



# Excuse Me, Sir, Must The Class Be Online? Students On-Campus Putting Faculty On The Defense After The Pandemic: The Search For Justification And Preference

Sani Alhaji Garba<sup>1\*</sup>, Muhammed Yusuf<sup>2</sup>, Mahizer Hamza<sup>3</sup>, Aroyewun Temitope Folashade<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education and Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Perak, Malaysia. Email: sanialhaji@fpm.upsi.edu.my; Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8305-9088>

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education and Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Perak, Malaysia. Email: muhammed.yusuf@fpm.upsi.edu.my

<sup>3</sup>Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education and Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Perak, Malaysia. Email: mahizer@fpm.upsi.edu.my

<sup>4</sup>Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education and Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Perak, Malaysia. Email: aroyewun@fpm.upsi.edu.my

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines students' reactions to lectures being online instead of in class; and, their instructional delivery preferences after the pandemic. The study was driven by students' queries demanding justifications for holding lectures online while they are on campus. Primary and secondary data were collected. The primary data was collected during a two-session faculty-students informal classroom discussion. Related published research articles from 2022-2024 were searched and collected as secondary data for a systematic review. Content analysis was used in analyzing the two sets of data collected. Three patterns emerged from the analysis of primary data indicating students' preference for in-class lectures while regarding the online class as a second option justified in the absence of face-to-face classroom teaching. Six patterns of information were identified from the analysis of the secondary data. The identified patterns indicated post-pandemic literature-based justification for hybrid and face-to-face classes as most recommended compared to online teaching. Cross-examination of related literature before, during, and after the pandemic shows increasing use of online and offline technology in distance and on-campus education while the value and preference for face-to-face classroom teaching on campus remained constant. The study in conclusion considers online teaching as the backbone of distance education; and, conventional technology-enhanced classroom teaching as the heart of on-campus education. As such, the positive effect of technology in educational practices is strengthening rather than threatening the value of classroom teaching in non-distance education programs.

**Keywords:** Online, in-class, and, hybrid teaching; Post-pandemic Education; Post-pandemic Instructional Preference.

## 1. Introduction

Much is known about students' reactions to online teaching before and during the pandemic (Ozdamli, & Karagozlu, 2022). On the contrary, not much is reported about students' experiences and reactions to online teaching on campus, after the pandemic. This study examines students' reactions when classes are to be online instead of in class after the pandemic. Driven by three initial findings from the analysis of primary data collected, the study further explores the literature from 2022 to 2024 in search of justification for Faculties' current practices of holding lectures online instead of in class. The search for the literature is restricted to 2022-2024 because the issue in view is a practice that emerged when students returned to campus after the pandemic. There are several studies reporting students' experiences and reactions to online teaching before and during the pandemic (Kebritchi, Lipschuetz, & Santiago, 2017; Gherheş, Stoian, Fărcaşiu, & Stanici, 2021). A

highlight of what was reported about students' experience and reactions to online learning during the pandemic shows that non-distance education students were dissatisfied with online teaching (Purwarno, Ekalestari, Sahendi, & Abedin, 2023). Faculty and students' readiness for online teaching and learning was reported as not good enough (Darmany, Erfan, & Maulyda, 2023). Erdel (2023) reported students' online learning skills as moderate; and, a series of challenges faced by students during the transition to online teaching was reported in the work of Lyon, Schatz, & Green, (2023) which included difficulty in getting individualized attention and interaction with peers. Peculea (2023) reported that students' resources and skills played a role in the negative or positive experiences of students with online teaching and learning. As such, there is a greater number of studies reporting students' experience and reactions to online teaching during the pandemic compared to studies on post-pandemic experience (Topping, 2023). What was reported in the literature before and during the pandemic neither proves the superiority of the online class option over face-to-face; nor, proves the online class option as having more advantages than the conventional approach to teaching in the classroom. Yet, faculties continue to teach online instead of in class after the pandemic. It is against this background that this study investigates the justification of faculties' current practices of giving lectures online more often than they do in class after the pandemic.

