Dataset of Vietnamese students' academic perfectionism and school alienation

Thanh-Thao Thi Phan a, Linh-Chi Nguyen b,∗, Ngoc-Quang Nguyen b,c, Yen-Chi Nguyen b

a Thanh Do University, Hanoi 100000, Viet Nam
b EdLab Asia Educational Research and Development Centre, Hanoi 100000, Viet Nam
c Utrecht University, Utrecht 3584 CS, the Netherlands

A B S T R A C T

Across the steadily superseding world, the younger generation is coming under pressure for an increase in the standard and a highly growing demand on their life themselves. This could lead to a variety of problems, including academic perfectionism and school alienation. To gain more insights into these phenomena, we conducted two research projects on students from eight upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam using online surveys, and obtained two datasets. Dataset A covers (i) the level of students’ perfectionism; (ii) belief in school meritocracy; (iii) the competitiveness among students; and (iv) the intrinsic motivation to achieve. Dataset B contains students’ self-reports about (i) their perceptions of parents’ and teachers’ academic conditional regard; (ii) academic contingent self-worth; and (iii) school alienation. The numbers of respondents of dataset A and dataset B are 2942 and 2970, respectively.

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∗ Corresponding author.
E-mail address: linhchi@edlabasia.org (L.-C. Nguyen).

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Specifications Table

| Subject                        | Education, Psychology |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Specific subject area         | Education Management; Educational Psychology; Developmental Psychology |
| Type of data                  | Raw data in excel file, and analyzed data in tables |
| How data were acquired        | Data was gathered using an online survey generated in Google Form (a web-based survey platform) |
| Data format                   | Raw Analyzed |
| Parameters for data collection| The paper focuses on students' psychological issues, using self-report data from upper secondary school students (Grade 10–12) from southeast areas in Vietnam. |
| Description of data collection| Before the survey was delivered directly to random students, we introduced the purpose as well as the content of our survey to those schools' teachers. After that, teachers explained the consent form to students and supported students to fulfill the questionnaires. |
| Data source location          | Information is collected from upper secondary student schools in Ho Chi Minh City (Latitude 10°49'22.87"N, Longitude 106°37'46.74"E), Vietnam |
| Data accessibility            | Repository name: Mendeley Data |
|                               | Data identification number:  |
|                               | Direct URL to dataset A: https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/jf43t395zs/4, Mendeley Data, V4 |
|                               | Direct URL to dataset B: https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/jsbbfpvf6ip2, Mendeley Data, V2 |

Value of the Data

- Dataset A and B contribute to extending the data of academic perfectionism and to the knowledge of the prevalence and distribution of school alienation across demographic groups among Vietnamese upper secondary students.
- The datasets can help teachers, school administrators, and education researchers formulate comprehensive policies, which partly minimize the negative effect of perfectionism and school alienation.
- Dataset A can help to validate a new instrument to measure academic perfectionism. At the same time, psychometricians could exploit dataset B to construct psychological scales assessing school alienation, parents’ and teachers’ academic conditional regard, and academic contingent self-worth. With a view from a developing country, gathering with datasets acquired from other cultural contexts, these two datasets may help to expand our understanding of the cross-cultural divergences and convergences in terms of each variable and their associations.
- Dataset A provides an examination of the relationship between academic perfectionism and intrinsic motivation, students’ belief in school meritocracy, and students' perceptions of class competitiveness.
- Dataset A performs as a starting point to explore students' belief in school meritocracy, an essential concept regarding inequality justification. A better understanding of this topic will help teachers, school administrators, and policymakers to aware of students’ mindsets on inequality and tackle the problem.
- Researchers could analyze dataset B to investigate the relationships among school alienation, parents’ and teachers’ academic conditional regard, academic contingent self-worth, and GPA.

