



**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**Impact of Om Mantra Chanting in Human Life: An Analysis from a Sociological Perspective**

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**Abstract**

The term “Om” has been used as a chant in the Sanatan tradition as a beneficial Mantra for maintaining a sound mind in a sound body. This word has been in use extensively in meditation and Yoga. This research aimed to delve into the profound importance of ‘Om’ and the effects of chanting this Mantra on individual well-being, encompassing socio-cultural, physical and psycho-social dimensions. To achieve the objective, both primary and secondary data were used under a qualitative research design. Primary data were collected through the case study method. Twenty-three case studies were conducted using purposive and snow ball sampling techniques. The secondary data were collected from previous research reports, articles and references. Both types of data were analyzed using content analysis. “Om”chanting meditation has been found to be effective, meaningful, useful, and essential for a healthy body and mind of an individual from various perspectives. Multiple benefits of ‘Om’ chanting emerged as thematic categories through the analysis of different cases and the respondents. These benefits include control of the blood pressure, reduction of depression, anxiety and stress, physiological relaxation, psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** meditation, Om mantra chanting, psycho-social relaxation, sociology of health, socio-cultural human life

**Introduction**

The term “Om” has been used as a chant in the Sanatan tradition as a beneficial Mantra of maintaining a sound mind in a sound

body. This word has been used extensively in meditation and Yoga. Similarly, the term “Om” is closely linked with Hinduism as Kumar (2010) has argued that Hinduism integrates religion and philosophy,

encompassing not just set of beliefs but also a way of life. Moreover, Akhilananda (1948) describes that within Hinduism, there exists a systematic understanding of the divine name known as Mantra Vidya, accompanied by a comprehensive science of worship. Various aspects of the Divine are symbolized by distinct names, yet these aspects, names, and forms are inherently interconnected. In this sense, the sacred sound "Om" has been emphasized as the manifesting word of the Divine. Engaging in the repetition of "Om" and contemplating its significance serves as a pathway to spiritual practice and enlightenment. In this context, Burchett (2008) clarifies that the term "Mantra" originates from the Sanskrit root "man," meaning "to think" or "mind," and the suffix "-tra," indicating instrumentality. Therefore, a mantra is often seen as "a vehicle for shaping thoughts" or "a means to cultivate particular mental states." In historical contexts, Mantras have been likened to "powerful phrases" or "ritualistic incantations." In Hinduism, Mantras are spoken words believed to possess inherent power when uttered with precision. In this context, Gonda (1963) suggests that scientifically, the term "Mantra" can be interpreted as a combination of "man," signifying thought or meditation, and "tra," denoting salvation or rescue. Hence, a mantra is understood as that which protects the individuals through contemplation and meditation. According to Goel (2020), employing a mantra is a simple yet highly effective method for achieving meditation. It involves the rhythmic repetition of a sound, which aids in gradually withdrawing the mind from external sensory stimuli, marking the initial phase of meditative practice. In this respect, Nalluri et al (2019) observe that Vedic chanting generates specific energetic vibrations akin to music, which deeply influence human moods and emotions. Research indicates that reciting mantras creates vibrational experiences near the ears, which are then transmitted through branches of the vague nerve. These

experiences subsequently impact limbic regions such as the amygdala, hippocampus, and thalamus. Thus, the mantra "Om" has been applied in meditation and the Yoga Sutras.

In the context of meditation and yoga, Burke (2012) and Harne et al. (2019), point out that meditation, an integral part of yoga, involves intentionally directing one's attention towards personal growth, self-discovery, or inner peace. Meditation can be categorized into two main forms: the first focuses on a specific object, while the second involves the mental or vocal repetition of a chant, known as mantra meditation. Mantra meditation, such as the sacred "Om" mantra, considered the essence of ultimate reality, is a simple technique for achieving meditation. It is accessible, time-efficient, and does not necessarily require the guidance of an expert or instructor during practice. In this sense, Kumar (2007) elucidates the Sanskrit phrase '*Mananat-trayate iti Mantrah*,' indicating that a mantra is that which, through continuous contemplation or recitation, offers protection or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Ancient sages, revered for their spiritual wisdom, recognized the profound significance of mantras in fostering mental and spiritual harmony. Consequently, they developed a diverse range of mantras tailored for specific purposes, understanding their role in facilitating personal evolution and spiritual advancement with the "Om" mantra being applied in mediative practices. According to Dwivedi and Singh (2016), "Om" (ॐ) holds significant spiritual and symbolic importance within Hinduism. It embodies both the Atma, the inner self or soul, and Brahma, the ultimate reality encompassing the entire universe, symbolizing divine truth, supreme spirit, cosmic principles, and knowledge. In this respect, Dudeja (2017) further elaborates that "Om" is believed to be the primordial sound of the universe, representing the original vibration of creation. Interestingly, astrophysicists have detected cosmic background radiation