It is noted however that, justification for online teaching in distance education is well established in the literature as meeting the learning needs of off-campus students (Garlinska, Osial, Proniewska, & Pregowska, 2023). The emergence of complete online programs is also justified in the literature as a means of expanding access to higher education for those with work and parenting responsibility; and, those that cannot afford the cost of education on campus (Asqli, 2020). Studies reporting justification for online teaching (wholly) in non-distance education are limited. What was reported mostly revolves around the flexibility, convenience, and cost-effectiveness that online education has to offer.

It is evident from previous studies that online and offline technology integration in face-to-face classroom teaching facilitates higher education teaching and learning (Lee, & Jeon, 2024; Nurhidayat, Mujiyanto, Yuliasri, & Hartono, 2024). On the other hand, the adoption of a wholly online approach to teaching and learning during the pandemic was reported as being justified by the restrictions imposed on physical human interactions. Scholarly articles describing the need for wholly online teaching in place of face-to-face scheduled classes with students on campus are limited. This study focuses on examining students' reactions to online teaching as practiced on campus after the pandemic; and, what has been reported recently in that context. The study is directed toward understanding the wisdom and justification behind faculties' continued use of online platforms to teach after the pandemic when students are on campus. The study also examines the justification and impact of the current practice based on what is reported in the literature from 2022. The aim of collecting and analyzing related post-pandemic research articles from 2022 to 2024, in particular, is to determine if what is reported in the literature in terms of evidence-based practice is enough to:

1. Consider the online teaching option as being better than the conventional practice on campus;
2. Consider the online class option as having more advantages than the in-class option;
3. Justify faculties' current practice.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Design of the study, Research Questions and Participants

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the study deals with the collection and analysis of primary data while the second phase has to do with the collection and analysis of secondary data. Data collection and analysis in the first and second phases of the study were directed toward understanding the instructional delivery practices that emerged on campuses after the pandemic. The study is particularly interested in understanding why faculties most often choose to teach online instead of in class.

Thus, three research questions were raised for the study during its conceptualization:

1. How do students on campus feel if lectures are to be online instead of in class?
2. Is teaching online instead of in class justified when students are on campus?
3. Is students' instructional delivery preference during the post-pandemic era different from what was reported before and during the pandemic?

Thirty-two (32) undergraduate students taking the Philosophy and History of Education course voluntarily participated in the study.

### 2.2 Data Collection Phase One

Initial data was collected during an informal classroom discussion when the faculty at the end of a class session casually stated 'I think we can hold the next class online. What do you think?'. Observed student's reactions and responses were noted and jotted down. The discussion was adjourned after five minutes to continue in the next class because a decision could not be taken. The subsequent discussion (face-to-face and in class) lasted for about twenty-six minutes. Participating students declined the video recording request but accepted the audio recording of the discussion. An explanation was advanced to the students that the recorded discussion

would be used as research data in a study that is investigating students' reactions to online teaching on campus after the pandemic.

### 2.3 Data Collection Phase Two

Relevant academic articles were searched and collected from Google Scholar and Scopus databases (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Result of Search for Articles on Online Teaching on Campus After the Pandemic

S/No	The Search:	Articles Identified	Articles Collected	Articles Selected
1	Justification for post-pandemic online teaching on campus	87	25	11
2	Students reactions to on-campus post-pandemic online teaching	89	65	18
3	Students' Post-pandemic on-campus Instructional delivery preference	111	71	22
Total		287	161	51

A total of 287 relevant articles were identified from the two databases after a series of searches conducted using relevant search terms. The identified articles were grouped into the three areas of focus in the study (See Table 1). 161 out of the 287 articles identified were collected discarding 126 during a preliminary review and screening based on title relevance. The 161 articles collected were screened using four-stage criteria. 110 articles were screened out leaving only 51 selected for analysis. After title relevance, focus and scope relevance were used as criteria for elimination at the second and third stages. Contextual relevance was used in the fourth stage of the elimination process. Articles dealing with online teaching before and during the pandemic were eliminated. Title, abstracts, introduction, and methodology were used to determine the contextual relevance of articles selected for analysis.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Content Analysis was used in analyzing the initial data collected during the first phase of the study. The field note taken during the initial discussion was typed and saved in a Word Document File for analysis. The audio record of the subsequent discussion was transcribed and saved in a Word document file too for analysis. The data sets prepared for analysis were carefully reviewed, coded, and categorized. Three perspectives emerged from the analysis (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** The Identified Perspective

