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AMBEDKAR'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND NEP 2020: AN
ANALYTICAL STUDY OF INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE
EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Keywords	Abstract
<i>Ambedkar's Educational Philosophy, NEP 2020, Inclusive Education, Social Justice, Educational Equality, Educational Reform.</i>	The present study examines the relevance of B. R. Ambedkar's educational philosophy in relation to the National Education Policy 2020 and its vision for inclusive and equitable education in India. Dr. Ambedkar regarded education as a powerful instrument for social transformation, equality, liberty and human dignity. The study aims to analyse the core principles of Ambedkar's educational thought, examine its relevance within the framework of NEP 2020, compare his vision with the policy objectives of NEP 2020, and suggest educational implications for building a socially just and inclusive society. The research is qualitative, analytical, and historical-philosophical in nature. Data have been collected from primary and secondary sources including Ambedkar's writings, speeches, constitutional provisions, books, research articles, and policy documents related to NEP



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	2020. The study employs content analysis and interpretative methods to analyse the collected data. The findings reveal that many provisions of NEP 2020, such as equity, inclusive education, gender inclusion, and educational access for disadvantaged groups, strongly reflect Ambedkar’s educational vision. However, challenges related to implementation, social inequality, and educational disparity still persist. The study suggests that Ambedkar’s philosophy should be integrated more effectively into educational policies, curriculum development, teacher education, and institutional practices to strengthen democratic values, social justice, and equal educational opportunities in India.
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Introduction:

Education is one of the most powerful instruments for individual development and social transformation. The term “education” is derived from the Latin words *Educare* and *Educere*, which mean “to nourish,” “to bring up,” and “to draw out” (Sharma, 2018). Education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge or information; rather, it is a continuous process of developing the intellectual, moral, social, emotional, and spiritual capacities of an individual. It enables a person to think critically, act rationally, and contribute meaningfully to society. Education plays a significant role in shaping personality, promoting democratic values, strengthening social harmony, and ensuring economic and cultural progress (Dewey, 1916).

In modern democratic societies, education is considered a fundamental human right and a powerful means of empowerment. It helps in reducing social inequalities, eliminating discrimination, and promoting social mobility (UNESCO, 2021). Education also acts as a catalyst for national development by producing responsible citizens and skilled human resources. In the Indian context, where society has historically been affected by caste hierarchy, gender inequality, poverty, and social exclusion, education becomes even more important as an instrument of liberation and social justice. It is through education that marginalized communities can gain awareness, dignity, self-confidence, and equal opportunities for participation in social, political, and economic life (NCERT, 2006).

Ambedkar’s Educational Thought

B. R. Ambedkar viewed education as the most effective weapon for social transformation and emancipation of oppressed communities. Having personally experienced caste discrimination and social exclusion, Ambedkar realized that education alone could challenge the deeply rooted structures of inequality and injustice in Indian society (Ambedkar, 1936). His famous slogan, “Educate, Agitate, Organize,” reflects his belief that education is the foundation of social awakening and democratic participation. Ambedkar’s educational philosophy was based on the principles of equality, liberty, fraternity, rationality, and social justice (Keer, 2009). He strongly opposed caste-based discrimination in education and advocated equal educational opportunities for all, especially



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for Dalits, women, backward classes, and other marginalized groups. According to Ambedkar, education should not merely prepare individuals for employment; it should develop critical consciousness, moral values, scientific temper, and self-respect (Omvedt, 1994). He emphasized that education must create socially responsible citizens capable of establishing a just and democratic society.

Ambedkar also believed that the state has a responsibility to provide accessible and inclusive education to disadvantaged sections of society. His contribution to constitutional safeguards, reservations, scholarships, and educational reforms demonstrates his commitment to educational democracy and social equality (Ranga, 2000). Even today, his educational philosophy remains highly relevant in addressing issues of exclusion, inequality, and injustice within the Indian education system.

