Distraction and Estrangement in the Digital Age: A sociological study based on the girl students of Kailash hostel of Lucknow University

Sandeep Saini [1] Pramod Kumar Gupta[2] Urvashi Nag[3]   Diksha Gaur[4]

[1]Senior Research Fellow, Deptt. of Sociology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow
[2]Proffesor, Deptt. of Sociology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow
[3] Junior Research Fellow, Deptt. of Sociology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow
[4] Deptt. of Sociology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow

ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the impact of digital technologies on the lives of girl's students, focusing specifically on feelings of distraction and estrangement in the digital age. The study is centred on the resident of Kailash Hostel at Lucknow University. The study examines how excessive engagement with digital devices particularly smartphones and laptops affect academic focus, emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and the overall sense of community. In the digital age, social media platforms, while designed to enhance interaction and provide entertainment, have also led to unintended psychological dependencies. Users often become subconsciously dominated by these technologies, resulting in a paradox where tools meant for connection contribute to emotional detachment and social engagement. The study is grounded in theoretical frameworks such as Karl Marx's theory of alienation, Sherry Turkle's concept of digital disconnection, and feminist media theory. offering a multidimensional perspective on digital saturation in academic life. The present research will be based on mixed method approach and include a google form questionnaire and interview scheduled examines screen-time habits, emotional outcomes, and patterns of social participation among U.G. & P.G. girl's students. Gendered experiences further reveal pressures related to online visibility, self-presentation, and digital surveillance. The Research Paper contribute to the broader discourse on digital culture by presenting a localized, gender-sensitive analysis of estrangement in higher education.

It emphasizes the need for digital mindfulness, institutional interventions, and community engagement to mitigate the isolating effects of hyperconnectivity and help students reclaim control over their digital lives.

KEYWORDS: *Digital technologies, social isolation, Interpersonal relationships, Digital Surveillance, Psychosocial Impact.*

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is marked by the rise of digital technology as a dominant force in shaping social structures, communication, identity, and mental well-being. The augmentation of smartphones, high-speed internet, social media platforms, and streaming services

Address for correspondence :
Sandeep Saini, Senior Research Fellow, Deptt. of Sociology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5087-6059
E-mail: sainisandeep906@gmail.com

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has altered the rhythm of everyday life. In India, this digital revolution has not only reshaped economic and political spheres but has profoundly influenced youth culture, particularly among university students. Students today are often referred to as digital natives, the term introduced by (Marc Prensky, 2001) which describes individuals born into the era of digital technology and therefore innately familiar with it. For students in higher education, especially those living away from their families in hostels, digital devices serve as tools for learning, entertainment, and maintaining long- distance social ties. However, this ubiquity of digital media is a double-edged sword. In the specific context of Indian universities, hostels are traditionally seen as microcosms of social learning and personal development. Kailash Girls Hostel, affiliated with the University of Lucknow, has long been regarded as a prestigious and active residential space for female students from diverse academic and regional backgrounds. With its own history, culture, and institutional norms, Kailash provides an ideal ground for studying the impact of the digital age on communal and individual life.

The based on present research study, it is an attempt to know how long teenagers and youth can remain away from these resources without being attracted to technological resources or digital environment in today's time, because in today's time, due to excessive attraction and attachment to these digital resources among youth and adolescents, many types of social and mental problems as well as physical problems They are being seen to have depression, restlessness, sleep problems as well as frequently checking the screens of their gadgets and falling behind in academic and academic levels. Due to the excessive use of these digital resources, teenagers and youth remain disconnected from people and community at the social and cultural level and there are problems related to limited social interaction.

