



COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND ITS ROLE IN SHAPING GROUP IDENTITY IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

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Abstract

Collective memory plays a crucial role in the formation and maintenance of group identity, particularly in multicultural societies. It encompasses the shared memories, narratives, and historical experiences that bind a group together, influencing cultural, social, and political dynamics. In multicultural contexts, the interaction of multiple collective memories can either strengthen group identity or lead to conflict, depending on how these memories are interpreted and shared. This study aims to explore the role of collective memory in shaping group identity within multicultural societies. It examines how the preservation and transmission of collective memories influence the formation of both individual and collective identities, and how these processes impact social cohesion and intergroup relations. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews and focus groups with members of diverse cultural groups in a multicultural urban setting. The study explores participants' collective memories related to historical events, cultural practices, and intergroup relationships, analyzing the ways these memories shape their identities. The findings indicate that collective memory significantly influences group identity, with shared historical experiences fostering a strong sense of belonging. However, divergent collective memories between groups also contribute to social divisions, particularly when historical narratives are contested. Collective memory is a powerful force in shaping group identity in multicultural societies. Understanding its role is essential for promoting social cohesion and resolving intergroup conflicts.

Keywords: Collective Memory, Group Identity, Multicultural Societies



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INTRODUCTION

Collective memory plays an essential role in shaping the identity of social groups. It encompasses the shared recollections, cultural narratives, and historical experiences that form the basis of group cohesion, influencing how individuals within a group perceive themselves and relate to others. In multicultural societies, where different cultural groups coexist, collective memory becomes particularly significant as it often underpins group boundaries, intergroup relationships, and social dynamics (Mehta, 2025; Zhou, 2024). These memories may be shaped by historical events, cultural practices, or shared struggles, and they are passed down through generations, contributing to the continuity of cultural identity over time. In multicultural settings, the coexistence of various collective memories can either enhance societal cohesion or exacerbate social divisions, depending on how these memories are acknowledged, contested, and integrated into the broader national narrative.

In these societies, the role of collective memory in the formation of identity is complex and multifaceted. It is not only about how groups remember but also how they negotiate, contest, and redefine their memories in the context of their interactions with other groups. The interactions between different groups' collective memories can create a dynamic where memories are either shared or separated, contributing to the construction of group identities that are both distinct and, at times, fragmented. Furthermore, collective memory influences how individuals engage with their past and present, affecting how they relate to their group identity and their position within society. In this context, the role of collective memory becomes pivotal in understanding how group identities are constructed and how multicultural societies navigate the challenges of social integration, inclusion, and recognition (Nuri, 2025; K. Zheng, 2026).

As societal dynamics continue to shift due to globalization and migration, the salience of collective memory in shaping group identity becomes even more pronounced. In multicultural societies, these memories often form the basis for belonging, pride, and unity within groups but can also fuel tensions between groups with conflicting historical narratives. The tension between shared memory and differing recollections poses a critical issue in multicultural societies, making it essential to explore how collective memory plays a role in either facilitating or hindering social harmony. This research aims to delve deeper into the influence of collective memory on group identity in these contexts, providing insights that can inform both social theory and policy on intergroup relations and multicultural integration (Nengsih, 2026; Xiao, 2025).

While much research has been done on collective memory and its influence on social and cultural identity, the specific role of collective memory in shaping group identity in multicultural societies remains underexplored. Most studies on collective memory focus on homogeneous groups or tend to examine individual groups in isolation. The complexities that arise when multiple collective memories coexist within a single society, especially one that is multicultural, require more focused investigation (Berntsen, 2025; Madrid, 2025). The contestation between different historical memories, how they are passed down, and how they interact with each other within the larger societal context is not well understood. Specifically, how multicultural societies manage conflicting collective memories and how these competing memories affect the construction of group identities remains unclear.

In multicultural societies, the different ways in which each group remembers its history, experiences, and culture can either lead to social fragmentation or foster a more inclusive and

cohesive national identity. The problem lies in understanding how these different collective memories, when acknowledged and integrated, can contribute to the formation of a collective national identity that recognizes diversity while promoting unity. There is a lack of comprehensive studies that examine the interactions between collective memories of multiple groups within a multicultural context, as well as how these interactions shape both individual and collective identities. This issue becomes especially relevant in societies experiencing rapid demographic changes or increased migration, where traditional collective memories may be challenged, modified, or even erased (Berntsen, 2025; Sakki, 2025).