1. Data Description

Perfectionism is a topic that has received a lot of attention in the psychology field. It was first mentioned as a pathological trait, which obscures the therapy process, but later studied as a trait that can also appear in the non-clinical population. Many researchers also argue about the importance of studying perfectionism under a specific domain of life [1]. On the other hand, school alienation, namely negative attitudes towards schooling, is the most common reason for
dropping out of school among Vietnamese children and adolescents [2]. In addition, school alienation can be the culprit for changing everyday learning habit and leads to problematic social behaviors [3]. Researchers suggested that the negative interaction between students and their parents and teachers in the academic domain might be the antecedents of this psychological phenomenon. In academic settings, these two phenomena recently occurred significantly and should be more highlighted, especially in the era of learning sustainability [4]. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, we coded school names using capital letters from A to G (for seven schools in dataset A), and roman numbers (for eight schools in dataset B). The two reported datasets are a part of a project aim to explore the contemporary psychological issues in Vietnamese students.

Regarding dataset A (Students’ perfectionism), the survey comprised five main parts: (i) The students’ demographic information; (ii) The students’ perfectionism level in academic backgrounds; (iii) Students’ belief in school meritocracy; (iv) Students’ perception of classroom competitiveness and (v) Students’ intrinsic motivation in terms of achievement. The students’ demographic information was presented in Table 1. Table 2 described students’ frequency of participating in voluntary activities and students’ level of perfectionism. Students’ opinions on school meritocracy, competitiveness, and intrinsic motivation were displayed in Table 3.

Since the scales used are self-administered, we carried out a principal axis factoring with oblique rotation method to test whether the items reflected a shared structure. One factor was extracted for all of the scales. For the Academic Perfectionism scale, the factor loadings of items ranged from 0.566 to 0.844, with the cumulative explained variance was 50.008%. The Cronbach’s alphas of sub-scales were between 0.77 and 0.913, and the whole scale was 0.936.

The Belief in Meritocracy scale had the factor loadings of items ranged from 0.52 to 0.826, with the cumulative explained variance was 48.911%. After deleting the item Student_Try, which had factor loading lower than 0.3, the Perceived Classroom Competitiveness scale had four items with factor loadings varied from 0.571 to 0.655, and the cumulative explained variance was 38.235%. The factor loadings of the Intrinsic Learning Motivation scale’s items varied from 0.519 to 0.749 and the cumulative explained variance was 38.235%, 40.910%. The Cronbach’s alpha of each scale is 0.839, 0.708, and 0.837, respectively.

Table 1
Demographic of dataset A.

| Variables      | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| **School name** |           |             |
| A              | 397       | 13.5        |
| B              | 434       | 14.8        |
| C              | 399       | 13.6        |
| D              | 420       | 14.3        |
| E              | 485       | 16.5        |
| F              | 420       | 14.3        |
| G              | 387       | 13.2        |
| **Gender**     |           |             |
| Male           | 1561      | 53.1        |
| Female         | 1381      | 46.9        |
| **Year of Birth** |       |             |
| 2002           | 1093      | 37.2        |
| 2003           | 968       | 32.9        |
| 2004           | 881       | 29.9        |
| **GPA**        |           |             |
| 5.1 - 6.0      | 410       | 13.9        |
| 6.1 - 7.0      | 1032      | 35.1        |
| 7.1 - 8.0      | 993       | 33.8        |
| 8.1 - 9.0      | 507       | 17.2        |
Regarding dataset B (Students’ school alienation), a similar approach has been adopted with eight upper secondary schools in Ho Chi Minh City. This dataset consists of five main parts. The first one is the participants’ demographic characteristics (Table 4).

The second part (Table 5) refers to students’ perception of their parental academic conditional regard (, including parental academic conditional positive regard (PCPR) and parental academic conditional negative regard (PCNR). PCPR is a parenting practice in which a parent expresses
more affection and attention towards his or her children when they meet the parent’s academic expectations [5]. Meanwhile, a parent practicing PCNR withdraws their appreciation and care for his or her children when they fail in achieving an excellent academic result [5].