associated with "Big Bang," which manifests as a humming sound akin to "Om."

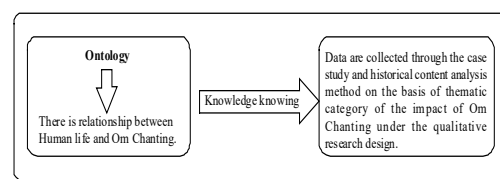
Likewise, Burchett (2008) categorizes "Om" as a "seed" (bija) Mantra, signifying the fundamental essence of the divine. Bija Mantras are considered to be sonic forms or "seeds" of essential cosmic energies, embodying the core and potent elements within the Mantras they compose. Moreover, Dwivedi and Singh (2016) and Sivananda (2010) explain that the syllable "Om" consists of the sounds A, U, and M. "A" symbolizes wakefulness, "U" represents the dream state, and "M" signifies deep sleep. The vibrations of "Om" resonate from the abdomen to the brain, harmonizing the body. Additionally, A, U, and M correspond to the three temporal phases-past, present, and future-while the entire symbol represents the transcendent Creator beyond time. Furthermore, they symbolize the qualities of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, with the complete symbol representing one who transcends these qualities. "Om" also symbolizes the divine trad of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, symbolizing creation, preservation, and transformation, as well as the stages of life: birth, existence, and dissolution.

A forementioned researchers like Burchett (2008), Dwivedi and Singh (2016), Sivananda (2010) Dudeja (2017), Kumar (2007), Burke (2012), Harne et al. (2019), Nalluri et al. (2019), Gonda (1963), Akhilananda(1948), and Goel (2020) have primarily focused on the symbolic and spiritual dimensions of "Om" chanting. However, the socio-cultural impact, psycho-social effects and health related outcomes of "Om" chanting remains unexplored from sociological perspectives. It is not possible for a single study to address all these unanswered issues. Therefore, this research aims to explore the impact of "Om" chanting in the well-being of human life from a psycho-sociological dimension.

## Methodology

Ontologically, this research assumes that 'Om' chanting is related to well-being of human life. The pattern of human well-being cannot be measured through a single reality. Instead, it differs based on socio-cultural contexts. It is concerned with subjectivity of individuals and the existence of multiple realities. So, this research is guided by an interpretive philosophical approach. The interpretive approach demands the qualitative research design to identify the subjectivity of individuals. Case study and content analysis methods are considered appropriate to collect the qualitative data and to explore the multiple subjective realities (Adhikari, 2020 a; Adhikari, 2020b). Hence, qualitative data were collected using case study and content analysis methods, with primary data collected from twenty-three case study narratives detailing individuals' experiences of "Om" chanting in their daily lives. These cases were selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods from individuals who participate in daily 'Om' chanting practices in the Kathmandu valley of Nepal. Additionally, secondary data were obtained from previous research studies, reports, academic papers, research articles, and blog entries to support and contextualize the findings. The content analysis method is more useful to analyze the data in this context (Adhikari et al., 2024a; Adhikari et al, 2024b). So, Content analysis was employed as a method to examine qualitative data drawn from multiple sources. Both primary and secondary data were analyzed using the content analysis, as illustrated in the methodological framework in figure 1.

**Figure 1**  
*Methodological Frame Work*



## Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research are organized and discussed under eight thematic categories.