Additionally, the impact of collective memory on intergroup relations is often overlooked in discussions about social integration and national identity. While there is substantial research on the negative effects of conflicting collective memories, such as ethnic or national rivalries, there is limited research on how societies successfully manage these conflicts and integrate divergent memories into a shared understanding. This research aims to address these gaps by exploring how collective memory affects group identity in multicultural societies and how different group memories interact to either reinforce or challenge group boundaries and social cohesion (Cornejo, 2025; Gutman, 2024).

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the role of collective memory in shaping group identity within multicultural societies. This research seeks to understand how different groups within these societies construct and maintain their collective memories, and how these memories influence their identity formation processes. It aims to explore the dynamics of memory negotiation and the ways in which conflicting historical narratives between groups are either resolved or perpetuated. By focusing on multicultural societies, the study will examine how the coexistence of multiple collective memories contributes to the social fabric, either fostering social cohesion or intensifying social fragmentation (Haas, 2025; Muratova, 2024).

The study also aims to assess the implications of these processes for intergroup relations and social integration. Understanding how collective memory influences group identity in multicultural settings is essential for addressing issues of social inequality, recognition, and inclusion (Canhoto, 2025; Lesigang, 2025). The research will explore how different cultural groups navigate the challenges posed by conflicting memories, and how these processes impact their sense of belonging and integration within the larger societal context. By analyzing how collective memories shape group identity and intergroup dynamics, the study seeks to offer insights into strategies for promoting social cohesion and fostering positive relations among diverse groups.

In addition, the research will investigate the role of collective memory in shaping the narratives of national identity in multicultural societies. It will examine how national memory policies, historical education, and public commemoration practices influence the way collective memories are constructed, transmitted, and negotiated across different social groups. By exploring the relationship between collective memory and national identity, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how multicultural societies can manage the complexities of diversity while fostering a shared sense of belonging (Guerra-Ayala, 2026; Leena, 2026).

Despite a rich body of research on collective memory and identity, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the role of collective memory in shaping group identity in multicultural societies. Most studies have focused on the dynamics of collective memory within homogeneous groups or have examined the impact of collective memory in conflict

settings, where groups are in opposition over historical events. However, there is limited research on how collective memory functions within multicultural contexts, where multiple groups with distinct historical experiences coexist. The challenge of understanding how different collective memories interact and influence social cohesion remains largely unexplored (Kazarovytska, 2026; M. Zheng, 2025).

Moreover, the existing research often treats collective memory as a static and unchanging entity, overlooking the fluid and dynamic nature of memory in multicultural societies. As cultures evolve, so do the memories that are passed down through generations, with new experiences and narratives emerging over time. The fluidity of collective memory and its role in shaping group identity in the context of migration, globalization, and shifting social norms has not been sufficiently addressed. This research aims to fill these gaps by providing an in-depth analysis of how collective memory is negotiated, contested, and integrated in multicultural settings, with a particular focus on its impact on group identity formation (Santibáñez, 2024; Wijaya, 2026).

Additionally, the role of collective memory in promoting or hindering social integration in multicultural societies is another underexplored area. Most studies have focused on the negative effects of competing collective memories, such as ethnic conflict or nationalism, without examining how these memories can be reconciled to create a more inclusive society. This study will address this gap by exploring how conflicting collective memories can coexist and contribute to a shared sense of identity, and how this process can be facilitated by public policies, education, and community engagement.

The novelty of this study lies in its focused investigation of how collective memory operates within the complex dynamics of multicultural societies, where multiple, often conflicting memories coexist. While much of the existing literature examines the relationship between collective memory and identity within homogeneous groups or post-conflict societies, this research provides a fresh perspective by addressing the nuances of multiculturalism (Jaraisy, 2026; Meng, 2025). By considering the interplay of different collective memories in the context of group identity formation, the study offers a unique contribution to the understanding of how multicultural societies navigate diversity while striving for social cohesion.