S/No	Generated Perspective
1	online lectures (classes) are not justified when students are on campus
2	Students are okay with online classes if the in-class option is not accessible
3	prefer to have their lectures in class rather than online

Content analysis was also used in analyzing the articles selected for review during the second phase of the study. The content of 11 articles in the first category was analyzed in search of justifications given in favor of faculties teaching online instead of in class after the pandemic when students are on campus. A pattern was identified from the analysis (see Table 3). Two patterns were identified from the content analysis of 18 articles in the second category (see Table 3). The analysis was based on a search within the content of the articles for reported reactions of students to online classes on campus after the pandemic. Three patterns of information were identified from the analysis of the 22 articles in the third category as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Patterns Identified from the Review and Analysis of Selected Published Articles 2022 to 2024 January

Categories of Articles Reviewed and Analyzed	Patterns Emerging from the Review and Analysis with examples/quotes
1 <i>Justification</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Instead of online teaching, justification for Hybrid/blended Teaching approaches were reported (<math>n=11</math>). <i>Example:</i> "it is clear that the mix of on-site and online learning is here to stay" (Schmälzle, &amp; Berkling, 2023, p. 1) "Finally, based on the mixed findings, the current study suggests a hybrid model for institutions" (Suriagiri, Norlaila, Wahyurudhanto, &amp; Akrim, 2022 p 600)</li> </ol>
2 <i>Reactions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students appreciated the online teaching option adopted during the pandemic but are more comfortable with in-class and hybrid after the pandemic (<math>n=11</math>) <i>Example:</i> "While overall having a preference for on-campus study, students cited a variety of reasons (inclusivity, flexibility, work/life balance, cost of living crisis) for why they were supportive of the continuation of some form of hybrid learning" (Crew, &amp; Märtins, 2023, p. 6)</li> </ol>

	2. They are okay with online classes but consider face-to-face as better ( $n=7$ )
	<i>Example:</i> “...the findings revealed that students perceived the importance of interaction and learning experience during face-to-face learning” (Dwipayanti, Santosa, & Kusuma, 2024, p. 24)
<b>3 Instructional Delivery Preference</b>	1. Prefer face-to-face classroom ( $n=9$ )
	<i>Example:</i> “The study revealed that although online learning is the possible educational adaptation during the pandemic, faculty and students still prefer face-to-face...” (Atwa, Shehata, Al-Ansari, Kumar, Jaradat, Ahmed, & Deifalla, 2022, p. 9)
	2. Prefer face-to-face and Hybrid ( $n=11$ )
	<i>Example:</i> “... students highlighted a preference for both face-to-face and hybrid education” (Nikolopoulou, 2022, P. 5).
	3. Preference for online and hybrid ( $n=2$ )
	<i>Example:</i> “...leads students to prefer online education or hybrid teaching models” (Hotar, Özcan, Baran, Karagöz, & Güney, 2023, p. 184)
Total Categories = 3	Total Number of Patterns identified = 6

### 3. The Findings

Analysis of the primary data collected reveals that except in such circumstances when meeting in class is not possible, on-campus students see no justifications for lectures to be online instead of in class. Though okay with the online class option if it is inevitable; their instructional delivery preference however is the ‘face-to-face technology-enhanced classroom teaching’. They consider the internet and the online environment as suitable for self-learning, discussion, and brainstorming between students and with the faculty if need be after classes. They hold a strong belief that whatever educational activities you do online should be complementary to classroom teaching and learning.

Six patterns were identified from the analysis of the secondary data collected (51 research articles investigating post-pandemic practices on campus). A pattern was identified from the analysis of 11 articles in search of justification for faculties’ teaching online instead of in class. The identified pattern indicated that post-pandemic literature-based justification and recommendation are dominantly for hybrid practices rather than online teaching. This is an indication that teaching online instead of in class is not a popular recommendation for on-campus instructional delivery practices in the post-pandemic literature. Two patterns of information were identified from the analysis of 18 articles in search of post-pandemic literature-based reported students’ reactions to online teaching on campus after the pandemic. The first pattern indicated that students were satisfied with online teaching during the pandemic but were more comfortable with the in-class and hybrid approaches after the pandemic ( $n=11$ ). The second pattern indicated that students are okay with online classes but consider face-to-face as better ( $n=7$ ). The two patterns point to one major finding indicating that students on campus are not comfortable with online teaching after the pandemic. What they value the most on campus is the face-to-face classroom interactions.

