 November 2024

Online: 3 November 2024

Abstract

The education system in Pakistan faces challenges in effectively teaching English as a second language, prompting students to seek external support through coaching classes. This study explores the impact and implications of coaching classes on English language learning, examining their influence on academic performance and their emergence as a parallel education system. A mixed-method approach was adopted, utilizing surveys of 300 participants, in-depth interviews with 30 students, teachers, and parents, and classroom observations conducted in 10 schools and coaching centers. Quantitative analysis revealed that 75% of students attended coaching classes, with significant academic improvements in English performance noted for coached students compared to non-coached students ($p < 0.05$). Qualitative findings highlighted both the benefits and challenges: while coaching classes offer personalized attention and enhance exam preparation, they also impose a financial burden on families and reflect inadequacies in formal education. The study concludes that while coaching significantly enhances students' English skills, it underscores the need for improvements within schools to provide more comprehensive language education. Addressing gaps in formal education could reduce over-reliance on coaching classes, ensuring more equitable access to language learning opportunities.

Keywords: Language Education, Coaching Classes, Private Tutoring in Pakistan, English as a Second Language (ESL), Second Language Acquisition, Sociolinguistics

Publisher's Note:

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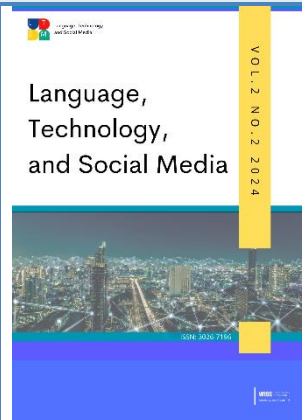


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INTRODUCTION

The education system in Pakistan largely retains a conventional structure, emphasizing high academic achievement through legacy approaches established during the colonial era. In many developing countries, including Pakistan, families turn to private tutoring to support their children's academic success, given that formal education often struggles to provide an adaptive learning experience. According to Rany Sam [1], the reliance on private tutoring continues to grow as families perceive this additional support as a solution to the limitations of the formal education system. While tutoring provides an alternative for students to master the material, its focus frequently leans more towards boosting test scores than fostering in-depth understanding. English, specifically, holds a crucial position as a second language (L2) in Pakistan, and English proficiency is deemed essential for students' academic and professional prospects [2], [3], [4]. However, previous findings revealed that, despite English being a core subject in Pakistani schools, instructional methods are predominantly theoretical, focusing on grammar rather than practical communication skills. Consequently, many students seek additional tutoring to reinforce their English language abilities. This indicates that formal education does not fully equip students with functional language competency, fueling the rise of tutoring as a means to fill this gap.

The study by Muhammad Mooneeb Ali et al. [5] found that English tutoring has rapidly expanded in Pakistan's urban centers, attracting students from various socioeconomic backgrounds seeking to improve their language skills. Nevertheless, this study also found that, while tutoring may improve academic scores, it often relies on test-focused exercises that do not foster holistic language acquisition. This concept is further supported by research that many English tutors tend to align their teaching methods with market demands, concentrating on score improvement rather than cultivating sustainable, in-depth language skills [6], [7], [8]. Moreover, Farrukh Kamran et al. [9] offered a critique of Pakistan's tutoring culture, noting that many teachers take on tutoring roles not out of professional commitment but as an additional income source. This situation impacts the quality of teaching in formal institutions, where teachers may prioritize tutoring over school responsibilities, resulting in a limited and less meaningful classroom experience for students. This phenomenon suggests that, while tutoring offers academic support, an overreliance on this shadow education system may undermine the structure of formal education, particularly concerning student-teacher relationships and teaching quality.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive and distinct approach. This study aims to delve into how English tutoring impacts English language acquisition as a L2 in Pakistan, with a focus on cognitive and affective aspects such as communication skills, language confidence, and motivation. Through surveys and classroom observations, the study not only evaluates students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of English tutoring but also assesses its effectiveness in supporting holistic English language learning, rather than focusing solely on academic score improvements. The research questions guiding this study are as follows: What are students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of English tutoring in Pakistan? Does English tutoring genuinely support functional English language acquisition beyond mere test score improvement? What challenges are encountered in the tutoring process, and what strategic solutions can be applied to address these issues?

