

OPINION **OPEN ACCESS**

Publishing Journal Articles: 5 Tips for Success

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1 | Introduction

Publishing in high-reputation journals can enhance a researcher's profile and lead to better career opportunities. However, family commitments, such as caring for children, complicate the process by limiting the time available for research and writing. Additionally, managing assistants and guiding students through writing and submission processes adds other layers of responsibility. Balancing various commitments while striving to write and publish can be particularly challenging for early career researchers.

In November 2023, 11 early career researchers attended the workshop "Publication Strategies" at the University of Konstanz, Germany. They came from different disciplines: biology, chemistry, computer science, linguistics, literature studies, medicine, and physics. They came from different countries: Argentina, Brazil, Germany, India, Italy, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine. Participants were in different stages of their careers: PhD students, postdocs, and assistant professors. Despite these differences, they faced similar obstacles in their everyday lives: multiple responsibilities and lack of time. What united them was one shared goal: publishing articles in high-quality academic journals.

The didactic design of the workshop was based on Experiential Learning Theory and followed Kolb's learning cycle (see Kolb 2015). In this cycle, reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation play key roles in the learning process (Wien et al. 2020). Furthermore, our approach was informed by the concept of a growth mindset (Dweck 2007), which encourages scholars—especially those from underrepresented or

structurally disadvantaged backgrounds—to view challenges in publishing not as fixed limitations but as opportunities for development. In this context, persistence, openness to feedback, and strategic learning are crucial.

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Stajkovic and Luthans 1998) stresses how learning is influenced by self-efficacy, social influence, and behavioural reinforcement. Applying this framework can shed light on the challenges young researchers face and how the factors shape their publishing capacity (Samsudin et al. 2017).

Based on the aforementioned theoretical frameworks and drawing from observations and conceptualisations during and after the workshop, a list of tips for getting published was developed. Five participants, together with the trainer, transformed this list into a paper. Here are their 5 tips for getting published (see Figure 1).

2 | Tip 1: Set Yourself Up for Publishing Success

Writing and publishing is time-consuming and challenging. In the face of challenges, questions like: "What can I do to help myself?", "How else can I do this?", "Is there a way to do this even better?" helps to trigger problem-solving abilities (Chen et al. 2020). These questions help to think about one's thinking and to adopt a strategic mindset (Chen et al. 2020). A strategic mindset could complement other progress-related attributes such as grit, self-control, and a growth mindset (Chen et al. 2020). A growth mindset is the belief that we can grow from failures and that we can develop our skills (Dweck 2007).

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Summary

- This paper provides practical guidance for early-career researchers seeking to succeed in academic publishing despite challenges related to time, pressure, and limited resources.
- It presents five actionable tips for achieving publishing success:
 - Set yourself up for publishing success.
 - Use effective tools to streamline the research and publishing process.
 - Improve writing skills using articles, books, and on-line platforms.
 - Build productive collaborations with fellow researchers.
 - Focus on making an impact through your research.
- The paper draws attention to the specific difficulties faced by researchers in countries with limited research facilities and funding.
- It emphasises the importance of striving for international visibility and contributing high-quality research to the global academic community.
- The tips are intended to help researchers at all levels navigate common publishing obstacles and achieve success in the competitive world of academic publishing.

Understanding that writing is a skill that can be developed like other skills helps us to become better (Grogan 2021). Thus, it matters how we think about our writing activities. Alshwairikh et al. (2023) showed that graduate students and postdocs with a negative sentiment towards scientific writing had fewer first-author publications.

The observation of successful peers, willingness to accept constructive criticisms, and building confidence are crucial to strengthening self-efficacy (Artino 2012; Stajkovic and Luthans 1998) which is essential for navigating the rigours of the publishing process.

In addition to an appropriate mindset, clear goals help early-career researchers to achieve publishing success. Goals are needed because it is easy for researchers to spend their days with activities that do not really matter. Therefore, find out what matters to you. Create a hierarchy of goals and act according to your goals. On a general level, define your academic mission. A helpful template for an academic mission statement is provided by Cathy Mazak (Mazak 2017): “I use [methodologies/theoretical frames] to study [population] [phenomenon] [context] to [change you want to see in the world].” On a more specific level, define your publishing goals: What are the topics of my next articles? What are my target journals? When do I plan to submit to these journals? On an even more specific level, define weekly or daily writing goals: What do I want to write? When will I do it?