### **Om Chanting controls the Blood pressure**

“Om” chanting has become therapeutic practice for the control of blood pressure. In this context, case 1 describes a 55 years old man, who had been taking medicine to control his blood pressure and shared his experience of “Om” chanting and the effects. He stated that he had been taking medication for 15 years, which had become troublesome for him. According to him, he once visited a meditation center where “Om” chanting was repeatedly practiced for an hour and he also began to participate in it daily. After a month of regular ‘Om’ chanting meditation, his blood pressure has remained normal and he stopped taking medication. He continued his routine practice of ‘Om’ chanting meditation and his blood pressure has remained stable without medication. He expressed his satisfaction with this practice and considers ‘Om’ chanting Matra as the permanent solution for managing his blood pressure. He believes that he has now achieved a balanced health condition in this regard.

The experiences with ‘Om’ chanting of case 1 align with Arora and Dubey (2018), who investigated the effects of chanting “Om” mantra for five minutes on immediate changes in blood pressure and pulse rate among individuals with moderate, uncomplicated hypertension. Their findings indicate that “Om” chanting was effective in balancing blood pressure and pulse rate.

### **Om Chanting Reduces the Sadness, Loneliness and Tension**

‘Om’ chanting functioned as a therapeutic practice of reducing sadness, loneliness and tension. Cases 15, 17, 19, and 20 describe their experiences of sadness, isolation and tension and had been taking medicine prescribed by doctors. Their

medication dosages were adjusted over time based on their conditions described to the doctors. Case 15 had even been hospitalized for a month. Later he was taken to the meditation center in a rural area, where he actively participated in ‘Om’ chanting chorus for three months continuously. He stated, “I enjoyed the Om chanting in the chorus and my mind got diverted in the spiritual belief”. Subsequently, the dosage of his medication was gradually reduced and eventually he stopped taking it. He reported that his health improved a lot and he experienced no negative thoughts in his mind.

Likewise, case 17 reported similar experience of Om chanting meditation. He explained:

I had thought that my life was over and I used to feel restless and I had the feeling of walking and moving somewhere instead of staying in one place. I never was able to stay in one place. I hated people talking around with me and I liked to stay only in the dark zone in the room. I did not like even to take medicine prescribed by the doctors and I was forcefully fed by my relatives. But one day, my mother took me in the meditation center where a large number of people like me were engaged in ‘Om’ chanting and they got me involved in Om chanting in the group. Then I got the habit and I did not help going there every day. Later on, I got my medicine avoided with the advice of the doctor. Now I am quite healthy.

This case revealed that ‘Om’ chanting meditation has become useful and better medication than that of the medical doctors’ medicine and ‘Om’ chanting has cured his depression completely.

Similarly, case 19 experienced relief from anxiety after regular practice of ‘Om’ chanting in the group for five months. He expressed his experiences as:

I had been taking doctor’s medicine for four years according the suggestion of the medical doctors. I used to feel like going out of the house all the time. I did not get sleep at all whole night and I was unable to

stay alone at home. But my friend took me to a meditation center where 'Om' chanting was common and I too participated in it for three months regularly. Now I cannot help having 'Om' chanted and I have avoided taking medicine according the advice of the doctors.

This account reveals that 'Om' chanting meditation served as therapeutic medication for managing his anxiety.

In the same way, case 20 reported that stress and his health conditions were recovered through the 'Om' chanting mediation. He shared his experience as:

I was the patient of the stress and I used to feel something wrong and negative thoughts used to be coming in my mind. I consulted the medical doctor who advised me to engage in meditation and so I did for a month with 'Om' chanting meditation regularly. As a result, I got felt everything normal.

These all cases indicate that 'Om' chanting meditation can be one of the best medications for those who are experiencing depression, anxiety and stress.

The experiences shared by these cases are assimilated with with Amin et al (2016), who explored the impact of 'Om' chanting on depression, anxiety, stress, and cognition among elderly women with hypertension. The study excluded individuals with extreme blood pressure values, those already engaged in yoga practices, and those with specific medical conditions.

### **Experiencing Psycho-Social Relaxation**

'Om' chanting meditation has been found to promote psychological relaxation among individuals who have been engaged in practice. Cases 9 and 12 felt the physiological pleasure in involving the 'Om' chanting meditation. The case 9 shared his feeling as:

I had involved in 'Om' chanting meditation in a group and as I participated in it, I got lost in the pleasure of it. I forgot everything of outside world and I did not help getting the relaxation in the 'Om'

chanting meditation regularly. Now I do not get away from the relaxation of out of it.