While previous studies have primarily centered on test score improvements or the financial impact of tutoring on families, this study also explores the challenges faced within the tutoring process and provides recommendations for formal educational institutions to integrate a more

adaptive and effective tutoring approach that aligns with 21st-century skills. The study aims to offer a more comprehensive perspective on how the shadow education system can constructively contribute to in-depth language skill development in formal education, and it provides a basis for policymakers to improve the quality of English language learning in Pakistan.

By employing a holistic approach that focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of tutoring in supporting functional English language acquisition, this research contributes significantly to educational discourse in Pakistan. The findings of this study have the potential to inform the formulation of integrative strategies that enhance formal education by systematically leveraging the strengths of tutoring to foster practical communication skills, collaboration, and high competitiveness among students in the 21st century.

METHODS

Research Design

This study attempts to analyze the role of coaching classes in English language learning in Pakistan using a mixed method. It assesses the extent of integration between formal education and coaching classes as well as the effect of each of the two on the proficiency of language and performance of students in academics. For data collection purposes, a cross-sectional survey design accompanied by classroom observations was employed. A sample of 300 participants students, teachers, and parents involved or not involved in coaching classes is surveyed to gather quantitative data on the prevalence, perceived benefits, and challenges of English language coaching. Additionally, qualitative data is obtained through in-depth interviews and classroom observations in both coaching and formal school settings.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling method was employed to achieve a holistic representation of relevant aspects of Pakistan's education system. The study included a sample of 200 Students, 50 Teachers, and 50 Parents. This included students from the secondary and higher secondary categories (grades 9-12) attending English preparation classes as well as a control group of similar students, not taking such preparation courses for comparison. The sample size was chosen to reflect a balanced representation of urban, semi-urban, and rural areas within Lahore City, ensuring that the findings were applicable across different socio-economic sectors of the region. Parents from various parts of Lahore were included to enable breadth of analysis. The study aimed to ensure data saturation during qualitative data collection by conducting interviews until no new themes emerged, enhancing the reliability of the results. Such diverse orientation did not lead to specific findings limited to one region and enabled them to be established in the context of different socio-cultural and economic sectors of Pakistan.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Regarding the first research objective, surveys are designed with closed-ended questions to gather information on the goals and strategies behind English coaching classes in Pakistan. These questions aim to quantify participation, the objectives of the coaching centers, and the perceived need for coaching in the context of L2 acquisition. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with coaching center administrators, teachers, and parents to explore their understanding of the coaching initiatives and the perceived reasons for their necessity. Interviewees were selected based on their

involvement in the English language education system in Lahore and their availability to provide in-depth insights into the challenges and benefits of coaching classes. Classroom observations in 10 coaching centers focus on identifying the alignment between stated objectives and actual instructional practices. Quantitative data from the surveys is analyzed using statistical methods to generate frequencies and percentages, providing an overview of the objectives of coaching classes. Interviews and classroom observations are thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns in coaching initiatives and teaching approaches. This combination provides a deeper understanding of the aims of English coaching in Pakistan.

Concerning the second research objective, surveys include Likert-scale questions to measure the perceived effectiveness of coaching classes in improving students' English proficiency. Classroom observations are conducted in both coaching centers and formal school settings to compare instructional methods, student engagement, and language comprehension. Additionally, interviews with students and teachers provide insights into how coaching classes complement formal schooling in language learning. Statistical analysis (T-Test and ANOVA) was employed to compare English language proficiency between students who attend coaching classes and those who rely solely on formal schooling. Thematic analysis of interview responses and observation notes reveals key factors influencing language acquisition through coaching, such as teaching methodologies, student motivation, and engagement.