We also recommend cultivating habits for success. Habits for success are regularly performed actions helping to achieve personal goals. In the influential book “The 7 habits of highly

effective people”, Covey (2004) advises for example “to begin with the end in mind”, “to be proactive”, “to put first things first”. In “High performance habits”, Burchard (2022) recommends seeking clarity (self, social interactions, impact on society), generating energy (mental and physical), increasing productivity (setting priorities, avoiding distractions) and showing courage (starting, persisting). Covey (2004) and Burchard (2022) describe high level habits, which can be labelled “macro habits”. These “macro habits” should be put into practice with actionable “micro habits”. A micro habit for increasing writing productivity is, for example, a regular, brief writing session in the morning. A micro habit for improving text quality is, for instance, a specific routine to ask colleagues for feedback.

Finally, there are divergent opinions regarding the quality versus quantity of academic publications (see Donaldson and Cooke 2014; Sandström and Van Den Besselaar 2016; Michalska-Smith and Allesina 2017; Liu et al. 2024). Although quantity remains an important factor in research evaluation metrics, the importance of focusing on the quality of research articles cannot be overstated. The quality of a publication reflects dedication, rigour, and excellence in academic pursuits, ultimately contributing to the advancement of knowledge. A high-quality article should have a clearly defined objective, a critical assessment of existing literature, a coherent structure, sound research methods appropriate for addressing the research question, and accurate, thoroughly reviewed findings that effectively support the conclusions. Furthermore, the article should be clear, concise, and precise, emphasising the significance of the research findings and their contribution to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting potential implications and applications (see Donaldson and Cooke 2014; Sandström and Van Den Besselaar 2016; Michalska-Smith and Allesina 2017). Key points that highlight the importance of quality over quantity in academic publishing are credibility and reputation, impact and contribution, peer recognition, effectiveness of communication, time and resource management, and career development.

3 | Tip 2: Use Effective Tools

Choosing effective tools is paramount for publishing success, as helpful tools enhance process efficiency and manuscript quality. With an abundance of online and desktop tools available, making appropriate selections is demanding. Extensive lists of tools are provided by Behzadi and Gajdacs (2021) and Kruse et al. (2023). In the literature survey phase, bibliographic databases such as Google Scholar, OpenAlex, PubMed, Semantic Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science streamline the search for relevant articles (see searchsmart.org for comparisons between databases). Reference management tools like EndNote, Zotero, or Mendeley assist in managing and organising literature efficiently, ensuring that citations are correctly formatted and easily accessible throughout the writing process. At the drafting phase, tools like Google Docs, Etherpad, Microsoft 365, and Overleaf (based on LaTeX) can facilitate real-time collaboration with co-authors. Overleaf and LaTeX allow for custom formatting of manuscripts in accordance with journal guidelines.

When conducting data analyses, statistical software like Python or R facilitate sophisticated analyses and the generation of

