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Situation of music education in primary school in Wuhan (China). Analysis from the perspective of music teachers

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This article makes an exploratory and diagnostic analysis, of empirical type, of the current situation of music education in primary schools in the city of Wuhan (China), from the perspective and opinion of the music teachers of these schools. The research approach is quantitative and a cross-sectional descriptive empirical-analytical research method was used. A total of 423 primary school music teachers from Wuhan participated in the research. An existing questionnaire on the situation of music education in primary schools in Beijing and Shanghai (China) is used in this research. This instrument has psychometric properties calculated by validity and reliability. As for the results of the questionnaire, the Mann-Whitney *U*-test was used to determine in which questions about the performance of music teachers in primary schools there are significant differences between different variables that make up the socio-demographic profile of the teacher, habits and resources available in the classroom. It is hoped that this study can contribute to the development of music education in Wuhan primary schools.

KEYWORDS

music education, primary education, music teachers, People's Republic of China, Wuhan

1 Introduction

The People's Republic of China is a socialist country in East Asia, the third largest country in the world by area, and the most populous country in the world, with a population of 1.43 billion in 2020 ([Bureau of Population Census, State Council, 2021](#)). Since 1986, the People's Republic of China has had a nine-year compulsory education system, consisting of 6 years of primary education and 3 years of secondary education ([Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1986](#)). To ensure that all children have access to school, in 2006 the government committed to making the 9 years of compulsory education completely free ([Zong, 2010](#)).

Over the past 40 years of reform and opening up, China has always taken education as a strategic priority for development, deepened the reform of its education system, so that the overall level of educational progress has reached all walks of life, playing an important role in improving people's livelihood, promoting comprehensive human development and raising the level of human resources ([Ma et al., 2022](#)). However, China is still the largest developing country in the world, still in the primary stage of socialism, with insufficient historical accumulation of various educational resources, and the general conditions of education are still not ideal. There are still shortcomings in the education system, and the protection of the right to education for some groups is still insufficient ([Min, 2021](#); [She and Shan, 2018](#)).

With the transformation of the People's Republic of China from "examination-oriented education" to "quality education," the Central People's Government issued a decision in June 1999 calling for the full implementation of quality education in all aspects of early childhood education, primary and secondary education, higher education and vocational training. A wide range of cultural and artistic activities are being carried out, such as the organic unification of morality, intellect, physical culture and aesthetics in all aspects of educational activities. On the other hand, emphasis is placed on developing the comprehensive and healthy development of students (Tu, 2018). For music education, schools, teachers and parents are essential for the transformation of music education into quality education (Tao, 2011).

The aim of this study is to determine on which questions of the performance of primary school music teachers there are significant differences between different variables that make up the socio-demographic profile of the teacher, the habits and the resources available in the classroom. For this purpose, a survey of primary school music teachers living in Wuhan (China) is used and the Mann-Whitney *U*-test (Mann and Whitney, 1947; Solano-Sánchez et al., 2022) is applied. According to the search conducted in this paper, there are few in-depth studies that have identified the problems of primary school music education in China from the perspective of music teachers (Wang and Lorenzo, 2018), so this article contributes to filling the gap in this regard.

2 Literature review

2.1 Primary school music education in China

China's Compulsory Education Law, which is based on the Constitution, stipulates that all young people of school age should receive a proper school education, and the music curriculum, as one of the curricula of compulsory education, is compulsory, public and universal. In the latest curriculum program and curriculum standards for compulsory education (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022a; Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022b), the proportion of art teaching has increased to 9% or 11%, even exceeding the proportion of total English teaching time, which shows the importance China attaches to art education in the 9 years of compulsory education (Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

With the reform of the new curriculum and curriculum standards, parents and schools have placed some emphasis on music, and this change in attitude has had some positive impact on music education. However, due to the influence of traditional Chinese education, the benefits of music education for schools are less important to parents than the promotion rate of students. This has, to some extent, led schools and families to attach less importance to music education (Li, 2015; Yan, 2017).