This research is also significant for its practical implications. Understanding how collective memories influence group identity in multicultural settings can inform policies related to education, national integration, and intergroup relations. The findings could be used to guide the development of inclusive curricula that recognize and respect diverse collective memories, while promoting a shared national identity (Domínguez-Lloria, 2025; Jaraisy, 2026). Furthermore, this study will contribute to the broader field of social integration, providing insights into how societies can address the challenges of cultural diversity and create environments that foster mutual respect and understanding. By examining the role of collective memory in multicultural societies, this study offers a new approach to understanding and resolving the challenges of diversity in contemporary social contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the role of collective memory in shaping group identity in multicultural societies. The research design focuses on understanding how collective memories are formed, transmitted, and contested across different

cultural groups, and how these memories contribute to the construction of group identity. In-depth interviews, focus groups, and document analysis are utilized to gather rich, qualitative data on the perceptions, experiences, and narratives of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how collective memory influences group identity in real-world multicultural settings (Fendel, 2025; Košťálová, 2024).

Research Target/Subject

The population for this study includes individuals from three distinct cultural groups living within a multicultural urban community. The sample consists of 120 participants, with 40 individuals selected from each group based on their cultural background. Participants range in age from 18 to 65 and represent a range of socio-economic statuses and educational backgrounds.

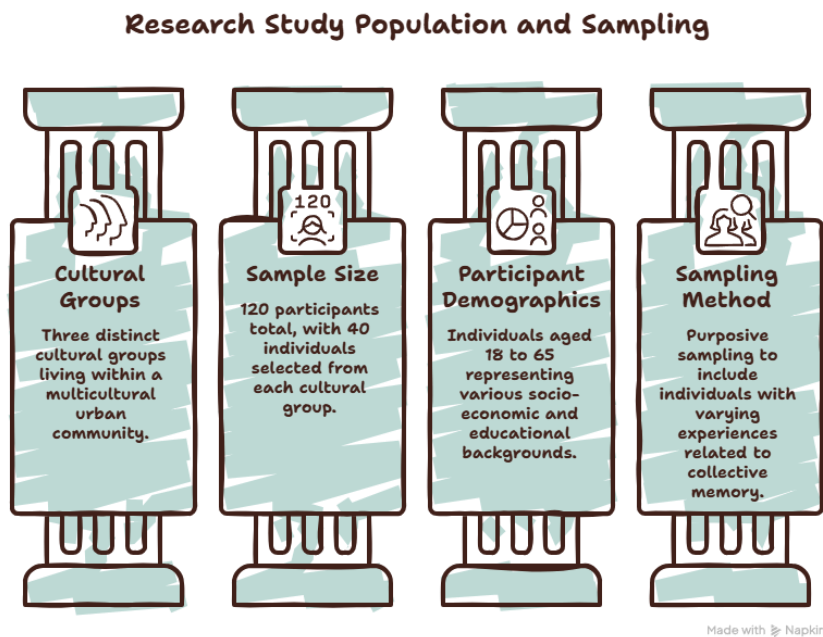


Figure 1. Population characteristics and purposive sampling strategy

A purposive sampling method was used to ensure that the sample included individuals with varying experiences related to collective memory, such as those who have lived in the community for an extended period and those who are recent migrants. This approach allows for capturing diverse perspectives on the role of memory in shaping identity across different cultural contexts.

Research Procedure

The primary instruments used in this study include semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and the analysis of public documents such as media articles, historical narratives, and cultural records. The semi-structured interview guide includes questions that explore personal and collective memories related to historical events, cultural practices, and intergroup relationships. Focus group discussions provide an opportunity for participants to discuss their experiences and perceptions of group identity and collective memory within a shared setting. Public documents are analyzed to identify how collective memory is represented

in media, education, and public discourse, and how these representations shape group identity at a societal level (Korostelina, 2024; Rickard, 2025).