The search for students’ post-pandemic instructional delivery preferences within the content of 22 post-pandemic research articles reveals three patterns of information. The first pattern indicated preferences for conventional technology-supported face-to-face classroom instructional delivery ( $n=9$ ); preferences for face-to-face and hybrid approach ( $n =11$ ) as the most popular; and, preferences for online and hybrid ( $n =2$ ) as the least popular. The three patterns indicated that online teaching is not the students’ preferred approach for on-campus instructional delivery practice after the pandemic. Students’ preference is for in-class teaching; and, in-class supported with additional learning activities online.

### 4. Discussions

#### 4.1 Justification for Teaching Online Instead of In-class On-campus After the Pandemic

Findings from the primary data collected and analyzed are consistent with the findings that emerged from the analysis of the secondary data collected (report of studies investigating post-pandemic instructional delivery practices on campus). findings from primary data indicated that teaching online instead of in class on campuses is only justified in such circumstances when classroom teaching is not possible for obvious reasons. Complimentary to this finding, post-pandemic literature (2022 to 2024) analyzed in this study mostly reports justifications for different types of hybrid approaches rather than online teaching on-campus. However, we noticed that some of the studies (post-pandemic) reporting justifications for hybrid approach teaching (Ulla, & Perales, 2022) are based on conceptual analysis leveraging the experience gained during and before the pandemic. Other studies advanced an argument in favor of hybrid that, we need to think of how to utilize the online technological and techno-pedagogical knowledge acquired during the pandemic in improving the on-campus face-to-face approach through the hybrid approach (González, Ponce, & Fernández, 2023). On the contrary, studies that examined the actual practice of the hybrid approach on campus after the pandemic

(Tierney, Davies, & Hopwood, 2024) identified a series of challenges associated with the practical use of the hybrid approach. The study recommended that caution needs to be applied in any effort directed toward the adoption of hybrid approaches. It can be contextually relevant but the other side of it needs further investigation.

This finding helps to establish a clear line of difference on how justification and conceptualization of online teaching differ over time in literature. The pre-pandemic literature sees the need for online teaching (and the subsequent emergence of online education) as a means of extending access to higher education for those who cannot afford to be on campus (Shea, Pickett, & Li, 2005). The debate then was more on higher education candidates' choice between enrolling for on-campus or online programs rather than online or face-to-face teaching on-campus. Online teaching was aligned with distance education while technology-enhanced in-class teaching was aligned with on-campus education (Carmo, & Franco, 2019). The pandemic literature on the other hand (2019-2021) reported online teaching during the lockdown as justified not because it is better (Al-Nasa'h, & Awwad, 2021) but because campuses were shut down indefinitely (Almendingen, Morseth, Gjølstad, Brevik, & Tørris, 2021). The transition was reported as challenging (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020). Teaching and learning were reported as difficult and distracting in the online teaching-learning environment while both faculty and students missed the in-class interaction (Tsai, Rodriguez, Li, Robert, Serpi, & Carroll, 2020). Some students and faculties were able to quickly adapt to the new reality while others prayed and hoped for a return to normal as they struggled to survive the challenge of attending classes online and at home.

The focus of the post-pandemic literature (2021-2024) was more on analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching during the pandemic as compared to conventional practices before the pandemic. More challenges were reported than advantages. What was reported as advantages had to do with flexibility, convenience, and cost-effectiveness while the reported challenges were overwhelming. Thus, rather than discussing the justification for the continued use of online teaching attention was shifted to how knowledge of online technology acquired can be used to improve on-campus instructional delivery practices. What is reported mostly is more conceptual suggestions for a hybrid approach that can leverage the use of online technology to complement in-class teaching and learning. The campaign for a hybrid approach is to do away with the disadvantages of online teaching for students. However, while learning how to go about the conceptualized hybrid approach as being justified by the post-pandemic literature; faculties in the meantime continue to teach a couple of times in class and wholly online must time in the name of a hybrid approach.