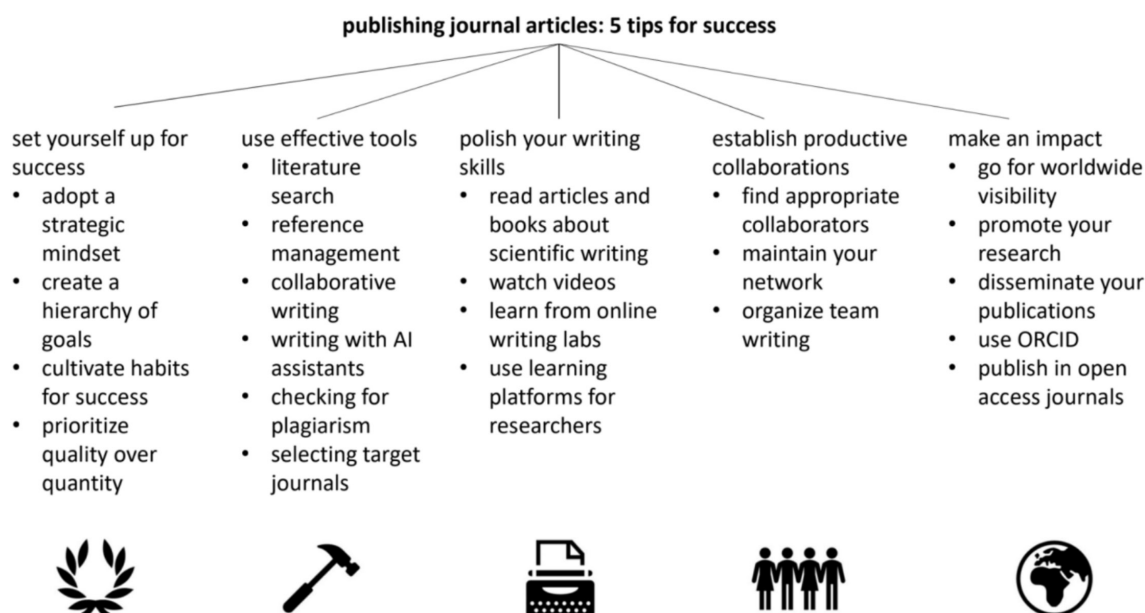


FIGURE 1 | Five key tips for publishing success.

precise, high-quality plots. These tools offer advanced functionality, ensuring accuracy and the ability to reveal deep insights from the data. Additionally, AI-based data analysis tools, for example Julius (julius.ai), can enhance the efficiency of uncovering patterns and trends.

AI-powered tools have transformed various aspects of writing processes. For example, AI assistants such as Grammarly, DeepL Write, Paperpal, Trinka, and Writefull not only correct grammatical errors but also enhance the text in terms of style and clarity. These AI tools help to improve the overall readability of scientific texts. In the editing and proofreading phase, plagiarism checkers like Turnitin and iThenticate play a crucial role in maintaining academic integrity by assessing text similarity against an extensive database of published works. While these tools undoubtedly enhance the quality and style of manuscripts, it is ultimately the researcher's innovative contribution to the field that drives impactful publications.

Special care must be taken to avoid unethical use of AI tools (see Buriak et al. 2023; European Commission 2024). Information provided by AI tools like ChatGPT should not be trusted blindly. Studies showed that AIs make mistakes, sometimes referred to as hallucinations (Alkaissi and McFarlane 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to double-check facts before using AI-generated content. Another potential danger of using AI writing tools is plagiarism. While AI systems generate newly written responses, they learn from pre-existing texts and may follow similar patterns, sometimes even using identical wording. AI algorithms are also often trained on confidential data sets, making them black boxes to users such as researchers and authors, who have no clear understanding of the depth of knowledge these tools have on respective topics. Despite these limitations, AI tools can significantly enhance the efficiency and quality of human efforts. It is essential, therefore, to use these tools ethically and be transparent about their usage (Chetwynd 2024).

In order to find target journals with matching scope, journal finder tools provided by publishers are helpful (e.g., Elsevier Journal Finder, Sage Journal Recommender, Taylor & Francis Journal Suggester). Jane (jane.biosemantics.org) is a journal finder for the life sciences including journals of many publishers. Bibliometric data, e.g., numbers of citations, are provided by Scimago Journal and Country Rank (scimagojr.com/journalrank.php), Scopus Preview Sources (scopus.com/sources), and CWTS Journal Indicators (journalindicators.com/indicators). Experiences of other scientists with journals, the duration of the peer review process is an example, can be explored with SciRev (scirev.org). For finding open access journals, we recommend consulting the Directory of Open Access Journals (doaj.org). The Directory of Open Access Preprint Repositories (doapr.coar-repositories.org) helps to find appropriate preprint servers. Thus, various online tools help to find publishing opportunities. For more tools and tips, see Glover et al. (2016). In addition, we have tabulated some of the key tools that can be used at different stages of scientific writing in Table 1.