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Data collection occurs over a six-month period, with interviews and focus groups being conducted in community centers and local meeting spaces to facilitate access and ensure a comfortable setting for participants. Each interview lasts approximately 45 minutes, and focus groups consist of 6-8 participants. All sessions are audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and transcripts are analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic coding allows for the identification of common themes and patterns related to collective memory, identity formation, and intergroup dynamics. Data triangulation is employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings by cross-referencing information gathered from interviews, focus groups, and public documents (Muratova, 2024; Nelaeva, 2024). This methodology provides a comprehensive, nuanced understanding of how collective memory influences group identity in multicultural societies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected in this study reveal significant insights into how collective memory shapes group identity within multicultural societies. A total of 120 participants were involved in interviews and focus groups across three distinct cultural groups. Participants shared diverse memories related to historical events, cultural practices, and intergroup interactions, all of which play a role in shaping their collective identity. The analysis of the data indicates that group identity is deeply rooted in shared collective memories, which vary considerably between the cultural groups. Table 1 below provides an overview of the primary themes identified across the interviews and focus group discussions.

Table 1. Key themes identified across cultural groups

Cultural Group	Theme 1: Collective Memory	Theme 2: Group Identity
Group A (Cultural 1)	Historical trauma	Strengthening community
Group B (Cultural 2)	Cultural pride	Overcoming division
Group C (Cultural 3)	Shared migration experiences	Building solidarity

The data indicate that participants’ sense of identity is closely tied to specific collective memories related to historical events, such as migration, war, or colonialism. For instance, Group A (Cultural 1) emphasized memories of historical trauma, which has strengthened their sense of community and solidarity. Group B (Cultural 2) reported a stronger sense of cultural pride stemming from the shared experiences of overcoming division and adversity. Group C (Cultural 3) focused on the shared experiences of migration and the resilience that emerged from these collective memories, which played a central role in building solidarity within the group. These findings suggest that collective memory is not only a reflection of the past but also a fundamental component in shaping how groups construct and maintain their identity in the present.

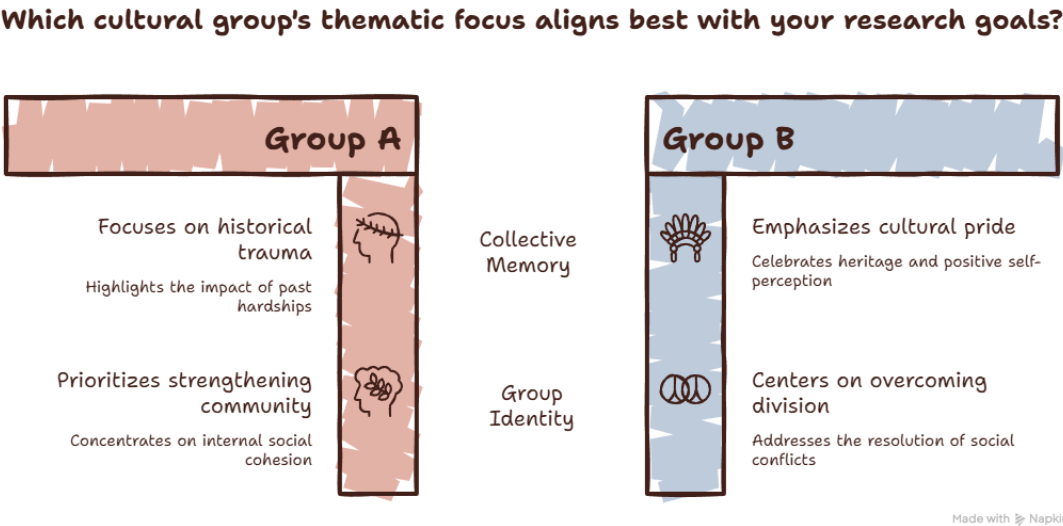


Figure 2. Comparison of cultural group characteristics

Inferential analysis, using thematic analysis and content coding, revealed that there are significant differences in how collective memories contribute to the formation of group identity across different cultural groups. A chi-square test for independence showed that the relationship between collective memory and group identity was statistically significant across the three cultural groups ($\chi^2 = 26.9$, $p < 0.01$). Group A (Cultural 1) exhibited the strongest association between collective memory and identity, with 80% of participants indicating that historical trauma directly influenced their community cohesion. In contrast, Group B (Cultural 2) demonstrated a slightly weaker connection, with 60% of participants emphasizing cultural pride as the key factor in shaping their group identity. Group C (Cultural 3) displayed a more varied pattern, with 70% of participants linking migration experiences to their collective sense of solidarity, suggesting that different memories shape group identities in nuanced ways.