From a sociological perspective, the Marxist concept of alienation means that a person feels alienated from his diverse culture, conduct and thoughts as well as from the society. Due to these digital resources, a person gradually starts getting detached from the society and along with becoming an obstacle in social mobility, problems related to involvement in criminal activities are often seen among adolescent and youth (Calabrese, et.al 1990). Another study found that higher use of digital resources led to mental stress and inhibition of cognitive development in adolescents studying in schools. (Natvig et al.1999) also due to the increased use of social media in the digital age, most teenagers and youth find it difficult to make social connections with their friends and family members and feel uncomfortable in sharing ideas and experiences in their daily lives (Gibson, 2020). Moreover, many adults' students now turn to social media for health information, either through active engagement or passive exposure (Lim et al. 2022). On a professional level, social media platforms can be a powerful tool for expanding knowledge and networking within specific fields (Fischer & Reuber, 2021). We avoid hard conversations, preferring the clean break of disappearing. Friendship has morphed from a lived practice into a virtual performance, measured in emojis and digital applause. Few people would welcome a surprise phone call these days many consider it intrusive. **Elizabeth and Jennifer** view the impact of social media as an application of psychological theories, suggesting that both communication and social psychology should be examined, particularly during times of crisis. In contrast**, (Boulianne, 2015)** explores the role social media plays in civic and political life, emphasizing its power to promote political expression, while less estrangement is given to its role in the dissemination of information, with a particular focus on the political context. Another perspective, offered by **(Liu and Li, 2016)**, explores social media from a societal and cultural angle. They argue that social media platforms provide users with enhanced communication opportunities, but the misuse of these platforms also exacerbates issues like polarization and violence. A second category involves the interpretation of estrangement itself. **(Yang, 2007)** draws on Marx 's theory, which views human activities as tools that, in turn, become controlled by external forces. Marx posited that the relationship between humans and their environment is one of mutual interaction, with the environment shaping human behavior while humans also contribute to environmental change. Building on this idea, **(Hu, 2018)** introduces the concept of estrangement in consumer culture. Marx argued that the purpose of labor is no longer to fulfill one 's production needs, but rather people become enslaved to labor itself. In modern consumer culture, symbolic consumption is driven by marketing strategies that transform the original meaning of production, creating a new symbolic reality. This symbolic fiction leads people to obsess over the meaning of these symbols, effectively making them "slaves" to consumerism. When applying the theory of alienation to social media, **(Wu,2019)** defines this estrangement as extreme panic, ¡¬ where individuals, instead of actively engaging in consumption, are controlled and dominated by the media. Additionally, the entertaining

nature of social media creates an illusion of happiness, which, coupled with the magnification of consumerism, leads to resource wastage.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to digital sociology and youth studies by examining the impact of digital tools on girl's students' social lives. It aids institutions in developing strategies to enhance mental health and community bonding, while offering broader insights into how digital habits affect social connectivity and overall well-being. Hostel residents may feel disconnected from peers despite constant virtual interaction. girl's Students' digital interactions can become commodified (e.g., likes, followers), reducing meaningful connection.

OBJECTIVES

To examine the extent and patterns of digital device usage among residents of Kailash Girls Hostel.

To analyze how digital distraction influences academic focus, social interaction, and emotional well-being.

To understand the nature and causes of alienation as experienced by the residents in a digitally saturated environment.

METHODOLOGY

The presented research study is based on undergraduate and postgraduate Girl's students living in Kailash hostel of Lucknow University. Mixed research methodology was used for this study, in which qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze digital distraction and isolation, behavior, screen time related facts among the female students, along with the use of structured questionnaire through Google Form for primary data collection, in which a list of 45 questions has been divided into 5 parts and an attempt has been made to analyze digital habits, mental behavior, social interaction, autism facts. This questionnaire has been sent to the respondents through Facebook, WhatsApp and email. The target population included undergraduate and postgraduate girl's student's resident in Kailash Hostel and enrolled at the University of Lucknow during the 2024–2025 academic year. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age, socio-economic status, and digital behavior. Only participants who identified as high users of digital media (i.e., those spending six or more hours daily on social media, streaming platforms, etc.) and were between the ages of 18 and 30 were included in the study. And sample size selection for using the Yamane's formula,

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$ with a total population of 200 and a 5% margin of error.