4 | Tip 3: Polish Your Writing Skills

Scientific writing is a demanding activity and polishing one's writing skills remains a life-long journey. We listed some resources that may facilitate this journey in Table 2. The suggested resources are categorised into articles, books, videos, online writing labs, and learning platforms. For example, the videos section in Table 2 features several YouTube channels that focus on productivity and scientific writing, offering tips on managing academic stress, writing efficiently, and navigating graduate school. For more structured support, online writing labs from established universities provide comprehensive resources, including tutorials on academic writing and grammar, as well as tips for writing in different disciplines. Finally, learning platforms, some of which are without costs, offer many helpful guidelines, videos, and tutorials. These resources assist

TABLE 1 | Useful tools for different stages of scientific writing.

Tasks	Tools
Literature analysis	Elicit, Consensus, Perplexity
Reference management	Zotero, Endnote, Mendeley
Notes and outlines	Obsidian, Logseq, Notion
Figures	Affinity Designer, Inkscape, GIMP
Writing with AI assistants	Paperpal Copilot, Assistant by Scite, Jenni
Checking grammar and spelling	Writefull, Trink, Grammarly

researchers in developing stronger academic writing skills and enhance their chances of getting published.

5 | Tip 4: Establish Productive Collaborations

Building international collaborations and networking are crucial activities for enhancing research quality. Establishing strong connections through interactions with other scholars fosters the organisation of international research projects, which often lead to high-quality articles published in high-impact journals. Collaboration is particularly beneficial for career progression in academic science, especially for female researchers, as noted by van der Wal et al. (2021). International research efforts are more likely to be recognised and valued in top-tier academic journals, thereby enhancing the visibility and impact of the research. A strategic approach not only broadens the scope of research but also enriches the scientific community through diverse perspectives and sets of expertise. Baumgartner et al. (2023) highlight that big team science offers a practical model for expanding collaborations, especially in large-scale, interdisciplinary projects, thus amplifying the reach and impact of academic work.

Several strategies can be implemented to establish, expand, and sustain successful collaborations. Begin by sending out emails to potential collaborators to initiate contact. Attending conferences and following up with people you meet is another excellent way to build relationships. Regularly syncing up with collaborators and keeping them informed about your recent publications helps to maintain engagement and to keep collaborations productive. Additionally, platforms like LinkedIn and ResearchGate are valuable tools for reaching out to potential collaborators and expanding your network.

Frassl et al. (2018)'s recommendations are instructive for writing scientific articles with co-authors. We converted their recommendations into a ten-item checklist (Table 3).

6 | Tip 5: Make an Impact

Worldwide visibility is crucial for making an impact and significantly enhances the likelihood of your research being discovered, read, used, and cited by other scholars, thereby increasing its academic influence. Reaching out to other stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs, and the public is vital for extending the impact of your research. Research funders and institutions prioritise disseminated research (for instance,

Horizon 2020 General Model Grant Agreement (European Commission 2017)). Thus, high visibility ensures that research reaches a broader audience, leading to more citations, greater recognition, and increased opportunities for collaboration and funding.

One approach to improving visibility is through Academic Search Engine Optimisation (ASEO) techniques and engaging with academic social networking sites like ResearchGate and Academia.edu. ASEO focuses on making scholarly content easily discoverable by academic search engines while maintaining the integrity and quality of the research. Striking this balance ensures that your work is both visible and credible, attracting genuine interest from the academic community (Beel et al. 2010). This not only boosts the immediate visibility of your research but also its long-term impact and relevance within the academic community.

Ross-Hellauer et al. (2020) suggest 10 rules to promote research and visibility, starting with dissemination in mind and deploying preprints to make your work discoverable early. In addition to these tips, we recommend using the journal's resources by providing detailed protocols and data to enhance visibility and reproducibility. Engage your institution's press office and use their repository for better accessibility. Leverage your networks by emailing colleagues and asking them to share your publication. Share your accomplishments through scholarly networks and enrich your content with multimedia to engage broader audiences. Use platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, and Academia.edu, and consider creating a website or blog to expand your reach. Track your activities to focus on the most effective strategies.

Creating video abstracts for your research articles can significantly enhance their visibility. Video abstracts use engaging visuals and narration to summarise the key points of your research, making it more accessible and appealing to a broader audience. These videos can be shared on various platforms, facilitating discussions and increasing the reach of your work (Taylor & Francis Group, n.d.).