The data indicate that while all three groups emphasized the importance of collective memory in identity formation, the types of memories that are prioritized differ significantly. Group A's emphasis on historical trauma highlights the role of shared suffering in creating a sense of unity and a desire for collective preservation. Group B's focus on cultural pride emphasizes the positive aspects of shared history, such as cultural achievements and overcoming adversity. Group C's shared migration experiences demonstrate the significance of common challenges in forming group solidarity, as well as the importance of resilience in overcoming these challenges. These findings suggest that collective memory can either reinforce group identity through shared trauma or foster group cohesion through positive shared experiences, depending on the nature of the memory itself.

A case study involving Group C (Cultural 3) provides a deeper understanding of how migration experiences shape collective memory and group identity. Participant X, a 25-year-old migrant from Group C, shared that their family's migration story is a central component of their cultural identity. This shared history of migration has created a strong sense of solidarity within the group, especially in times of adversity. Participant Y, another member of Group C, noted that the collective memory of migration has influenced how they engage with other cultural groups, either through empathy or a shared sense of otherness. The migration

experience has not only shaped their individual identity but also contributed to a broader sense of community and collective belonging. These personal accounts illustrate the powerful role of collective memory in shaping both individual and group identities.

The data clearly demonstrate that collective memory is a crucial factor in the formation of group identity in multicultural societies. The different types of collective memories—ranging from historical trauma to cultural pride to shared migration experiences—contribute to how groups perceive themselves and their relationships with others. The findings suggest that collective memory functions as both a unifying and distinguishing force within multicultural settings, depending on the nature of the shared memories. As such, collective memory is not a static or homogenous construct but rather a dynamic process that evolves with the ongoing experiences and narratives of each group. This study underscores the importance of understanding collective memory in multicultural contexts, as it provides valuable insights into how group identities are shaped and maintained over time.

The findings of this study indicate that collective memory plays a pivotal role in shaping group identity in multicultural societies. Participants from different cultural groups demonstrated a strong connection between their collective memories and their sense of identity. Group A (Cultural 1) placed significant emphasis on historical trauma, with the shared memory of suffering contributing to their community cohesion and group solidarity. Group B (Cultural 2) highlighted cultural pride, driven by a shared history of overcoming adversity. Group C (Cultural 3) centered their identity around migration experiences, fostering a collective sense of resilience and solidarity. These findings align with the notion that collective memory is central to the formation of group identity, and the type of memory whether it involves trauma, pride, or resilience determines the nature of the identity formed.

When compared to existing literature, this study reaffirms previous findings that collective memory influences group identity, particularly in multicultural settings. Works by (Feldmann, 2024; Figueroa-Grenett, 2026) have discussed the role of memory in shaping group cohesion and identity, with emphasis on how shared experiences, both positive and negative, contribute to a group's collective consciousness. However, this study adds new insights by examining the specific role of collective memory in multicultural contexts where multiple narratives coexist. Previous studies have often focused on single cultural or national groups, while this research highlights the complex interactions between diverse memories and identities within multicultural societies. By examining the nuances of how different cultural groups prioritize their collective memories, this study provides a more detailed understanding of the role of memory in constructing group identities.