N = total population = 200

Sample Size Calculation: $n = \frac{n}{1 + n \times n^2}$

$$n = \frac{200}{1 + 200 \times (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{200}{1 + 200 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{200}{1 + 0.5}$$

$$n = \frac{200}{1.5} = 133.33$$

Sampling Technique:

So, the total sample has been selected for the study is 133. Now 133 sample out of 200 total population has to be selected through scientific sampling techniques. So, the random circular sampling method will be adopted. Firstly, a list of students from Kailash hostel has been taken for the proper using of random selection of the respondents and following formula has been adopted which are as follows:

$$S = \frac{N}{S}$$

$$S = \frac{200}{133}$$

$$S = 1.50$$

According to the circular random, 1.5 respondents were to be selected from a total of 200 girl students. For this, first 200 respondents were arranged in ascending order from the list and in the process of selection, every third respondent was selected with an interval of Second and then the fourth respondent was selected. Similarly, the process of selection was completed sequentially. A total of 134 respondents were selected from the list. As per Yamane's formula, a total of 133 respondents were to

be selected, hence the last respondent was dropped. Thus, the total number of selected respondents was 133.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This Research Paper find out presents and interprets the empirical findings gathered through the structured questionnaire administered to the Undergraduate & Postgraduate girl's Students resident Kailash Hostel at University of Lucknow. The aim is to explore how digital technologies especially smartphones, social media, and internet use affect students 'sense of estrangement, focus, emotional well-being, and academic productivity.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The Research begins by outlining the demographic details of the sample: Total Sample Size: 133 (calculated using Yamane formula). Age Range: 18–30 years Course Enrolment: U.G. & P.G. girl's Student resident Kailash Hostel at University of Lucknow all Departments Represented: Humanities, Sciences, Commerce, and Professional Courses Digital Access: All respondents own smartphones and access the internet daily

Table-1 Age Distribution of the Respondents

| Ages Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage
15-20	4	3
21-25	122	91.7
26-30	7	5.3
Total	133	100.0

Table no. 1 presents the data about age of respondents in the study. A majority of the respondents 91.7 percent belongs to 21–25 age group, indicating that most respondents are in their early twenties. A smaller proportion 5.3 percent belong to the 26–30 age group, while only 3 percent of the respondents are fall between 15–20. This age distribution reflects the youthful demographic of the study population, with a total of 133 respondents surveyed.

Table 2: Socio-economic backgrounds of respondents

| Background	No. of respondents	Percentage
Upper class	7	5.2
Upper Middle Class	30	22.6
Middle Class	85	63.9
Lower Middle Class	9	6.8
Lower Class	2	1.5
Total	**133**	**100.0**

Date presented in table no. 2 reveals that the majority of respondents 63.9 percent belong to the middle class, followed by 22.6 Percent from the upper middle class. A small proportion comes only 6.8 percent from the lower middle class followed by 5.2 percent belongs to upper class whereas only1.5 percent belongs to lower class. Therefore, the data indicates that girl's students Kailash Hostel at the University of Lucknow predominantly come from socio-economically stable backgrounds, with some representation from economically marginalized sections.

Graphs 1: Use of phone per day (average)
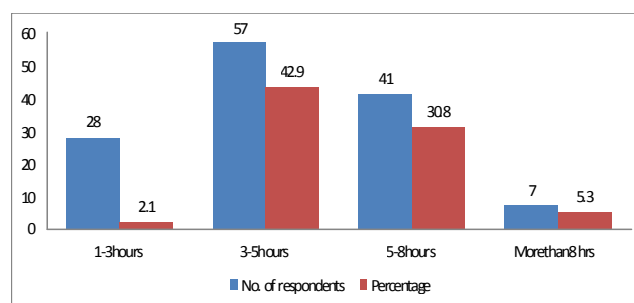
As Show in Graph no. 1 analysis of the data number of respondents who use mobile phone for maximum 8 hours out of 24 hours per day is 5.3 percent. This percentage further shows a negative relationship i.e. the number of people using mobile for 5 to 8 hours is 30.8 percent. Whereas the number of respondents using mobile for 3 to 5 hours is 42.9 percent and the number of respondents using mobile for 1-3 hours is relatively less. Hence, it is known from the data that the relationship between the number of hours used for mobile and the number of respondents is decreasing and negative. According to W.H.O guidelines, from a health perspective, adults should use smartphones for at least 2 to 4 hours per day during non-working hours.