2.2 Music education in Wuhan

Wuhan is located in the Chu Cultural Circle. Chu culture is a regional culture created by the ancient Chu people in their own

region, and includes crafts such as bronze smithing, embroidery and silk weaving, as well as literature, music, dance and art. Chu culture was one of the components of the Yangtze River culture, as well as the brilliant Yellow River culture (Tu, 2018).

At present, although China is promoting quality education on a large scale, it has hardly reached primary schools and has changed the views of very few primary school teachers and principals on education. In the case of primary schools in Wuhan, for example, many teachers use music lessons to teach other lessons, a phenomenon that seems to be taken for granted. It is clear that this approach to education is one of the main reasons why primary school students do not receive a good music education (Hu, 2017). The music curriculum in schools is more formal in its approach, with too much emphasis on learning musical knowledge and too little on developing students' music and interests, and gradually students' love of music is lost due to pressure from other subjects that are considered more socially relevant (Sun, 2014).

2.3 Music education teachers in China

The international competition of the future is the competition of talent, and the cultivation of talent depends on education (Du and Yang, 2013; Zhu, 2000). The key to education is teachers, and the cultivation of excellent teachers cannot be separated from the reasonable training of teachers. The quality of teacher education and the training process are directly related to the future and destiny of the country (Chen, 2017; Li, 2020; Weng, 2013).

In many advanced and developing countries around the world, teacher education has been given high priority by governments. The reform and development of teacher education has always been a priority for governments in all countries (Yang and Wang, 2009).

In September 2012, the Chinese Ministry of Education promulgated the Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers, which set out standardized requirements for primary school teachers in three areas: professionalism, professional knowledge and professional competence, requiring teachers to take these standards as the fundamental basis for their own professional development, to formulate their own professional development plans, to courageously carry out education and teaching among themselves, and to continuously improve themselves (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012). Since then, the Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers (Test) (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012) and the Compulsory Education Music Curriculum Standards (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2011) have formed a complementary combination to strongly promote the professionalization of primary school music teachers in two aspects: regulating the qualifications of music teachers and leading the development of the music curriculum, respectively (Shu, 2014).

The People's Republic of China supports and encourages teachers to engage in music teaching, and the requirements for the professionalism of these teachers are constantly strengthened. Music teachers are the guiding light for students on their way to feeling and loving music, and only by constantly improving their own quality can they better reflect the value of music education.

The objectives proposed in this work, in order to respond to the purpose of the study, are the following:

2.3.1 General objective

To carry out an empirical exploratory and diagnostic analysis of the current situation of music education in primary schools in the city of Wuhan (China).

2.3.2 Specific objectives

- After understanding China's social background and education system, this research combines primary school music education, Wuhan music education and music education teachers in China. So, the first specific objective is to analyze music education in primary schools in the city of Wuhan (China).
- It was applied a survey in the city of Wuhan (China) to determine in which questions about the performance of music teachers in primary schools show significant differences between different variables that make up the socio-demographic profile of the teacher, habits, and resources available in the classroom. In this sense, the independent variables are: Gender, age, primary school teaching experience, employment status, level of education, whether they play an instrument, how much time each week is spent practicing your speciality, the school has a classroom dedicated to music, the school has a multimedia classroom that the teacher can use in they music class, what they learnt at university is consistent with their work as primary school teachers, have participated in any studies related to music education in they workplace, number of teaching hours per week, monthly salary, satisfaction with monthly salary, whether overtime is required, have plan to leave in the future, the social background of the students contributes to the teaching objectives of the music classes in the school, are musically active outside of education, have the basic facilities required to carry out music teaching and in the development of music education, have noticed the special attention paid to multiculturalism and the phenomenon of ethnic minorities in China.

3 Methodology

3.1 Method

This research has been designed as a descriptive and exploratory survey-type study, articulated through the administration of a questionnaire.