As for the third research objective, interviews with students, teachers, and parents focus on identifying challenges faced in coaching classes, such as cost, time management, and alignment with formal education. Classroom observations assess whether these challenges impact the quality of learning and student outcomes. The survey includes questions related to the perceived challenges of coaching classes and their effect on language learning progress. Thematic analysis of interview data identifies recurring challenges and potential improvements in the coaching system. Quantitative data is analyzed to measure the prevalence of these issues and their perceived impact on language learning. The results will provide actionable insights into how coaching classes can be enhanced to better support L2 acquisition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 contains an overview of the demographics of the participants with respect to gender, education level, and involvement in coaching classes.

Table 1. Demographics of Survey Respondents

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	120	60%
Female	80	40%
Educational Level		
Secondary (Grade 9-10)	100	50%
Higher Secondary (Grade 11-12)	100	50%
Attending Coaching		
Yes	150	75%
No	50	25%
Type of Coaching		
One-on-One	40	26.7%
Group Coaching	110	73.3%

The result included 60% of male respondents and 40% female respondents. The sample was evenly distributed across educational levels, with 50% of the participants in secondary school (grades 9-10) and the remaining 50% in higher secondary school (grades 11-12). Notably, 75% of the students were attending coaching classes, while 25% were not. Among those attending coaching, the majority (73.3%) participated in group coaching, while 26.7% received one-on-one tutoring. The high percentage of students attending coaching classes reflects the increasing reliance on supplemental education in Pakistan, a trend also noted in research on the “shadow education system” [10], [11], [12], [13], [14]. The overwhelming of students in need of academic assistance outside the classrooms is clearly due to any inadequacies within the structural system of education whereby there are too many students and not enough lesson hours allocated for each of them. Therefore, it is evident that students seek and do extra coaching which increases their performance level and chances of passing competitive assessments of high importance. The predominance of group coaching over one-on-one tutoring highlights the affordability and accessibility of group sessions, which are essential for families with limited financial resources. This pattern is consistent with research findings, which pointed to the widespread nature of group coaching in countries where formal education is underfunded [11], [15], [16], [17]. Figure 1 compares the participation of students in coaching classes at two educational levels: secondary and higher secondary.



Figure 1. Participation in Coaching Classes at the Educational Level

The data reveals that a significantly higher number of higher secondary students (over 80) attend coaching classes compared to secondary students (approximately 60). On the other hand, the number of students not attending coaching classes is much lower at both levels, with fewer than 10 higher secondary students opting out of coaching. The sharp increase in coaching attendance at the higher secondary level can be linked to the growing academic pressure as students prepare for board exams and college entrance exams, a phenomenon in relation to heightened stakes in secondary education. Students at this level may seek coaching as an essential complement to formal schooling, which often fails to provide adequate preparation for exams that have a significant impact on their academic and professional futures.

Table 2. T-Test Results for English Language Performance

Group	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Students in Coaching	78.5	8.9		
Students not in Coaching	68.2	10.2	5.12	0.001*

The results of the T-test presented in [Table 2](#) demonstrate a statistically significant difference in English language performance between students who attend coaching classes and those who do not, with a t-value of 5.12 and a p-value of 0.001 (significant at $p < 0.05$). The mean score for students attending coaching is 78.5, compared to 68.2 for those not attending coaching. This substantial difference suggests that coaching has a positive impact on students' English language performance. These findings align with several studies that highlight the advantages of private tutoring, particularly in developing countries like India and Pakistan. Choudhury et al. [18] and Khalida Parveen et al. [19] argue that private tutoring addresses the gaps created by underfunded and overcrowded public education systems. In these contexts, students attending coaching classes often benefit from individualized attention and targeted exam preparation, as reflected in their higher performance. This is consistent with the concept of the “shadow education system” where private tutoring supplements formal schooling, particularly when schools fail to adequately prepare students for high-stakes exams. Several previous studies have shown that private tutoring improves academic outcomes by offering additional resources and targeted strategies, leading to higher English scores [20], [21], [22]. Coaching clearly gives students a competitive edge in achieving academic success, especially where English proficiency is critical.