Citing your previous work, or that of your co-authors, in your new publication is a strategic way to build on existing research and to establish a cohesive narrative of your contributions. This practice not only reinforces the continuity of your research but also increases the citation counts of your earlier publications, contributing to their visibility and impact. However, Dougherty and Horne (2022) caution that citation counts and

TABLE 2 | Resources for improving writing skills.

Category	Title	Authors	Summary
Articles	How to write your first research paper (Kallestinova 2011)	Elena D. Kallestinova	Here you find tips on how to start writing processes and how to draft the sections of a typical research article.
	Writing science: What makes scientific writing hard and how to make it easier (Grogan 2021)	Kathleen E. Grogan	This article discusses the challenges of scientific writing and provides practical strategies to facilitate processes.
Books	How to write a lot (Silvia 2018)	Paul Silvia	This book offers advice on overcoming procrastination and writing productively.
Videos	YouTube Channel (https://www.youtube.com/@James_Hayton)	James Hayton	James Hayton's channel focuses on PhD productivity and scientific writing. He provides tips on how to write efficiently and how to manage academic stress.
	YouTube Channel (https://www.youtube.com/@ScientificWritingwithKarenLMcK)	Karen McKee	Karen McKee's channel offers advice on scientific writing, covering topics from manuscript preparation to effective communication in research.
	YouTube Channel (https://www.youtube.com/@SciGradCoach)	Alana Rister	Alana Rister's channel provides guidance on navigating graduate school, including scientific writing tips and career advice for aspiring researchers.
	YouTube Channel (https://www.youtube.com/@DrAndyStapleton)	Andy Stapleton	Andy Stapleton shares tips on PhD survival, scientific writing, and productivity. He motivates researchers and students.
Online writing labs	Purdue Online Writing Lab (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl)	Purdue University	Purdue OWL offers comprehensive writing resources, including guidelines for various text types and grammar issues.
	Excelsior Online Writing Lab (https://owl.excelsior.edu)	Excelsior University	Excelsior OWL provides writing resources and tutorials to help students and researchers improve their writing skills.
	The Writing Center, University of North Carolina (https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools)	The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	This resource provides tips and tools for writing across various disciplines.
Learning platforms (free)	Elsevier Researcher Academy (https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com)	Elsevier, RELX group	A free platform offering e-learning resources for researchers, covering topics like manuscript writing, peer review, and research ethics.
	Enago Academy (https://www.enago.com/academy)	Enago	Enago Academy offers free articles, webinars, and resources to help researchers improve their writing and publishing skills.
	Wiley Author Services (https://authorservices.wiley.com/)	John Wiley & Sons	Wiley Author Services provides free tools and resources for authors, including writing tips, submission guidelines, and peer review support.
Learning platforms (with costs)	Upskill (https://upskill.researcher.life)	Cactus Communications	A paid platform that offers courses and workshops for researchers looking to improve their writing and publishing skills.
	Enago Learn (https://learn.enago.com)	Enago	Enago Learn provides paid courses and certification programs on scientific writing, publication, and research skills.

TABLE 3 | Recommendations for collaborative scientific writing (based on Frassl et al. 2018).

1	The writing team is built wisely.
2	The leader provides leadership.
3	A data management plan is created and implemented.
4	Required participation to obtain authorship is defined.
5	A writing strategy is selected and executed.
6	Suitable digital tools are chosen.
7	Timelines are set and adhered.
8	Transparent communication is practiced.
9	Equity, diversity, and inclusion are cultivated.
10	Ethical implications of co-authorship are considered.

journal impact factors may not adequately capture certain aspects of research quality, particularly in fields like behavioural and brain sciences. As such, researchers should be mindful of over-reliance on these metrics and focus on broader indicators of impact. Overdoing self-citations can sometimes be considered unethical; therefore, this practice should be employed judiciously.

Obtaining and using an ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor Identifier) is essential when publishing a research article. ORCID provides a unique identifier that distinguishes you from other researchers with similar names, ensuring that your work is correctly attributed to you. This disambiguation enhances the accuracy of citation metrics and the visibility of your research portfolio across various platforms and databases.