Similarly, case 12 expressed similar experience as, "I experienced physiological relaxation in 'Om' chanting meditation and I enjoyed it much and I got motivated in it much more than anything else." These two cases revealed 'Om' chanting meditation can support to mesmerize as well as hypnotize involvement in the group and in chorus chanting mood. Hence, it contributes to both psychological and physiological relaxation. In this context, Kumar et al. (2010) conducted a comprehensive scientific study on the effects of 'Om' chanting meditation. Their research has encompassed various aspects of 'Om' chanting meditation, examining auditory and respiratory parameters under different experimental conditions and found that Om chanting has worth for promoting psychological well-being.

### **Increase in *Sattva* and a Decrease in *Raja*, and *Tama Guna***

Various cases indicate that 'Om' chanting provides socio-cultural and psycho-social benefits and contributes to positive lifestyle transformation from from the habits of having *Rajas* and *Tamas* eating to *Sattva*. Cases 11, and 10 have shared their experiences in this regard. Case 11 said "I used to take *Raja* and *Tama guni* types of food items before I participated in Om chanting meditation and 'Om' chanting was a great transformation in my life." In the same way, Case 10 narrated his experience as:

I had the worst habit of having the *Raja* and *Tamas* with my friends and I had got my evil habits in the process of eating before I began 'Om' chanting in the chorus and the groups. When I got actively involved in the Om chanting meditation, I had got completely changed my habit of having my food items from *Rajas* and *Tamas* into *Sattva* and it was the outcome of the Om chanting meditation.

These two cases displayed that those who have participated in 'Om' chanting

meditation can bring positive transformation in the life and habits of people.

In the same way, the researcher Dash (2017) emphasizes the efficacy of meditation, yoga, and *Japa* (mantra chanting) as therapeutic approaches for addressing diverse psychosocial challenges like substance dependency, psychological stress, and depression. Although yoga is often viewed primarily as a physical exercise routine, it plays a more comprehensive role by integrating the body, mind, and spirit. Ultimately, these practices offer not only physical advantages but also promote overall well-being by fostering harmony among different aspects of an individual's existence.

Likewise, Wolf & Abell (2003) conducted experimental research to examine the effects of chanting the "Maha mantra" on stress, depression, and the three *gunas-Sattva, Raja, and Tama*-as described in Vedic literature as fundamental aspects of human psychology. The study aimed to test the hypothesis that participants in the Maha mantra group would experience and increase in *Sattva* and a decrease in stress, depression, *Raja*, and *Tama* compared to other groups. Participants underwent assessments at pretest, posttest, and follow-up stages, spaced 4 weeks apart. They were randomly assigned to three groups: a Maha mantra group, an alternate mantra (placebo) group, and a control group. The findings supported the hypotheses for all variables except *Rajas*, suggesting that chanting the Maha mantra has the potential to alleviate stress and depression. Similarly, Harne et al. (2019) conducted a survey that synthesized existing research on 'Om' meditation, encompassing a variety of techniques and methodologies.

The narratives from cases 11 and 10 suggest that chanting 'Om' provides socio-cultural and psycho-social benefits, leading to a positive transformation from *Raja guna* and *Tama guna* habits to *Sattva guna*.

### **Chanting of 'Om' and Balancing of Psycho-social Dimensions of Human Life**

Chanting 'Om' has been found to contribute the overall balance of human life including physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Case 13 and 14 shared their experiences of gaining better condition of the physical strength. Case 13 expressed as:

My mind used to be imbalance and emotionally uncontrolled before I started in 'Om' chanting meditation. But when I began in the act of 'Om' chanting meditation, then I was fascinated towards spiritual dimensions and I began to seek the ideas of The Bhagwat Gita and now I am fully devoted in the study of religious texts.

In the same way, Case 14 shared his beliefs as, "I was one of the uncontrolled men and out of discipline. I never trusted in spiritual life but when I started in participating 'Om' chanting meditation, then I changed myself and I got attracted in the spiritual dimensions." These cases exhibit that 'Om' chanting meditation restores physical, mental, and emotional power and leads to spiritual growth.