Need for Inclusive Education in India

India is a diverse country characterized by differences in caste, class, gender, language, religion, region, disability, and socio-economic background. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and educational rights, many sections of society continue to face educational exclusion and discrimination. Marginalized communities such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, women, minorities, economically weaker sections, and children with disabilities often encounter barriers related to access, participation, quality, and equity in education (Government of India, 2020). Inclusive education has emerged as an important approach for ensuring equal educational opportunities for all learners regardless of their social, cultural, or economic background. It seeks to create an educational environment where diversity is respected and every learner receives support according to their needs and abilities (Ainscow, 2005). Inclusive education promotes social justice, democratic values, and national integration by eliminating discrimination and fostering mutual respect among learners.

In India, the need for inclusive education has become more urgent due to persistent educational disparities, school dropouts, gender inequality, regional imbalance, and digital divides (UNICEF, 2022). A truly inclusive education system is essential for achieving constitutional values and sustainable national development. In this context, Ambedkar's educational philosophy provides a strong ideological foundation for promoting educational inclusion, equity, and social transformation in contemporary India.

Introduction of NEP 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 is one of the most significant educational reforms introduced in India in the twenty-first century. Approved by the Government of India in July 2020, the policy aims to transform the Indian education system by making it holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, inclusive, and learner-centered (Government of India, 2020). NEP 2020 seeks to ensure equitable access to



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quality education for all sections of society and aligns education with the constitutional values of justice, equality, liberty, and fraternity. The policy emphasizes universal access to education, foundational literacy and numeracy, experiential learning, skill development, multilingualism, gender inclusion, and the integration of technology in education. Special attention has been given to Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, women, and rural learners (NEP, 2020). Provisions such as the Gender Inclusion Fund, Special Education Zones, scholarships, and flexible learning pathways reflect the policy's commitment toward inclusive and equitable education.

NEP 2020 also highlights the importance of critical thinking, constitutional values, ethical reasoning, and holistic human development. Many of these principles resonate strongly with Ambedkar's educational vision (Kumar, 2015). Therefore, examining the relevance of Ambedkar's educational thought in relation to NEP 2020 is highly significant for understanding how educational policy can contribute to building a socially just and democratic society in India.

Rationale of the Study

The present study is significant because it examines the relevance of B. R. Ambedkar's educational philosophy in the context of the National Education Policy 2020. Although Ambedkar is widely recognized as a champion of social justice and equality, his educational philosophy has not received sufficient scholarly attention in relation to contemporary educational reforms (Sirswal, 2016). In India, issues such as educational inequality, social exclusion, gender disparity, and unequal access to quality education continue to affect marginalized sections of society. NEP 2020 emphasizes inclusion, equity, quality education, and holistic development, particularly for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). Many of these objectives closely reflect Ambedkar's vision of education as a means of empowerment, social transformation, and democratic participation (Sunita, 2017). His ideas based on liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice remain highly relevant in addressing present educational challenges.

Several studies have explored Ambedkar's social and political contributions as well as the features of NEP 2020. However, limited research has analytically examined the relationship between Ambedkar's educational philosophy and the inclusive vision of NEP 2020 (Barnwal, 2014). Most existing studies are descriptive in nature and lack a comparative analysis of both perspectives. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this research gap by critically analyzing the relevance of Ambedkar's educational thought in achieving inclusive and equitable education in contemporary India.

Problem Statement

“AMBEDKAR'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND NEP 2020: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION IN INDIA.”



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Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the core principles of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's educational philosophy.
2. To examine the relevance of Ambedkar's educational thought in NEP 2020.
3. To compare Ambedkar's vision of educational equality with the objectives of NEP 2020.