The third part of the dataset (Table 6) gives information about student’s perception of their teacher’s academic conditional regard, including teachers’ academic conditional positive regard
### Table 4
Demographic characteristics of dataset B.

| Variables                          | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| **Gender**                         | **2970**  | **100**     |
| Male                               | 1438      | 48.40       |
| Female                             | 1491      | 50.20       |
| Prefer not to reveal               | 41        | 1.40        |

| **School**                         | **2970**  | **100**     |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| I                                  | 535       | 18.00       |
| II                                 | 211       | 7.10        |
| III                                | 264       | 8.90        |
| IV                                 | 133       | 4.50        |
| V                                  | 561       | 18.90       |
| VI                                 | 194       | 6.50        |
| VII                                | 538       | 21.50       |
| VIII                               | 434       | 14.60       |

| **Grade**                          | **2970**  | **100**     |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Grade 10                           | 927       | 31.20       |
| Grade 11                           | 899       | 30.30       |
| Grade 12                           | 1144      | 38.50       |

| **GPA**                            | **2970**  | **100**     |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Under 3.5                          | 0         | 0.00        |
| From 3.5 to under 5.0              | 0         | 0.00        |
| From 5.0 to under 6.5              | 77        | 2.60        |
| From 6.5 to under 8.0              | 1791      | 60.30       |
| Above 8.0                          | 1102      | 37.10       |

| **Mother (or stepmother)’s education level** | **2970**  | **100**     |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Primary school                                | 0         | 0.00        |
| Secondary school                              | 0         | 0.00        |
| High school                                   | 1049      | 35.30       |
| Graduate                                      | 1337      | 45.00       |
| Postgraduate                                   | 584       | 19.70       |

| **Father (or stepfather)’s education level** | **2970**  | **100**     |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Primary school                                | 0         | 0.00        |
| Secondary school                              | 25        | 0.80        |
| High school                                    | 820       | 27.60       |
| Graduate                                       | 1728      | 58.20       |
| Postgraduate                                   | 397       | 13.40       |

| **Mother (or stepmother)’s occupation**       | **2970**  | **100**     |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Managers                                       | 178       | 6.00        |
| Professionals                                  | 287       | 9.70        |
| Technicians and associate professionals        | 306       | 10.30       |
| Clerical support workers                       | 808       | 27.20       |
| Service and sales workers                      | 538       | 18.10       |
| Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers | 225     | 7.60        |
| Craft and related trades workers               | 473       | 15.90       |
| Plant and machine operators, and assemblers    | 0         | 0.00        |
| Elementary occupations                         | 0         | 0.00        |
| Armed forces occupations                       | 155       | 5.20        |

| **Father (or stepfather)’s monthly average income** | **2970**  | **100**     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Under 5 million VND                                | 0         | 0.00        |
| From 5 to under 10 million VND                     | 155       | 5.20        |
| From 10 to under 15 million VND                    | 1370      | 46.10       |
| From 15 to under 20 million VND                    | 1308      | 44.00       |
| Above 20 million VND                               | 137       | 4.60        |

| **Father (or stepfather)’s occupation**          | **2970**  | **100**     |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Managers                                         | 204       | 6.90        |
| Professionals                                    | 217       | 7.30        |

(continued on next page)
Table 4 (continued)

| Variables                                                                 | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Technicians and associate professionals                                   | 572       | 19.30       |
| Clerical support workers                                                   | 607       | 20.40       |
| Service and sales workers                                                  | 0         | 0.00        |
| Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers                         | 425       | 14.30       |
| Craft and related trades workers                                           | 627       | 21.10       |
| Plant and machine operators, and assemblers                               | 40        | 1.30        |
| Elementary occupations                                                     | 0         | 0.00        |
| Armed forces occupations                                                   | 278       | 9.40        |

| Father (or stepfather)'s monthly average income                           | 2970      | 100         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Under 5 million VND                                                       | 0         | 0.00        |
| From 5 to under 10 million VND                                            | 316       | 10.60       |
| From 10 to under 15 million VND                                           | 560       | 18.90       |
| From 15 to under 20 million VND                                           | 1645      | 55.40       |
| Above 20 million VND                                                      | 449       | 15.10       |