Similar to this study, Das & Anand (2012) conducted a study to investigate the influence of prayer and meditation, particularly of 'Om' chanting, on galvanic skin response (GSR) arousal. The research aimed to explore the potential positive impact of prayer and meditation on GSR levels. Participants were engaged in daily prayer and meditation sessions lasting 30 minutes each for a duration of one month. Using a single-group pre-post research design, data were collected before and after the intervention period. The findings revealed a significant increase in GSR values following prayer and meditation sessions, indicating a state of psychophysiological relaxation. This suggests that engaging in prayer and meditation practices helps to alleviate individual stress levels. The narratives from cases 13 and 14 of reveal that 'Om' chanting meditation can lead to balance, mental, emotional and spiritual

dimensions of human lives.

### **Chanting Meditation has a Positive Impact on Mood and Social Cognition**

‘Om’ chanting meditation has a positive impact on mood and social cognition in the life of those who engaged on it. Cases 7, 8 and 9 shared their positive impact and better social cognition that they have got in their life. Case 7 shared her experience of ‘Om’ chanting meditation as:

I got involved in Om chanting meditation with my friends in the groups and found myself entirely having positive impact on my mood and social cognition. I never got negative thoughts and beliefs in my mind as I used to have such feelings before and I began to see everyone with my positive sights and it was my great achievement in having the wider thoughts to all.

Similarly, case 8 shared her feelings of before and after engaging in Om chanting meditation:

I had always negative thoughts, doubts, cynicism to everyone in any kinds of ideas before I got involved in the act of ‘Om’ chanting meditation. When I started participating in ‘Om’ chanting with my friends, then my negative thoughts, cynicism, doubts and judging everyone negatively got transformed into the positive impact in my mood and social cognition.

Likewise, case 9 expressed her feelings and experience as:

I doubted everyone and I never used to take anyone with positive aspects before I started Om chanting meditation but when I was taken in ‘Om’ chanting meditation by my mother in the ‘Om’ chanting center, then I got surprised myself that my negative thoughts, doubts, cynicism and beliefs got changed into positive one and I found nothing negative in my mind that was the outcome of the ‘Om’ chanting meditation.

These all cases point out that ‘Om’ chanting meditation can contribute to transforming negative beliefs, thoughts, doubts and cynicism into more positive patterns of thinking and social perceptions.

The findings from cases 7, 8 and 9 suggest that ‘Om’ chanting meditation can function as a therapeutic practice to remove negative thoughts, feelings, doubts, cynicisms and disagreements, and to foster social cognition and psychological well-being.

### **‘Om’ Chanting Influences Cognitive and Emotional Functions through Neural Mechanisms**

‘Om’ chanting has been found to positively influence emotional got positive emotional functioning by transforming t negative impulses into feelings of joy and calmness. In this context, cases 2, 3 and 5 shared their personal experiences. Case 2 expressed her feelings as:

I had always been troubled my mind and I had the negative thoughts about myself and about my friends. I was emotionally out of the control and I did not know how to behave where with whom in my life but when I got my Om chanting meditation, then all my thoughts and the uncontrollable emotional thoughts got in the balanced form and now I am quite sensible of how to act where and with whom properly.

This narrative indicates that ‘Om’ chanting positively influences emotional aspects of human life.

Likewise, case 3 shared her personal thoughts as, “I am completely changed in my life when I have started ‘Om’ chanting and now, I am sound emotionally and I have felt peace and calm in my mind due to ‘Om’ chanting meditation.” Her experience displayed that ‘Om’ chanting functions as a therapeutic medication for emotional control and psychological well-being.

Similarly, case 5 has shared her experiences and states “I have got effective and positive impacts in my emotional thoughts and feelings through the ‘Om’ chanting meditation. It has made me energetic, active, and dynamic in my feelings, manners, and activities.” Her experience revealed that Om chanting medicates to improve emotional conditions

and psychological vitality.