Table 3. ANOVA Results for English Language Performance by Type of Coaching

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	850.4	2	425.2	8.25	0.004*
Within Groups	6090.8	147	41.43		
Total	6941.2	149			

The ANOVA results in [Table 3](#) show a significant difference in English language performance based on the type of coaching, with an F-ratio of 8.25 and a p-value of 0.004 (significant at $p < 0.05$). This indicates that the type of coaching (e.g., one-on-one vs. group) has a statistically significant effect on students' English performance. The between-groups sum of squares (850.4) suggests that a substantial portion of the variance in scores is attributed to the differences between coaching types, further highlighting the importance of individualized or small-group instruction. The significant difference in English language performance based on the type of coaching, as shown by the ANOVA results, can be attributed to several factors. One-on-one coaching typically allows for personalized attention, enabling instructors to tailor their teaching methods to each student's needs, which may lead to better performance. Some studies suggest that such an individualized approach helps address specific weaknesses and encourages active engagement [23], [24], [25], [26], [27], which is difficult to achieve in larger group settings. Additionally, smaller groups often allow for more focused interactions, providing opportunities for in-depth discussions, feedback, and reinforcement of learning, which boosts language acquisition. Another reason may lie in the ability of one-on-one or small-group instruction to minimize

distractions and create a structured learning environment. In larger groups, students may not receive the same level of attention, and instructors may struggle to cater to diverse learning needs.

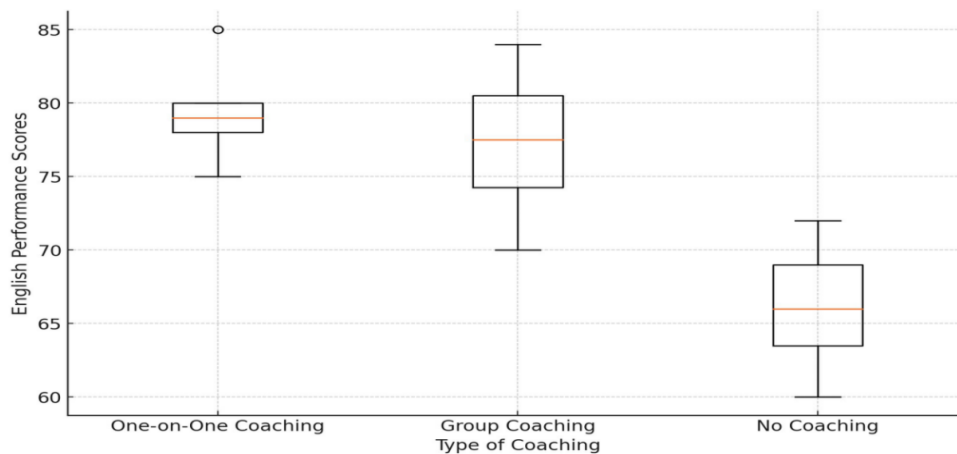


Figure 2. English Performance by Type of Coaching

This box plot shows the distribution of English performance scores among students based on the type of coaching they receive: one-on-one coaching, group coaching, and no coaching. One-on-one coaching results in the highest and most consistent scores, as indicated by the relatively tight range and higher median. This suggests that personalized attention in one-on-one sessions allows students to improve their performance more effectively. Group coaching, while still beneficial, shows a wider range of scores and a slightly lower median compared to one-on-one coaching, suggesting variability in how students benefit from this format. This could be due to less individualized attention in group settings. Students with no coaching exhibit the lowest median scores and the widest spread, indicating less predictable and overall lower performance. This suggests that students without supplemental coaching might struggle to keep up, possibly due to the limitations of formal education alone. The comparison highlights that both forms of coaching, particularly one-on-one, offer substantial benefits in improving English performance.

Qualitative Data Analysis

This section explores the themes derived from interview transcripts and classroom observations, which were coded to identify patterns related to the impact of coaching classes.