Graphs 2: Use of laptop per day (average) for academic purpose.
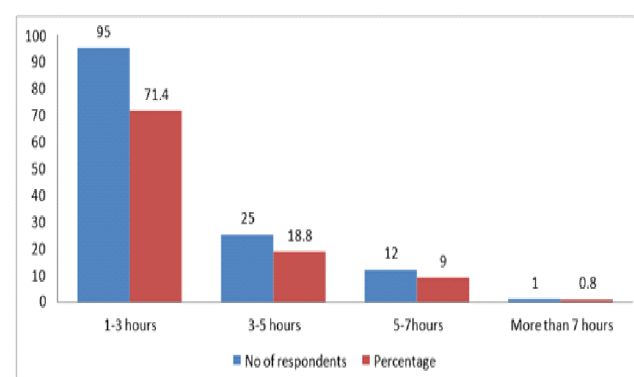
As shown in Graph no. 2 the analysis of the data reveals that the majority of respondents 71.4 precent use their laptops for academic purposes for 1–3 hours daily, while 18.8 precent spend 3–5 hours. A smaller portion 9 precent, use laptops for 5–7 hours, and only 0.8 precent exceed 7 hours. This indicates that while laptops are an essential academic tool, most girl's students limit their academic screen time possibly to balance other activities or due to a preference for alternative study methods.

Graphs 3: Phone checked by respondents in a day (average)
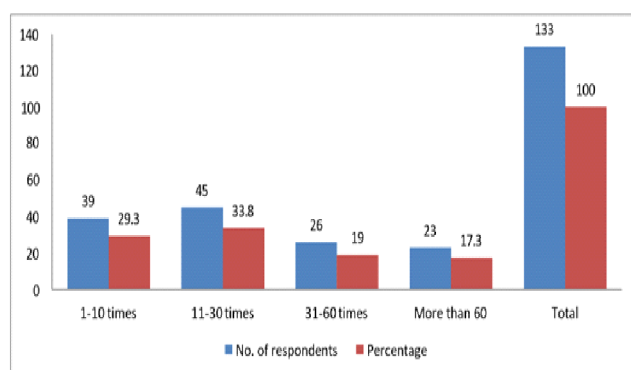
The analysis of the data presented in graph no. 3 reveals that the majority of respondents 33 percent check their mobile phones 11–30 times per day on average. meanwhile, 29.3 percent check their phones 1–10 times a day, and 19 percent check them 31–60 times daily. A smaller proportion 17.3 percent were found to check their phones more than 60 times per day. These findings clearly indicate a level of dependency and habitual phone checking behavior among girl's students, suggesting a form of addiction. This may contribute to digital distraction and negatively impact students' academic performance.

Table 3: Platforms used by respondents

Platforms	No. of respondents	Percentage
Instagram	78	58.6
WhatsApp	95	71.4
YouTube	102	76.7
Snapchat	39	29.3
Twitter/X	22	16.5
Ott platforms	17	12.8
Other	10	7.9

Data presented in table no. 3 reveals that the majority of respondents above highlights the widespread usage of various digital platforms among the U.G & P.G. girl's

Students Resident Kailash Hostel at University of Lucknow. YouTube emerges as the most popular platform, used by 76.7 Percent of respondents, closely followed by WhatsApp 71.4 Percent and Instagram 58.6 Percent. Snapchat and Twitter/X are used less frequently, with 29.3 Percent and 16.5 Percent respectively. A smaller portion of the respondents reported using off platforms 12.8 Percent or other platforms 7.9 Percent, indicating limited engagement with alternatives beyond mainstream social media. This suggests that visual and instant messaging platforms dominate the digital landscape for these students, potentially shaping their habits, communication styles, and daily routines. The high dependency on these platforms may also imply a strong connection between digital usage and distraction, which the central theme estrangement in the digital age explored in this Study.

Table 4: Use of phone during lecture or classes

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Frequently	9	6.8
Occasionally	41	30.8
Rarely	54	40.6
Never	9	6.8
Total	**133**	**100.0**

Data presented in table no. 4 reveals that the majority of respondents 40.6 Percent rarely use their phones during lectures, while 30.8 Percent use them occasionally. Only 6.8 Percent admit to using their phones frequently, and an equal 6.8 Percent claim they never use them in class. This indicates that while phone usage during lectures is not extremely prevalent, it is still common enough to warrant attention. The data suggests a moderate level of digital distraction that could potentially affect classroom engagement and learning.