Similar to this research, Kalyani et al. (2011) conducted a pilot study using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to examine the neuro-hemodynamic effect of 'Om chanting.' The study examined whether 'Om' chanting leads to deactivation in the limbic system, akin to transcutaneous Vagal nerve stimulation (VNS). Participants underwent fMRI scans while performing 'Om' chanting, and the resultant neuroimaging data were scrutinized to identify alterations in brain activity correlated with this chanting practice. The results indicated that 'Om' chanting may induce deactivation in the limbic system, similar to the effects observed with Vagal nerve stimulation. This initial evidence supports the theory that 'Om' chanting influences cognitive and emotional functions through neural mechanisms. To summarize, Kalyani et al. (2011) used fMRI in their pilot study to advance our understanding of the neurological aspects of 'Om' chanting, highlighting potential limbic system deactivation linked to this traditional practice.

The narratives from cases 2, 3 and 5 reveal that Om chanting has positive influence in maintaining emotional, cognitive balance and psychological well-being. Om chanting may function a supportive therapeutic medication to promote both emotional and psychological functioning.

### **Stabilize the Mind, Reduce Mundane Thoughts**

'Om' chanting meditation serves to stabilizing the mind and reducing mundane thoughts. In this context, cases 4 and 6 narrated their personal experiences and feelings. Case 4 shared her experience as:

I had got mentally disturbed and had the uncontrollable thoughts when I was alone. But when I started the 'Om' chanting meditation, then it helped me to stabilize my mind and it even reduced my mundane thoughts and I got quite sound condition

both mentally and emotionally.

Her experience inculcates that Om chanting can act as the medication for stabilizing the mind and reducing the unnecessary thoughts.

Likewise, the case 6 reported her experience as:

I had never become able to keep my mind in full concentration and I had countless thoughts before I had started Om chanting meditation. When I got the 'Om' chanting meditation, then my mind was completely stabilized and even the uncountable thoughts got controlled by the concentration of 'Om' chanting activities.

Her experience shows that 'Om' chanting meditation stabilizes the mind and reduces the mundane thoughts.

In support of these findings, Gurjar et al. (2009) conducted research to examine the psychological and physiological effects of Om chanting in human life. After engaging on Om chanting, the participants reported that Om chanting increased their mental calmness, physical relaxation, and smoother, slower breathing patterns., These changes result reduction in the swing of the FM signal. The participants also reported a soothing effect of Om chanting on both their mind and body, accompanied by a significant decrease in negative thoughts. This transformation was described as a release of internal vitality, which contributes to healing at the cellular level, increases energy, enhances strength, and improves focus. Consequently, chanting the Om mantra was found to stabilize the mind, reduce mundane thoughts, and elevate levels of vitality. The narratives from cases 4 and 6 prove that Om chanting meditation can effectively stabilize the mind, reduce the mundane thoughts and promote mental clarity.

### **Conclusion**

'Om' chanting has been established as an important factor for psychological and cultural well-being of individuals. 'Om'

chanting meditation has been found to be effective, meaningful, useful, and essential for the healthy body and healthy mind of individuals from multiple perspectives. The thematic analysis of different cases and the narratives of the respondents reveal multiple benefits of Om chanting in human life. These benefits include blood pressure control, reduction of depression, anxiety, and stress, physiological relaxation, and psychological well-being. Moreover, Om Mantra chanting increases *Sattva* and decreases *Rajas*, and *Tamas*, helping to restore balance across socio-cultural, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of life. It also has a positive impact on mood and social cognition, influencing cognitive and emotional functions through neural mechanisms. It contributes to mental stabilization and reduction of mundane thoughts, thereby supporting individuals to lead to positive and more balanced paths of life. The findings imply that 'Om' chanting functions as a therapeutic medication for addressing psycho-social, mental, physical, and socio-cultural issues in human life.

### Implication

All individuals seek for well-being of lives. This research explored the impacts of om chanting on the socio-cultural life of human beings. It will be useful to identify the indigenous medication practices for the well-being of human life as well as to make health policies in indigenous perspective. The exploration of Om Mantra chanting underscores its profound significance in socio-cultural practice and its tangible impact on individual well-being. As an ancient tradition with timeless relevance, Om serves as a potent tool for holistic healing and socio-cultural growth, offering solace and rejuvenation to practitioners across cultures and generations.

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### Availability of Data and Materials

Data are safely stored. They will be made available in special request.

### Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this manuscript.

### Ethical Compliance

This study involved human participants; however, no human biological data or tissue was used. I/We declare that the study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards.

### Consent for Publication

"Not applicable"

### Plagiarism and AI Use

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