Table 4. Key Themes from Qualitative Data Analysis

Themes	Descriptions	Supporting Quotes
Motivations for Coaching	Students seek coaching for better exam preparation and individual attention.	“I can ask questions freely in coaching; it’s not like school.”
Perceived Benefits	Enhanced English performance and personalized support for language development.	“My coaching class helps me understand grammar better than in school.”
Challenges in Coaching	Lack of regulation, inconsistency in quality, and financial burden on families.	“Coaching is expensive, and not everyone can afford it.”
Implications on Formal Education	Coaching may lead to disengagement in formal school lessons, focusing on	“I only pay attention in coaching because that’s where

exam scores rather than holistic learning.	I actually learn to solve exam questions.”
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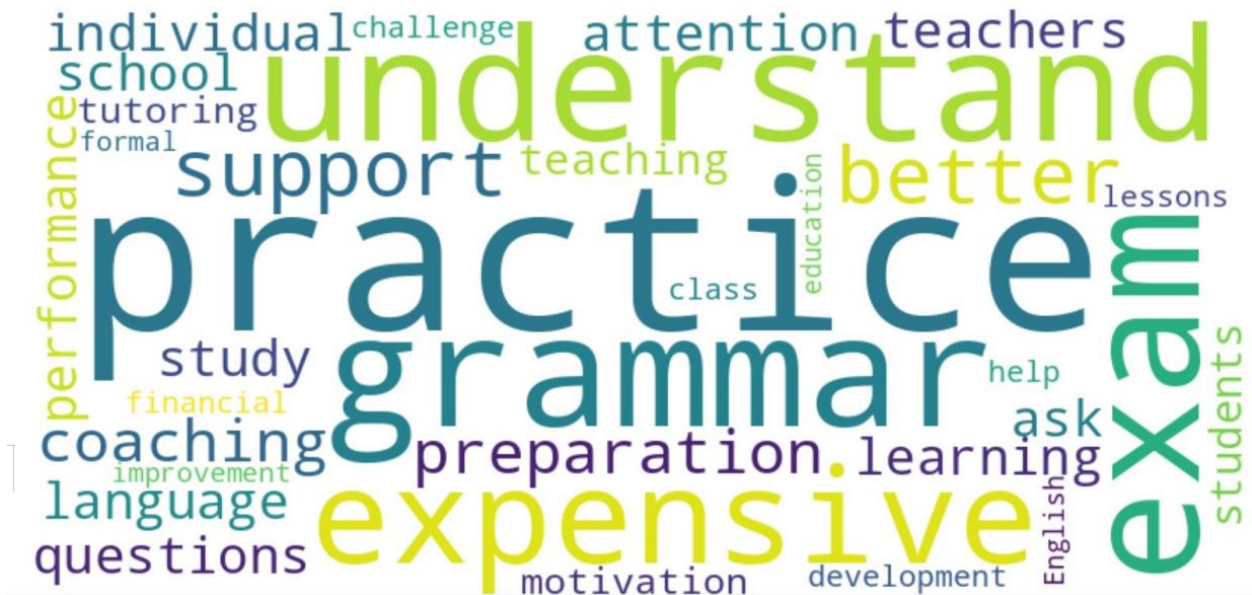


Figure 3. Word Cloud of Themes from Interviews

The word cloud produced from the interview transcripts and classroom observations shows many important themes arising out of students’ participation in coaching classes. These themes connect with the core insights presented in Table 4 which underline the motivations, the perceived value, the associated negative issues, and the coaching effects on formal education systems.

Motivation for Coaching: The highest index words like ‘practice’ or ‘understand’ or ‘exam’ directly speak to the students (Relatively high reply rate) why they visit coaching classes the most. Often students go to coaching classes to do better in examinations as well as to increase their understanding, especially in areas like grammar and exam techniques that might be neglected in the mainstream education system. As indicated in the interviews, students appreciate the opportunity to ask questions freely and receive individual attention, contrasting with the more constrained and often crowded environments in schools.