Note: N = 2970.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics of students' reports on parents' academic conditional regard (N = 2970).

| Variables                                                                 | Range | Minimum | Maximum | Statistic | Std. Error | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|-----------|------------|----------------|----------|
| 14.1. I feel that when (or if) I study hard, my parents will appreciate me more | 2 3 5 | 4.11 .014 .754 .569 |
| 14.2. I feel that when (or if) I do well in my exam, my parents will accept me more | 2 3 5 | 4.01 .015 .798 .637 |
| 14.3. I feel that when (or if) I have a good academic achievement, my parents will care more or pay more attention to me | 2 3 5 | 3.91 .014 .784 .614 |
| 14.4. I feel that when (or if) I study well, my parents will love me more | 4 1 5 | 3.92 .016 .885 .784 |
| 14.5. I feel that when (or if) I have a good academic achievement, my parents will be more gentle and warm with me | 4 1 5 | 3.89 .018 .977 .956 |
| 15.1. I feel that when (or if) I do not study hard, my parents will appreciate me less | 4 1 5 | 3.97 .017 .948 .899 |
| 15.2. I feel that when (or if) I do not do well in my exam, my parents will accept me less | 4 1 5 | 3.99 .017 .931 .866 |
| 15.3. I feel that when (or if) I do not have a good academic achievement, my parents will care less or pay less attention to me | 4 1 5 | 4.02 .016 .866 .751 |
| 15.4. I feel that when (or if) I do not study well, my parents will love me less | 4 1 5 | 4.02 .018 .957 .917 |
| 15.5. I feel that when (or if) I do not have a good academic achievement, my parents will be less gentle and warm with me | 4 1 5 | 4.00 .018 .981 .963 |
(TCPR) and teachers’ academic conditional negative regard (TCNR) [6]. In the same way with parental academic conditional regard, these two concepts respectively describe situations in which a teacher’s provision and withdrawal of his or her respect and attention towards students contingently on what they accomplish at school.

Another part of this dataset (Table 7) addresses students’ academic contingent self-worth (CSW) which means the degree to which students’ positive and negative feelings towards their selves are dependent on their academic performance [7].

The last part of the dataset cover students’ self-reports about their attitude toward school, which implies the student’s school alienation (SAL).

The Cronbach’s alpha of the School Alienation scale, Parental Conditional Regard scale, Teacher Conditional Regard scale, and the Academic Contingent Self-worth are 0.407, 0.101, 0.171, 0.220, respectively. The same method which was used to test the validity of dataset A’s scales was performed. Nine factors were extracted with the School Alienation scale, but only one factor had its eigenvalue above 1. Therefore, the analysis was repeated with the number of factors constrained to one. Only six items had factor loadings higher than 0.3, specifically, ranged from 0.301 to 0.386. The one factor explained 4.388% of the variance.

The Parental Conditional Regard scales ended up with four factors, but only 4 items remained (as the rest had low factor loadings) with factor loadings varied between 0.319 and 0.383. 4 factors were extracted when examining the Teacher Conditional Regard scale; only 2 items had their factor loadings higher than 0.3, which were 0.301 and 0.321 in particular. For The Aca-

### Table 6

Descriptive statistics of students’ reports on teachers’ academic conditional regard ($N = 2970$).