6. Review of Literature

Studies related to B. R. Ambedkar's educational philosophy mainly focused on social justice, equality, and empowerment of marginalized communities. Omvedt (1994) emphasized that Ambedkar considered education a powerful tool for social emancipation and the upliftment of oppressed sections of society. Keer (2009) highlighted that Ambedkar's educational ideas were rooted in liberty, equality, fraternity, and democratic values. Ainscow (2005) discussed the importance of inclusive education in ensuring equal participation and access for all learners irrespective of caste, gender, disability, and socio-economic background. Rege (2013) observed that Ambedkar strongly supported women's education and viewed it as essential for social and economic empowerment. Barnwal (2014) noted that Ambedkar's educational thought aimed at establishing an inclusive and democratic society through equal educational opportunities. Sirswal (2016) further explained that Ambedkar's philosophy of education was closely connected with constitutional morality and social transformation. Zene (2018) emphasized Ambedkar's contribution toward gender justice and educational rights for marginalized women.

Recent studies have increasingly focused on equity and inclusion in the framework of the National Education Policy 2020. Government of India (2020) stated that NEP 2020 aims to ensure equitable access to quality education, particularly for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), through provisions such as Gender Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones. UNESCO (2021) highlighted that inclusive education policies are essential for achieving social justice and sustainable development. Kumar (2021) observed that NEP 2020 promotes constitutional values, multilingualism, holistic development, and learner-centered education. UNICEF (2022) emphasized the continuing challenges of educational inequality, digital divide, and exclusion in India. However, most studies on NEP 2020 remain descriptive and policy-oriented, and limited research has analytically examined the relationship between Ambedkar's educational philosophy and the inclusive vision of NEP 2020. Therefore, the present study attempts to bridge this gap by critically analyzing the relevance of Ambedkar's educational thought in promoting inclusive and equitable education in contemporary India.

Methodology

The present study is qualitative, analytical, and historical-philosophical in nature. It examines the relevance of B. R. Ambedkar's educational philosophy in the framework of the National Education



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Policy 2020. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources include Ambedkar's speeches, writings, books, Constituent Assembly debates, and the NEP 2020 document, while secondary sources include research papers, books, journals, and reports related to education, social justice, and inclusive education. The collected data have been analyzed through content analysis and thematic analysis to examine the relationship between Ambedkar's educational thought and the inclusive and equitable vision of NEP 2020.

Analysis of the Core Principles of Ambedkar's Educational Philosophy

B. R. Ambedkar, "Indian jurist and social reformer" considered education as the most powerful instrument for social transformation, equality, and human dignity. His educational philosophy was deeply rooted in the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, rationality, and social justice (Keer, 2009). Ambedkar believed that education should empower marginalized communities to challenge social discrimination, caste hierarchy, and economic exploitation. According to him, education was not merely a means of literacy or employment but a tool for developing critical consciousness, self-respect, democratic values, and scientific temper (Omvedt, 1994). He strongly emphasized that educational opportunities should be made accessible to all individuals irrespective of caste, gender, religion, or socio-economic status.

Analysis of the Core Principles of Ambedkar's Educational Philosophy

"Education is the milk of a tigress, he who drinks it will roar."
- B. R. Ambedkar

CORE PRINCIPLES

- LIBERTY**
Education develops freedom of thought and expression.
- EQUALITY**
Education ensures equal opportunities for all without discrimination.
- FRATERNITY**
Education promotes brotherhood, solidarity and social harmony.
- RATIONALITY**
Education encourages critical thinking, scientific temper and questioning.
- SOCIAL JUSTICE**
Education empowers the oppressed and brings social transformation.

Ambedkar believed that education should empower marginalized communities to challenge social discrimination, caste hierarchy, and economic exploitation.

For him, education is not merely a means of literacy or employment but a tool for developing critical consciousness, self-respect, democratic values, and scientific temper.

He strongly emphasized that educational opportunities should be accessible to all irrespective of caste, gender, religion or socio-economic status. He also advocated women's education as essential for social progress and gender equality.

His slogan "Educate, Agitate, Organize" reflects his belief that education creates awareness and empowers individuals to fight against injustice and inequality.