**Graphs 4:** Respondents following the celebrities or influencers online.
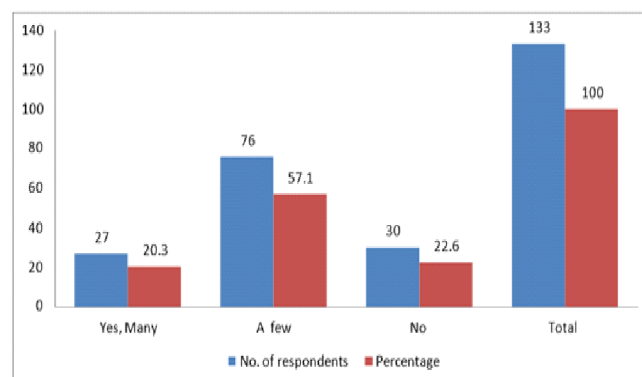
The analysis of the data presented in graph no. 4 indicate that a significant majority of respondents follow celebrities or influencers online to some extent. 57.1 Percent follow a few, while 20.3 Percent follow many. Only 22.6 Percent reported that they do not follow any. This shows that online personalities have a notable presence in the digital lives of most respondents, potentially shaping their opinions, lifestyle choices, and online behavior. The influence of social media figures is clearly a relevant aspect of youth digital engagement today.

Table 5: Feels alienated from real life surrounding due to excessive digital engagement

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	31	23.3
No	63	47.4
Sometimes	39	29.3
Total	**133**	**100.0**

Data presented in table no. 5 reveals that the majority respondents that 47.4 Percent of respondents sometimes feel estrangement from their real-life surroundings due to excessive digital engagement, while 23.3 Percent feel this way consistently. Only 29.3 Percent reported not experiencing such estrangement. This suggests that digital overuse significantly affects social presence and emotional connection with the immediate environment. The majority's acknowledgment of occasional or constant estrangement highlights a growing concern about the impact of digital habits on real-world interactions and well-being, particularly in communal living spaces like university.

Graphs 5: Decrease in academic focus due to distraction by digital devices.
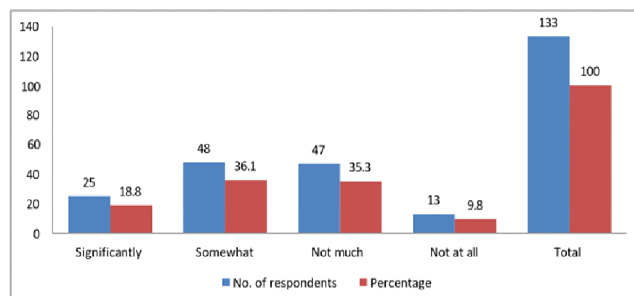
The analysis of the data presented in graph no. 5 reveals that a significant portion of respondents 36.1 Percent reported a somewhat noticeable decrease in academic focus due to digital factors, while 18.8 Percent experienced a significant decline. Meanwhile, 35.3 Percent indicated only a minor impact, and 9.8 Percent

claimed no effect at all. This suggests that digital distractions have a considerable influence on academic engagement for a majority of individuals, with over half acknowledging at least some degree of negative impact, highlighting the need for digital balance in academic settings**.**

Table 6: Missed deadlines or study targets because of digital distraction

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes, many times,	26	19.5
Occasionally	33	24.8
Rarely	33	24.8
never	41	30.9
Total	133	100.0

Data presented in table no. 6 reveals that the majority of respondents that illustrates the extent to which digital distraction affects the ability to meet deadlines or study targets. While 19.5 Percent of respondents admitted to missing deadlines many times, a larger portion reported occasional 24.8 Percent or rare 24.8 Percent occurrences. Notably, 30.9 Percent of the respondents claimed they never missed deadlines due to digital distraction. This suggests that although a substantial number of individuals are impacted by digital distractions, a significant proportion still manage to maintain their productivity. Overall, nearly 69.1 Percent of respondents have experienced missed targets due to digital distractions at least once, indicating that it remains a widespread issue worth addressing.