| Variables | Range | Minimum | Maximum | Mean Statistic | Std. Error | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|-----------|-------|---------|---------|----------------|-------------|----------------|----------|
| 16.1. I feel that (or if) I study hard, my teachers will appreciate me more | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.05 | .016 | .850 | .723 |
| 16.2. I feel that (or if) I do well in my exam, my teachers will accept me more | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.08 | .017 | .915 | .837 |
| 16.3. I feel that (or if) I have a good academic achievement, my teachers will care more or pay more attention to me | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.18 | .016 | .849 | .721 |
| 16.4. I feel that (or if) I study well, my teachers will like me more | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.21 | .016 | .899 | .807 |
| 16.5. I feel that (or if) I have a good academic achievement, my teachers will be more friendly with me | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.32 | .016 | .852 | .726 |
| 17.1. I feel that (or if) I do not study hard, my teachers will appreciate me less | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.21 | .014 | .753 | .567 |
| 17.2. I feel that (or if) I do not do well in my exam, my teachers will accept me less | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1.46 | .011 | .596 | .355 |
| 17.3. I feel that (or if) I do not have a good academic achievement, my teachers will care less or pay less attention to me | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.22 | .014 | .778 | .605 |
| 17.4. I feel that (or if) I do not study well, my teacher will like me less | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.28 | .015 | .809 | .655 |
| 17.5. I feel that (or if) I do not have a good academic achievement, my teachers will be less friendly with me | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.16 | .015 | .829 | .687 |
Table 7
Descriptive statistics of students’ reports on self-worth academic conditional regard (N = 2970).

| Variables | Range | Minimum | Maximum | Mean Statistic | Std. Error | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|-----------|-------|---------|---------|----------------|-------------|----------------|----------|
| 18.1. I feel good about myself when (or if) I have a good academic achievement | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.12 | .016 | .896 | .803 |
| 18.2. I feel bad about myself when (or if) I do not have a good academic achievement | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4.60 | .011 | .588 | .346 |
| 18.3. My feelings toward myself are affected by my academic achievement | 4 | 1 | 5 | 4.30 | .015 | .813 | .662 |
| 18.4. I feel more valuable when (or if) I have a good academic achievement | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4.28 | .013 | .723 | .523 |
| 18.5. My sense of self-worth is reduced when my academic results are not good | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4.38 | .012 | .643 | .414 |

Academic Contingency Self-worth, two factors were extracted, but only two items had their factor loadings higher than 0.3, which were 0.421 and 0.356. However, for all of the three above scales, there were not any factors that had eigenvalue greater than 1.

2. Experimental Design, Materials and Methods

The researchers designed the surveys on Google Forms with questions commensurate with each dimension in the scale (except demographic questions). These questions followed the 5-point Likert scale (1: totally disagree; 2: somewhat disagree; 3: neither agree nor disagree; 4: somewhat agree; 5: totally agree). Because our respondents were upper secondary students, we had to get permission from their headmasters as well as teachers, and then teachers introduced and instructed their students to complete the questionnaire via online platforms such as mobile phones, computers or tablets. Three or four classes from each school were randomly selected to participate. Also, each student can decide not to take part in the survey or withdraw anytime if they do not want to continue. The data collection occurred in two months, from the 28th of February to the 30th of April 2020. For dataset A, we collected 2942 responses from seven high schools with the population size of more than 21,000 students. Similarly, 2970 responses were obtained from eight different high schools with the population size of more than 25,000 students for dataset B.

Regarding students’ perfectionism (Dataset A), we carried out adapting available scales to measure upper secondary student academic perfectionism [8,9], student’s belief in school meritocracy [10], student’s competitiveness [11] and student’s intrinsic motivation in terms of their achievement [12]. Although there are a few attempts on exploring perfectionism in the academic domain of student life, the instruments failed to reach a compromise. That is, this dataset introduced and described the specific domain for measuring student academic perfectionism (PERF_LEV). In the PERF_LEV factor, we examined student’s expectation of their own learning as well as their evaluation of others expectation of their academic performance, for example, “If I fail at school, I am a failure as a person” or “Other people think that I have failed if I do not do my very best at school all the time”.