AMBEDKAR ON THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN EDUCATION

- The state must provide educational facilities for all citizens.
- Scholarships and financial support should be given to disadvantaged groups.
- Reservations and special opportunities are necessary for social equality.
- Constitutional safeguards must ensure educational rights and protection.

Ambedkar's educational philosophy aims at building an inclusive, democratic and just society where education is the path to empowerment, equality and social justice.

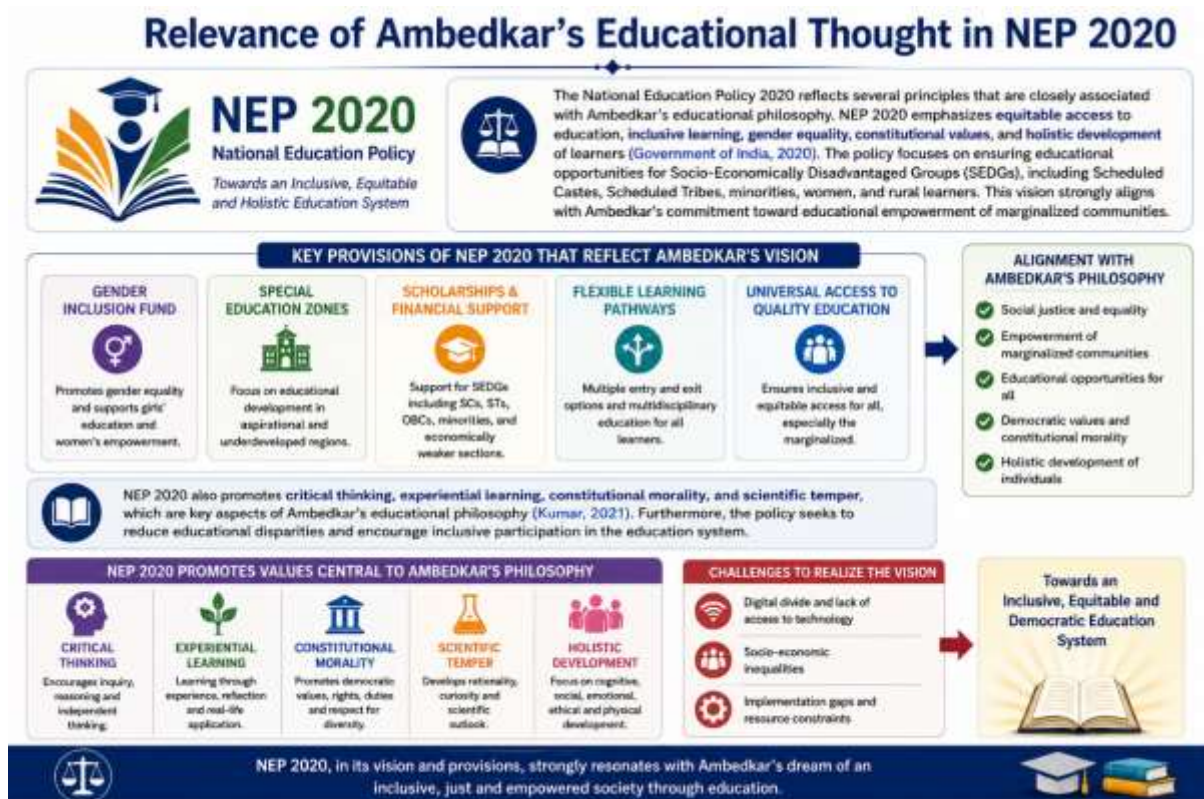


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Ambedkar viewed education as the foundation for social emancipation and democratic participation. His famous slogan "Educate, Agitate, Organize" reflected his belief that education creates awareness and empowers individuals to fight against injustice and inequality (Sirswal, 2016). He also advocated women's education and considered it essential for achieving social progress and gender equality. Ambedkar believed that the state must play an active role in providing educational facilities, scholarships, reservations, and constitutional safeguards for disadvantaged groups. His philosophy aimed at establishing an inclusive and democratic society in which education serves as a means of empowerment, equality, and social justice. Therefore, Ambedkar's educational thought continues to remain highly relevant in addressing contemporary educational inequalities and exclusion in India.