Perceived Benefits: Coaching is perceived as beneficial, with students frequently mentioning “support”, “individual”, and “better”. Many students feel that coaching provides personalized attention that improves their understanding of English, particularly in areas like grammar and exam strategies. The word “better” suggests that students feel they achieve higher performance through coaching than they do in formal classroom settings, as noted by one student who found coaching more effective in understanding complex grammar topics.

Coaching Challenges: The term “expensive” reflects an important obstacle raised by students and families: coaching comes with a financial burden. Although coaching seems to provide positive educational outcomes, due to its price, not everyone can benefit from it. This situation is made even worse by the absence of any regulation and irregularity in the training standards. The discrimination regarding who gets what in this case, who can afford what creates, as often expressed in the interviews, a striking yet unfair advantage for some students to gain privileges that others cannot afford.

Implications on Formal Education: It is one of the most alarming issues, the risk of withdrawal from the formal school system due to extensive over-dependence on coaching. Such words as “school” and “attention” show this tendency, as some students indicated that they only pay attention in certain classes, coaching classes, where they perceive learning as taking place. Hence, coaching may further belittle students’ willingness to attend school lessons that may not concern examination preparation but rather guide the process of learning. Such changes especially how this emphasis is placed on coaching rather than formal education in the performance of examinations raise concerns about a possible deficiency in all-rounded judging of the students in the far future. We are taught by the result that, although coaching is an important tool that allows students to prepare for the exams, they find it too expensive for many families and in the process diminish the value of education. These aspects need to be reviewed to ensure fairer and healthier educational outcomes [28], [29], [30], [31].

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of coaching classes in enhancing English language acquisition in Pakistan, revealing how these classes help bridge the gaps in the formal education system. The findings indicate that students who attend coaching classes demonstrate substantial improvements in English proficiency, underlining the importance of supplemental education in addressing deficiencies in traditional schooling. However, this dependency on external tutoring exposes critical weaknesses in the formal education system, such as overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching time, and a lack of emphasis on practical language skills. This study contributes to the educational discourse by providing a comprehensive analysis of the impact of coaching on language learning, extending beyond just academic score improvements. It offers valuable insights into the financial burden that coaching imposes on families, highlighting the growing socioeconomic divide it exacerbates. Furthermore, the research demonstrates that while coaching provides personalized instruction, its focus on rote learning and test preparation limits students' ability to develop functional language skills. To reduce the over-reliance on private tutoring and foster more equitable access to language learning, policymakers must address the shortcomings of the formal education system. Recommendations include improving teacher training programs, revising curricula to integrate communicative language teaching, and reducing class sizes to allow for more personalized attention. Strengthening formal education would not only lessen the need for expensive tutoring but also ensure that all students, regardless of their financial background, can access quality English language education. This would promote a more holistic, skill-oriented approach to language learning, which is essential for preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century.

LIMITATIONS

This study, while providing significant insights into the impact of coaching classes on English language acquisition in Pakistan, has some limitations. Firstly, the research is limited to a sample drawn from Lahore, which may not fully represent the diversity of educational practices and challenges across other regions of Pakistan. As such, the findings may not be generalizable to rural areas or regions with differing socio-economic conditions. Additionally, the study relies on self-reported data from students, parents, and teachers, which may introduce bias in perceptions of the

effectiveness and challenges of coaching classes. Furthermore, the scope of the study is limited to the evaluation of English language coaching, without exploring the broader impact of other subjects or the overall educational system. Future research could expand on these findings by including a more diverse geographic sample, incorporating objective performance measures, and investigating other areas of academic coaching.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Z.H.S. was responsible for conceptualizing the study, designing the research methodology, and collecting the data. H.G. contributed to data description, result reporting, and writing the discussion and conclusion sections. Y.S. assisted in the introduction, literature review, result validation, and manuscript formatting. All authors collaborated on the interpretation of the results and the final revision of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors used DeepL and Grammarly during the preparation of this work to improve grammar. After utilizing the tools, the authors thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as necessary and assumed full responsibility for the publication's content.

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