Publishing in open-access (OA) journals is another way to increase the visibility and impact of your research. Research suggests that OA articles receive more citations than those published in traditional subscription-based models (see Dorta-González and Dorta-González 2023). The influence of open access on citations, however, is not simple and, until now, not clear (Langham-Putrow et al. 2021).

7 | Publishing Is Even More Challenging for Many of Us

The tips presented in the previous sections may help improve writing productivity, publishing success, and research impact. However, for scholars around the world, many challenges are seemingly insurmountable. Writing and publishing are even more challenging for researchers from countries with lower research budgets, either from the global south or from other countries (see also Moreno and Gutiérrez 2008). In addition, when it comes to publishing in academic journals, different countries and different disciplines have different priorities and conventions.

The publication strategy for scholars and educators, while rooted in universal academic values and goals, can vary significantly depending on the regulations governing scientific activities in

the respective country. Individual researchers may prefer to target international peer-reviewed journals, but institutional requirements, such as mandates for specific types of publications, can influence this strategy. This selection directly impacts the researcher's visibility in the international scientific discourse. The isolation of certain academic fields or individual researchers contradicts the fundamental academic value of openness and the generation of new knowledge, making international visibility crucial for modern scholars.

In many countries, publishing in Scopus-indexed journals is a prerequisite for obtaining academic degrees and advancing careers. However, there are often no criteria for the journal's impact factor or category, leading to publications in low-quality journals that fail to enhance international visibility.

For instance, in recent years, Ukrainian researchers and university educators have become subject to evaluations of their scientific work, including teaching and methodological activities. These evaluations often result in rankings that influence administrative decisions. This global trend is becoming familiar to Ukrainian scholars. The cumulative quantitative indicators determine the individual rank of each worker, leading to university-wide rankings of staff and research topics.

While scientometric data provides a quick assessment of research effectiveness, its validity is often low, leading to inadequate decisions. The publication strategy in national journals can vary; prestigious journals in specific countries or disciplines may maintain high standards but lack international visibility due to their exclusion from databases like Scopus or Web of Science. Publishing exclusively in national languages further isolates researchers from the global discourse. Conversely, publishing in low-ranking journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science can result in low-quality work that fails to engage with the international community and may damage the author's and the country's scientific reputation.

Sociologist Savelyev (2021) addresses this issue in Ukrainian academic discourse, suggesting that the quality assessment of scientific publications and the ranking of scholars should be discipline-specific. Comparing researchers from different fields is neither effective nor fair, echoing the sixth principle of the Leiden Manifesto, which emphasises the variability of publication and citation practices across different research areas (Hicks et al. 2015). Savelyev (2021) also proposes a revised ranking system for scientific staff based on the quality of the journals. Implementing this strategy in regulatory documents governing scientific activities across countries could significantly enhance motivation for high-quality publications in top-tier journals and prevent the isolation of “national” sciences from the global discourse.

In summary, publishing is even more challenging for researchers from countries with limited research resources and with inherited limitations as well as disadvantages. For researchers from these countries, it is even more important to learn through experiencing, observing, conceptualising, and acting. It is crucial for them to set up for publishing success, to use effective tools, to polish writing skills, to establish productive collaborations, and to make an impact.

Author Contributions

Kengatharaiyer Sarveswaran: conceptualisation (equal), investigation (equal), writing – original draft preparation (equal), writing – review and editing (lead), visualisation (supporting) and project administration. **Israel E. Ebhohimen:** conceptualisation (equal), investigation (equal), writing – original draft preparation (equal), writing – review and editing (supporting). **Karthika Krishna Kumar:** conceptualisation (equal), investigation (supporting) and writing – original draft preparation (supporting). **Maheshwar Gopu:** conceptualisation (equal), investigation (equal), writing – original draft preparation (equal), writing – review and editing (supporting). **Yeliena Kovalska:** conceptualisation (equal), investigation (equal), writing – original draft preparation (equal), writing – review and editing (lead). **Philipp Mayer:** conceptualisation (equal), investigation (equal), writing – original draft preparation (equal), writing – review and editing (lead), visualisation (lead), supervision.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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