3.2 Participants

After non-probability sampling, a sample of 423 primary school music education teachers in Wuhan resulted. It is worth noting here that [Alicia and Lawrence's \(2015\)](#) study points out that traditional full-probability sample face-to-face survey and the non-full-probability Web survey have great similarities in social science research, the results are equally valid if non-probability sampling is used. In addition, non-probabilistic surveys are widely used in the social sciences. In this sample selection process, the researcher first identifies the attributes and characteristics of the population for stratification, and then selects a certain number of people from each stratum category for the study. Although there are similarities with

stratified sampling in the initial procedure, as both have prior knowledge of the population before stratification, there is some control over the regional distribution of participants to ensure that there are teachers from each of the 15 districts in Wuhan participating in the survey and to ensure the proportion of participants from each district, thus avoiding a situation where all teachers are from one district and also to ensure the reliability and stability of the questionnaire data.

The minimum age of the participants was 22 years and the maximum 46 years ($M = 28.05$, $SD = 4.65$), with 12.3% being male ($n = 52$) and 87.7% female ($n = 371$).

3.3 Instrument

In this research, the Questionnaire on the Situation of Music Education in Primary School in Beijing and Shanghai (China), previously used in the doctoral thesis of Fang [Wang \(2020\)](#), is applied. This questionnaire is derived from the cultural adaptation of the questionnaire by [Lopez et al. \(2015\)](#), adapted using the content validity technique of [Barbero et al. \(2006\)](#).

The questionnaire is made up of a first part designed to collect socio-demographic and professional information (age, sex, years of teaching experience, etc.) and a second part, the questionnaire itself, made up of 68 items with different response possibilities, Likert-type responses, other qualitative items, with open questions, and others with a true or false option. The items in the questionnaire are divided into 10 classification categories:

1. Knowledge and application of current music-related legislation in primary schools in Wuhan.
2. Teacher's materials and resources in schools.
3. General current situation of music in primary schools.
4. Professional self-perception of music teachers in primary schools.
5. Contents and activities in the subject of music in primary schools.
6. Teaching time in the subject of music in primary schools.
7. Integration of the subject of music with other subjects in the school curriculum.
8. Methodology.
9. Evaluation.
10. Initial and in-service teacher training.

3.4 Sampling and data analysis

A total of 423 valid surveys were obtained. Assuming an infinite population and simple random sampling, a reliability of 95% and a sampling error of 4.765% would be obtained. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov ([Kolmogorov, 1933](#); [Smirnov, 1948](#)) and Shapiro–Wilk ([Shapiro and Wilk, 1965](#)) normality tests confirmed the non-normality of all the items of the scale and, therefore, non-parametric tests were used. Thus, the Mann and Whitney U -test (1947) is used to show in which of the Likert-type questions there are significant differences in the subgroups created on socio-demographic profile, habits and musical education environment in primary school. As stated before, the independent variables are: Gender, age, primary school teaching

experience, employment status, level of education, whether they play an instrument, how much time each week is spent practicing your speciality, the school has a classroom dedicated to music, the school has a multimedia classroom that the teacher can use in their music class, what they learnt at university is consistent with their work as primary school teachers, have participated in any studies related to music education in they workplace, number of teaching hours per week, monthly salary, satisfaction with monthly salary, whether overtime is required, have plan to leave in the future, the social background of the students contributes to the teaching objectives of the music classes in the school, are musically active outside of education, have the basic facilities required to carry out music teaching and in the development of music education, have noticed the special attention paid to multiculturalism and the phenomenon of ethnic minorities in China. Only those contrasts that obtained a probability limit of less than 5% (p -value <0.05) are presented. In addition, the mean obtained by each of the subgroups in the different items is added, in order to check in which sense the answers of these subgroups were different.