#### **4.2 On-campus Student's Feelings Toward Online Classes after the Pandemic**

Findings from primary and secondary data analyzed in this study are consistent in showing that after the pandemic, students are satisfied with online classes in the absence of face-to-face classes. What exists in the literature indicates that there are differences in students' feelings, attitudes, and responses to online classes before, during, and after the pandemic. Before the pandemic, students had mixed feelings about online education, with many preferring face-to-face classes for better learning experiences and socializing. During the pandemic, students had to adapt to online teaching. The process of adapting to online teaching exposed students to the good and bad of online education. At the initial stage, students consider learning in online classes as difficult, challenging, and unsatisfying for many reasons. However, as students gradually get used to it learning in online classes becomes less challenging. Thus, the initial negative perception of online teaching becomes minimal. This exposure empowers the students with the requisite experience to compare the two and three options based on strengths and weaknesses. After the pandemic, students were more comfortable with face-to-face classroom teaching and learning (Yessenova, Baltabayeva, Amirbekova, Koblanova, Sametova, & Ismailova, 2023). They express a feeling that learning face-to-face in a classroom is more efficient with better quality of classes and socializing opportunities (Zulfiqar, Ajmal, & Bano, 2023). However, some students still had a positive attitude toward online teaching and learning (Mohammad, Marada, Nifat, Hatta, & Fajrianti, 2023). The evolution of students' perception of online teaching during the pandemic ended up a post-pandemic perception that values face-to-face classroom teaching and learning while appreciating the good in online teaching and learning (Wahid, Firdaus, Amaliah, Ariandi, Firman, Irfan, & Nurdin, 2023).

#### **4.3 Students' Instructional Delivery Preference**

There are studies reporting students' preferences for both options before, during, and after the pandemic. However, students' instructional delivery preference was largely face-to-face classroom teaching before the pandemic. Preference during the pandemic was polarized with some preferring online and others preferring face-to-face classroom teaching. After the pandemic, preference was more for a hybrid/blended approach and face-to-face.

Reported learning difficulties experienced by students during online education before and during the pandemic are what accounted for students' preference for face-to-face classroom teaching. Different learning difficulties were reported in the literature; and, all the groups that experienced any of the reported difficulties opted for the face-to-face option (Fish, & Snodgrass, 2023). Efficient learning, socializing with peers, higher quality of classes, better communication, and true university experience were reported as some of the factors that make face-to-face classroom teaching most preferred by students on campus (Costado Dios, & Piñero Charlo, 2021; Marco-Fondevila, Rueda-Tomás, & Latorre-Martínez, 2022). Students feel more concentrated in a face-to-face class than in an online class (Wahid, Firdaus, Amaliah, Ariandi, Firman, Irfan, & Nurdin, 2023). Learning

outcomes in a face-to-face class are higher because of the physical face-to-face dialogue and discussion (Horowitz-Kraus, Heyd-Metzuyanim, & Zivan, 2023). Academic achievement test scores of smaller sizes of classes in a face-to-face learning environment were consistently reported as higher than the scores of students in online classes. Generally, face-to-face classes are reported as being considered more effective and efficient by students, providing opportunities for practical learning, effective interaction, and better academic performance.

Online teaching was found to be less popular and less preferred by students due to several reasons. Students express a preference for traditional methods of teaching, such as lectures and discussions over online classes (Agustina, 2022). They felt that online teaching lacked the same level of teacher-student interaction and socialization as compared to offline classes (Park, 2022). In addition, students were faced with different types of challenges during online teaching (as reported during the pandemic) (Jain, 2022). Moreover, the transition to online classes was perceived by many students as a poor substitute for offline classroom experiences, leading to decreased satisfaction. These factors contributed significantly to the overall preference for offline teaching and the belief that it retains the quality and value of the education system.