Inspired by the work of Curran & Hill [13], we want to explore the relationship between student academic perfectionism and their meritocracy belief (MERIT), their perceived classroom competitiveness (COMPET) and their intrinsic learning motivation (INTRINS). In the MERIT factor, we examine their opinions on aspects such as student learning chance, grade or reward at school, whether or not these aspects are determined completely by hard work and ability.
The COMPET factor measures the degree to which students view their classmates as competitive rivals. The INTRINS factor discovered students’ innate motivation to achieve in their academic performance. Particularly, we present the influence of student’s level of perfectionism over the three factors MERIT, COMPET, INTRINS by the following regression:

\[ \text{PERF}_\text{LEV} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ast (\text{MERIT}) + \beta_2 \ast (\text{COMPET}) + \beta_3 \ast (\text{INTRINS}) + u \]

We continue to explore the relationship between these three factors (MERIT, COMPET, INTRINS) with student’s frequency of participating in voluntary activities (FRE_ACT). These voluntary activities include mental, physical health; environment; education; gender equality; poverty reduction as well as peace and justice. The impact of student’s frequency of participating in voluntary activities on the three factors (MERIT, COMPET, INTRINS) can be explored through the following regression:

\[ \text{FRE}_\text{ACT} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ast (\text{MERIT}) + \beta_2 \ast (\text{COMPET}) + \beta_3 \ast (\text{INTRINS}) + u \]

To determine students’ alienation (Dataset B), we adopted the school alienation scale developed by Morinaj et al. [3]. The scale comprised 24 items equally divided into three subscales that were alienation from learning (AFL) (i.e., the feelings that learning is boring, meaningless, or useless), alienation from teachers (AFT) (i.e., feelings that one is not accepted or care about by teachers), and alienation from classmates (AFC) (i.e., feelings that one does not belong to the class or is not accepted by peer at school). Participants expressed their agreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Several items requiring reverse scoring were marked with asterisks in the dataset file. The sum of items from a subscale quantified the feeling of a student towards the corresponding domain. A higher score showed a higher level of alienation a student experienced.

To measure students’ perceptions of parental academic conditional regard, we constructed ten items based on the parental conditional regard scale for the academic domain proposed by Roth et al. [5].

The first five items measured parental academic conditional positive regard (e.g., I feel that when or if I study hard, my parents will appreciate me more). The remaining items assessed students’ perception of parental academic conditional negative regard (e.g., I feel that when or if I do not have a good academic achievement, my parents will care less or pay less attention to me). Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with each item on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. A higher sum of each group of five items reflected a higher degree to which students experienced parental conditional positive or negative regard.

We generated ten items to measure students’ perceptions of teachers’ academic conditional regard. Five of them referred to teachers’ academic conditional positive regard (e.g., I feel that when or if I do well in my exam, my teachers will accept me more) and the others focused on teachers’ academic conditional negative regard (e.g., I feel that when or if I do not study well, my teachers will like me less). The method to obtain and to interpret variable scores were the same as one applied in measuring students’ perception of parental academic conditional regard.

Five items from the contingencies of self-worth scale [7] were adjusted and used to assess students’ academic contingent self-worth (e.g., I feel good about myself when or if I have a good academic achievement). Participants rated these items on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. To obtain the variable score, we summed up these items. A higher total score reflected the stronger dependence of students’ self-worth on academic achievement.

To dwell more into the influence of student’s school alienation (SAL) on other factors including PCPR, PCNR, TCPR, TCNR AND CSW, we present the following regression:

\[ \text{SAL} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ast (\text{PCPR}) + \beta_2 \ast (\text{PCNR}) + \beta_3 \ast (\text{TCPR}) + \beta_4 \ast (\text{TCPR}) + \beta_5 \ast (\text{TCNR}) + \beta_6 \ast (\text{CSW}) + u \]
Ethic Statements

Informed consent was obtained from all participants and their legal guardians before the two studies were proceeded. The work was conducted with the approval of EdLab Asia Educational Research and Development Centre’ Institutional Review Board. The IRB numbers for the study on perfectionism (Dataset A) and alienation (Dataset B) are No. 201009 and No. 200127, respectively.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships which have, or could be perceived to have, influenced the work reported in this article.

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