4 Results

4.1 Sociodemographic profile and question collection

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic profile, habits and educational background of the respondents. In terms of gender, female teachers are in the majority, which is in line with the situation of primary music teachers in China as reported by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2023), indicating that at this stage there is an imbalance in the ratio of male and female primary music teachers, with a disproportionate number of female teachers. In terms of age, almost all respondents were between 22 and 34 years old. In terms of the teachers' level of education, the majority were university graduates, indicating that, with the advent of the lifelong learning era, it has become an inevitable trend for full-time primary school teachers to be highly educated. As for whether they can play musical instruments, most of the teachers can play musical instruments, which shows that society's requirements for music teachers have become broader and stricter, and it has gradually become a social trend for music teachers to have the necessary skills. As for the monthly salary of Wuhan music teachers, the difference between satisfied and dissatisfied is very small, which shows that the monthly salary level of Wuhan music teachers still needs to be improved.

The set of Likert-type questions asked in the questionnaire, together with their mean and standard deviation, is presented in Table 2. The highest means correspond to teachers who prepare their music lessons according to the requirements of the latest published curriculum standards and to those who are familiar with the new Art Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (Edition 2022) published by the Chinese Ministry of Education IT02 ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.82$) (In my daily teaching, I will prepare my music lessons according to the requirements of the latest published curriculum standards) and IT01 ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.81$) (I am aware of the new Art Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) published by the Chinese Ministry of Education), respectively. The

lowest mean is for teachers who perceive that the music subject is valued satisfactorily as an academically important curricular element by the students' families IT10 ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.15$) (I perceive that the subject of music is satisfactorily valued as a curricular element of academic importance by the students' families). In second place, and also with a low mean, society values their work as music teachers IT12 ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.06$) (I perceive that society values my work as a music teacher).

4.2 Mann-Whitney's U test results

No significant differences were found in any item discriminating by age group EDAG or gender GEN. As can be seen in Table 3, primary music teachers with more than 3 years of teaching obtained higher mean scores than those with 0.5 to 3 years of teaching. The biggest difference is IT11 ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.00$) (I perceive that the school administration values and recognizes my teaching as a music teacher). Teachers who had been teaching for more than 3 years agreed more strongly that the school administration values and recognizes their teaching as a music teacher. Secondly, they also generally had a budget allocated by the school administration for the purchase of materials for the music class IT05 ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.00$) (I have a budget allocated by the school management for the purchase of materials for the music class).

Table 4 shows that the mean scores of permanent teachers are higher than those of non-permanent teachers. Among them, permanent teachers agree more strongly that their music lessons and activities are supported by the school administration IT06 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.94$) (I am supported by the School Administration for music lessons and activities).

With the exception of the two questions on teachers perceive that society values their work as a music teacher and the approval of their students' relatives recognize their professional work as a music teacher at school IT12 ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.06$) (I perceive that society values my work as a music teacher) and IT14 ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.98$) (I feel that my students' families recognize my professional work as a music teacher in the school), respectively, the mean of Master's graduates is higher than the mean of Bachelor's graduates. The biggest difference is found in the teachers' use of harmonic instruments to accompany students in music lessons IT04 ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.95$) [I use a harmonic instrument to accompany students in my classes (piano, guitar, keyboard, etc.)] (Table 5).

The means of teachers who play an instrument are all higher than those of teachers who do not. The biggest difference is that the teachers' school is immersed in an educational renewal program IT07 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.93$) (My school is involved in a program of educational renewal). The second is that the teachers' music lessons and subject activities are supported by the school administration IT06 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.94$) (I am supported by the School Administration for music lessons and activities).

With the exception of the two issues of teachers' music lessons and subject activities being supported by the school administration IT06 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.94$) (I am supported by the School Administration for music lessons and activities) and teachers' job stress levels IT15 ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.90$) (Do you feel that you sometimes have too much work and stress?), the mean of teachers who spend more than 3 h a week practicing their subject is higher than the mean of teachers who

TABLE 1 Socio-demographic profile, habits and educational context of respondents.