2. Relevance of Ambedkar's Educational Thought in NEP 2020

The "National Education Policy 2020", "Indian education policy" reflects several principles that are closely associated with Ambedkar's educational philosophy. NEP 2020 emphasizes equitable access to education, inclusive learning, gender equality, constitutional values, and holistic development of learners (Government of India, 2020). The policy focuses on ensuring educational opportunities for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, women, and rural learners. This vision strongly aligns with Ambedkar's commitment toward educational empowerment of marginalized communities.

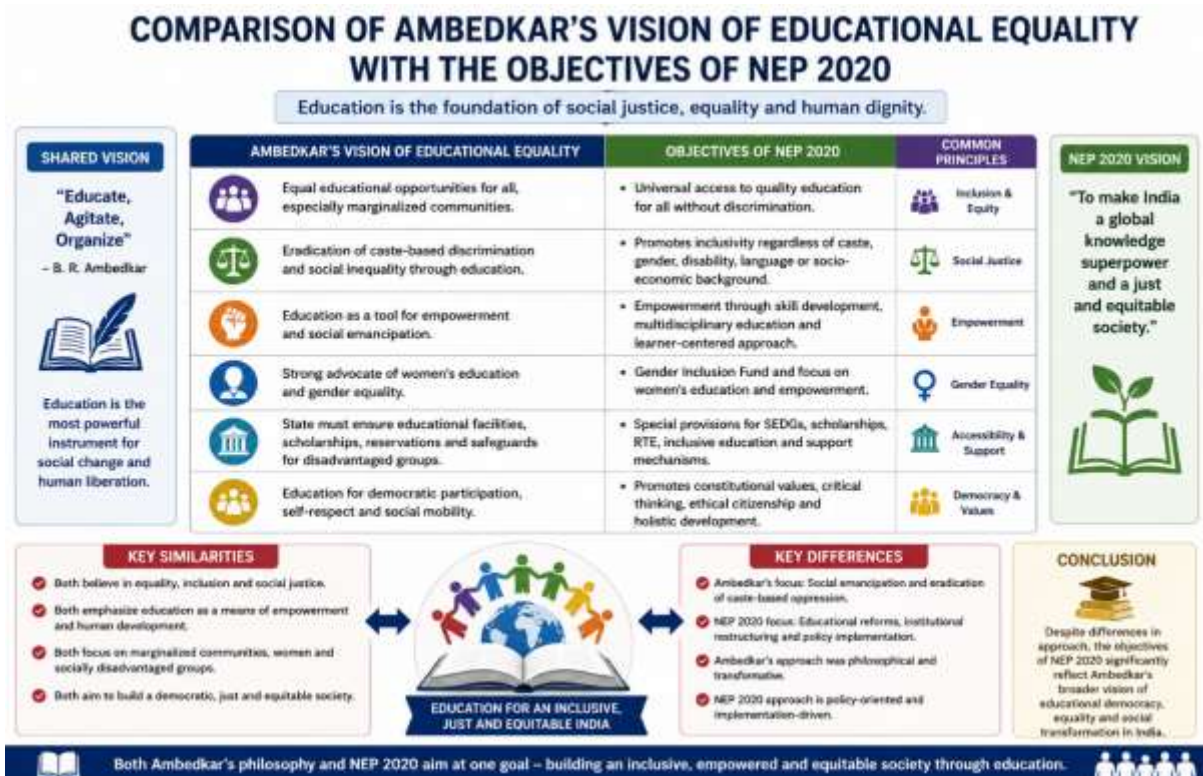


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The policy introduces important provisions such as the Gender Inclusion Fund, Special Education Zones, scholarships, flexible learning pathways, and universal access to quality education. These initiatives reflect Ambedkar’s vision of social justice and equality through education. NEP 2020 also promotes critical thinking, experiential learning, constitutional morality, and scientific temper, which are key aspects of Ambedkar’s educational philosophy (Kumar, 2021). Furthermore, the policy seeks to reduce educational disparities and encourage inclusive participation in the education system. Although challenges related to implementation, digital divide, and socio-economic inequalities still exist, the overall framework of NEP 2020 significantly resonates with Ambedkar’s vision of an inclusive and democratic education system.