The preferences between online and offline classes (face-to-face) were polarized during the pandemic because of several factors. Some students prefer face-to-face classes because they believe it offers more efficient learning, socializing opportunities, and higher quality classes among other reasons (Yener, 2023). On the contrary, some students prefer online classes because it provides more flexibility and cost-effectiveness (Quesada, Gabuardi, Vargas, Quirós, & Chaverri, 2023). The two options were associated with disadvantages peculiar to the time of the pandemic. Adopting the face-to-face as most preferred was a risk during the pandemic while the online option was faced with the challenge of access to computers and internet connectivity, lack of contact with peers, and increased stress among other things (Wahid, et al., 2023). These differing preferences were attributed to individual experiences, personal circumstances, and the specific challenges faced by students during the pandemic (Riaz, Mahmood, Begum, Ahmad, Al-Shaikh, Ahmad, & Khan, 2023).

After the pandemic, preference for hybrid/blended is the most reported followed by wholly face-to-face learning. The popularity of the hybrid approach after the pandemic is due to several reasons. The use of an online teaching approach as an alternative to face-to-face during the pandemic is one of the major factors that contributed to giving birth to the hybrid approach (Torrison-Steele, 2023; Ma, 2023). Access to technology and the internet, the cost-effectiveness of online communication, and the convenience of accessing learning content anytime anywhere online contributed to building a perception that a hybrid approach is likely to be a better approach to post-pandemic instructional delivery (Ma'aruf, 2023). The perception that, with a hybrid approach the face-to-face in-class teaching is sustained and complimented with additional online learning activities makes the idea of hybrid popular and acceptable. The idealized perspective that with the hybrid approach, flexibility, convenience, and cost-effectiveness can be injected into educational practices on campus also contributed to selling the idea of hybrid education as conceptualized (Karmini, Nugrahanti, Ramadhan, Rusliandy, & Sukomardojo, 2023). Most of the studies discussing the hybrid approach are conceptual. Findings from research studies reporting the operational effectiveness of the approach are polarized with positive and negative feedback.

## 5. Conclusion

The role of technology in facilitating teaching, learning, and research in higher education is appreciated. Online technology in particular is most celebrated as a key factor in the transformation of distance education. With online classes, distance education students can attend lectures with flexibility and convenience in a virtual learning environment. Online technology is now considered the backbone of distance education programs in institutions of higher learning. It also plays a key role in on-campus education in a manner that differs from that of distance education. It is most appreciated in on-campus education as a means of facilitating access to unlimited learning materials, and communication between students and with faculties before and after classes. The online class option in particular is appreciated in on-campus education as a second option in situations where conventional classroom teaching is not possible for obvious reasons. However, while online teaching is considered the backbone of distance education, face-to-face classroom teaching supported with both online and offline technology is most appreciated as the heart of on-campus education. As such, what informed the popularity and acceptance of the hybrid/blended approach as conceptualized in the literature is the presence of face-to-face classroom teaching sustained as the primary means of teaching. The popularity of wholly online classes is limited to distance higher education programs. Though appreciated in terms of need, the online class option is never appreciated above the 'conventional face-to-face classroom teaching', 'technology-enhanced face-to-face class', 'blended', or the 'hybrid approach' as variously referred to in the literature over time in history.

## 6. Limitations of the study

A qualitative research approach was used in collecting and analyzing the primary data used in the study. Data was collected from a small sample and is not enough to represent the research population. All the research participants are from the Faculty of Education. Students of other faculties may hold a contrary view and opinion on the issue. Therefore, findings emanating from the analysis of the primary data collected cannot be generalized. It is therefore suggested that similar studies involving students from other faculties are needed. Not all the identified related articles were selected for the review being reported in the study. The articles that were not considered for review in this study may contain valuable information that can contradict the findings reported in this study. Further studies involving the review of similar literature not considered in this study and related literature emerging after the study are needed.

## 7. Co-Author Contribution and Conflict of Interest Statement

Muhammed Yusuf actively participated in the brainstorming sessions that led to the conceptualization of the study. He contributed to analyzing the data collected. Aroyewun Temitope Folashade participated in the process of data collection. Mahizer Hamza participated by reviewing the report writing. Contributing authors declare no conflict of interest.

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