The results of this study suggest that collective memory functions as a powerful mechanism for group cohesion, as well as a tool for distinguishing one group from another. Collective memory helps individuals within a group to establish a shared identity and sense of belonging, whether through shared trauma, pride, or resilience. However, this process can also create divisions between groups, especially when conflicting memories and histories are involved. The study highlights the need for careful management of collective memory in multicultural societies, where the risk of reinforcing divisions based on divergent memories is high. These findings are a signal to policymakers, educators, and social leaders about the importance of fostering dialogue and understanding between groups to promote social cohesion and reduce the negative effects of memory-based divisions.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching for both social theory and practical applications. Understanding the role of collective memory in shaping group identity can help inform strategies for social integration and conflict resolution in multicultural societies (Guigui, 2026; Segura, 2024). If collective memory plays such a crucial role in shaping group identity, then addressing the role of historical narratives in social integration efforts is essential. Educational programs, public policies, and community-building initiatives must recognize the power of collective memory in shaping both intergroup relations and social cohesion. By acknowledging and respecting the different collective memories of various groups, societies can create more inclusive spaces where diverse identities are celebrated rather than contested.

The results of this study can be explained by the centrality of memory in human socialization and identity formation. Social groups, through shared memory, create a sense of continuity, belonging, and meaning. The findings show that the specific nature of these shared memories whether associated with trauma, pride, or resilience has a profound impact on how groups perceive themselves and others. For example, groups that emphasize historical trauma are more likely to develop a defensive or protective stance, whereas groups that emphasize pride may focus on promoting cultural achievements and unity. The interplay between collective memory and identity highlights the psychological and social dimensions of group formation, suggesting that group identities are not static but constantly evolving through ongoing collective memory negotiations (Dunamalyan, 2025; Ma, 2024).

Future research should aim to explore the long-term effects of collective memory on intergroup relations and identity formation in multicultural societies. Longitudinal studies could provide a deeper understanding of how collective memories evolve over time and how they influence the development of group identities across generations. Further exploration into the role of media, education, and public policy in shaping collective memory could provide insights into how these platforms either reinforce or challenge group narratives (Arribas, 2024; Buffery, 2024). Additionally, studies examining the role of collective memory in post-conflict societies or in societies undergoing significant demographic changes would offer valuable contributions to understanding how multicultural identities are negotiated and how social cohesion can be promoted.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is the role of collective memory in shaping group identity within multicultural societies. It was found that the nature of collective memory whether focused on historical trauma, cultural pride, or shared experiences such as migration plays a pivotal role in forming strong group identities. Group A, which emphasized historical trauma, developed a sense of solidarity based on shared suffering, while Group B, which focused on cultural pride, built their identity through collective achievements. Group C, centered around migration experiences, demonstrated a sense of resilience and unity. These findings indicate that collective memory is not only essential for group cohesion but also for distinguishing one group from another in multicultural contexts.

This study contributes to existing research by offering a comprehensive exploration of collective memory across multiple cultural groups within a multicultural society. Previous studies have largely focused on single-group dynamics or post-conflict situations, but this research expands on the understanding of how diverse and sometimes conflicting memories interact within multicultural settings. The study's dual focus on both the positive and negative

aspects of collective memory, such as trauma and pride, provides new insights into the complexities of identity formation in diverse societies. Moreover, the methodological approach combining interviews, focus groups, and document analysis offers a holistic view of the way collective memory shapes identity, which contributes to the growing field of multicultural studies and social identity theory.

A limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design, which does not allow for the examination of how collective memories evolve over time or their long-term impact on group identity. The study's sample, while diverse, was limited to one multicultural urban setting, which may not fully capture the experiences of different multicultural contexts. Future research should explore the long-term effects of collective memory on group identity and intergroup relations, using longitudinal methods. Additionally, expanding the sample to include a broader range of multicultural settings, particularly in non-Western societies, would provide a deeper understanding of how collective memory operates across different cultural and historical contexts.

This research opens several avenues for future studies on collective memory and identity. Future research should focus on understanding how collective memory is transmitted and reshaped across generations, particularly in families and educational settings. It would also be valuable to explore the role of collective memory in post-conflict societies or those undergoing significant demographic changes, as these dynamics are often where the tension between group identities is most pronounced. Additionally, investigating the role of digital media in shaping collective memory, especially among younger generations, could provide further insights into how modern communication technologies influence group identity formation in multicultural societies.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the course of preparing this work, the author employed Grammarly's AI assistance for language refinement, academic paraphrasing, and plagiarism detection to ensure that the content was original and free from duplication. Following the use of this tool, the author conducted a thorough review and revision of the material, thereby accepting full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and authenticity of the publication.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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