3. Comparison between Ambedkar’s Vision of Educational Equality and the Objectives of NEP 2020

Ambedkar’s vision of educational equality and the objectives of NEP 2020 share several common principles related to inclusion, equity, empowerment, and social justice. Ambedkar strongly advocated equal educational opportunities for all sections of society, particularly for socially and economically marginalized communities. Similarly, NEP 2020 aims to ensure universal access to quality education without discrimination based on caste, gender, disability, language, or socio-economic background (Government of India, 2020). Both perspectives emphasize that education should contribute to democratic participation, social mobility, and human development.



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Ambedkar believed that education should eradicate social inequality and empower individuals to participate equally in social and political life. Likewise, NEP 2020 promotes inclusive education, learner-centered pedagogy, skill development, and constitutional values for creating a just and equitable society. Both Ambedkar and NEP 2020 emphasize women's education, empowerment of disadvantaged groups, and accessibility to quality education. However, Ambedkar's educational philosophy was more directly focused on social emancipation and the eradication of caste-based oppression, whereas NEP 2020 primarily emphasizes educational reforms, institutional restructuring, and policy implementation. Despite this difference, the objectives of NEP 2020 significantly reflect Ambedkar's broader vision of educational democracy, equality, and social transformation in India (Barnwal, 2014).

Major Findings of the Study

1. B. R. Ambedkar viewed education as a powerful instrument for social emancipation, equality, and empowerment of marginalized communities. He considered education essential for eliminating caste discrimination and promoting democratic participation.
2. Ambedkar's educational philosophy was based on the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, social justice, constitutional morality, and scientific temper, which remain highly relevant in contemporary Indian education.
3. The National Education Policy 2020 reflects several Ambedkarite principles such as inclusive education, equitable access, gender equality, empowerment of disadvantaged groups, and holistic development of learners.
4. Both Ambedkar's educational vision and NEP 2020 emphasize equal educational opportunities for all sections of society, particularly for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), women, minorities, and rural learners.
5. The study found that provisions such as the Gender Inclusion Fund, Special Education Zones, scholarships, and flexible learning pathways in NEP 2020 align closely with Ambedkar's vision of social justice and educational democracy.
6. Despite the progressive objectives of NEP 2020, challenges such as educational inequality, digital divide, socio-economic disparities, lack of resources, and implementation gaps continue to hinder the realization of inclusive and equitable education in India.
7. The study concludes that integrating Ambedkar's educational philosophy more effectively into educational policies, curriculum, and institutional practices can strengthen democratic values, social justice, and inclusive educational development in contemporary India.



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Conclusion

B. R. Ambedkar's educational philosophy continues to remain highly relevant in contemporary India, particularly in addressing issues of social inequality, exclusion, and educational injustice. His vision of education as a means of empowerment, equality, and democratic participation provides a strong foundation for building an inclusive and socially just society. In the present educational context, there is a growing need for value-based and inclusive education that promotes constitutional values, human dignity, social harmony, and equal opportunities for all learners. The National Education Policy 2020 plays an important role in realizing these constitutional ideals through its emphasis on equity, inclusion, gender justice, and holistic development. Although challenges related to implementation and accessibility still exist, the policy reflects many principles of Ambedkar's educational thought. Therefore, Ambedkar's educational philosophy remains a foundational framework for achieving inclusive, democratic, and socially just education in contemporary India.

AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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

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