Graphs 6: Feel more mentally tired after using screen for a long time.
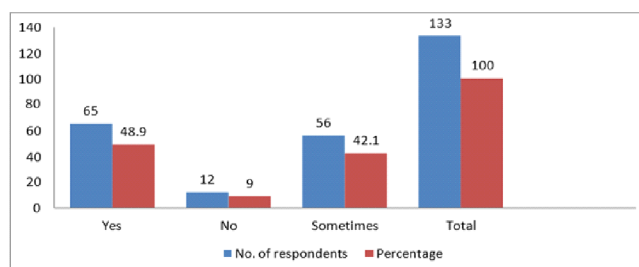
The analysis of the data presented in graph no. 6 indicate that a significant majority of respondents that 48.9 Percent of respondents feel mentally tired after prolonged screen use, while 42.1 Percent experience it sometimes, and only 9 Percent do not feel any fatigue. This indicates that a significant majority over 90 Percent report some level of mental exhaustion due to extended screen exposure, highlighting the cognitive strain associated with digital device usage and the need for mindful screen time management.

Table 7: Effect on the sleep time of respondents

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	94	70.7
No	39	29.3
Total	**133**	**100.0**

Data presented in table no. 7 reveals that the majority of respondents that 70.7 Percent of reported an effect on their sleep time, while 29.3 Percent did not. This indicates that a significant majority experienced changes in sleep patterns, suggesting a widespread impact on rest and well-being among the population studied. Digital distraction is pervasive, especially among students trying to balance studies and online life. Feelings of estrangement are subtle but significant, rooted in constant online comparison, attention fatigue, and reduced face-to-face interactions.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the deep and multifaceted impact of digital technology on the emotional, academic, and social lives of girl's Student residing in Kailash Girls Hostel, University of Lucknow. While digital tools and social media platforms provide opportunities for academic support, connection, and entertainment, they also contribute significantly to digital distraction, emotional detachment, and a sense of social Estrangement. A majority of students spend over 3–8 hours daily on smartphones and digital platforms, often multitasking during study or social hours. Although digitally connected, ¡¬ many students experience loneliness, identity fragmentation, and weakened real-life relationships. Platforms such as Instagram and YouTube are widely used for both academic and escapist purposes, revealing a dual role of media in empowerment and entrapment. Emotional dependency on digital tools, frequent self-comparison, and anxiety related to online personas contribute to self-estrangement and psychological fatigue. Gendered experiences, such as online performance pressure and digital surveillance, further complicate the digital experiences of women in hostel settings. The study, grounded in theoretical frameworks such as Marx's alienation theory, Seeman's dimensions of alienation, and Goffman's dramaturgical analysis, shows that hyperconnectivity does not equate to genuine social integration. Rather, it may reinforce emotional isolation and cognitive overload, particularly in closed residential environments.

SUGGESTION

Digital Mindfulness Programs Hostels and universities should implement workshops or seminars promoting conscious digital usage, screen-time management, and emotional self-regulation. Establish Tech-Free Zones or Hours Designate common areas or time blocks in hostels for device-free interactions, to foster real-life social bonding and improve mental presence. Counselling and Support Services Offer access to mental health counsellors trained in addressing tech-induced anxiety, alienation, and social withdrawal. Digital Literacy Curriculum Incorporate modules on digital behavior, algorithm awareness, and ethical media use into university orientations or skill-building courses. Encouragement of Offline Community Activities Promote peer support groups, study circles, and extracurricular events that encourage interpersonal connection and reduce screen dependency. Gender-Sensitive Digital Policies Address the unique digital challenges faced by women, including online harassment, surveillance, and self-image pressures, through safe reporting mechanisms and awareness drives. Academic Engagement with Digital Tools Shift students' digital use from distraction to productivity by integrating interactive academic platforms that promote structured learning. Encourage more longitudinal and comparative studies across other hostels or universities to generalize findings and propose policy reforms.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS:

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Availability of data and materials

No datasets were generated or analysed during the current study

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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