Age groups (EDAG)		¿Have you participated in any studies related to music education in your workplace? (PAREST)	
22–34 años	89.60%	Sí	87.23%
35–46 años	10.40%	No	12.77%
Group years of primary education (APEG)		¿How many hours of music do you teach each week? (HIMP)	
From 0.5 to 3 years	65.25%	From 0 to 5 h	58.87%
More than 3 years	34.75%	More than 5 h	41.13%
Gender (GEN)		Monthly salary (SALM)	
Male	12.06%	Up to 640€ approx.*	73.52%
Female	87.94%	Greater than 640€ approx.*	26.48%
Employment status (LAB)		¿Are you satisfied with your monthly salary? (SAT)	
Non-permanent	37.35%	Yes	50.59%
Permanent, official	62.65%	No	49.41%
Level of education (EST)		¿Your work requires overtime? (HOREX)	
Grade	64.30%	Yes	24.59%
Master's degree	35.70%	No	75.41%
¿Do you play an instrument? (INS)		¿Do you plan to leave teaching in the future? (DEJ)	
Yes	79.43%	Yes	26.71%
No	20.57%	No	73.29%
¿How much time do you spend practicing your speciality each week? (PRA)		The social background of the students contributes to the teaching objectives of the music classes in our school (ORISOC)	
From 0 to 3 h	67.38%	Yes	27.19%
More than 3 h	32.62%	No	72.81%
Our school has a classroom dedicated to music (AUMUS)		¿Are you musically active outside of education? (ACTMUS)	
Yes	93.14%	Yes	71.16%
No	6.86%	No	28.84%
Our school has a multimedia classroom that I can use in my music class (AUMUL)		I have the basic facilities required to carry out music teaching (instruments, music players, staffed blackboards, etc.) (INSTREQ)	
Yes	91.96%	Yes	72.10%
No	8.04%	No	27.90%
What I studied at university is aligned with my work as a primary school teacher (ESTU)		In the development of music education, have you noticed the special attention paid to multiculturalism and the phenomenon of ethnic minorities in China? (MULTCUL)	
Yes	83.45%	Yes	75.65%
No	16.55%	No	24.35%

*In the original survey, asked in Chinese Yuan.

spend 0–3 h a week practicing their subject. The biggest difference is found in the design of their lessons following the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and identifying the objectives and expectations to be achieved in the music lesson IT22 ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.83$) (I design my lessons according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and identify the objectives and expectations to be achieved in the music class) (Table 5).

The mean of all items analyzed to the effect of teachers whose schools have a dedicated music classroom is higher than that of teachers whose schools do not have a dedicated music classroom. The biggest difference is that their schools are implementing an educational renewal program IT07 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.93$) (My school is involved in a program of educational renewal).

As Table 5 shows, the mean of teachers whose schools have a multimedia classroom is higher than that of teachers whose schools do not have a multimedia classroom. The biggest difference is found in the teacher's use of the latest literature and research to support their lesson design IT08 ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.89$) (I support my lesson design with recent literature and research).

The mean of all items analyzed to the effect of teachers who believe that the specialism they studied at university aligns with their work as a primary school teacher is higher than the mean of those who believe it does not. The biggest difference lies in the teachers' perception that society valued their work as a music teacher IT12 ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.06$) (I perceive that society values my work as a music teacher). Teachers who had participated in studies related to

TABLE 2 Likert scale questions on the performance of primary music classes.

Code	Statement	Media	Des. Tip.
IT01	I am aware of the new Art Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) published by the Chinese Ministry of Education	4.25	0.81
IT02	In my daily teaching, I will prepare my music lessons according to the requirements of the latest published curriculum standards	4.28	0.82
IT03	I use multimedia information technology in my music lessons (GarageBand, Seewo, etc.)	4.20	0.91
IT04	I use a harmonic instrument to accompany students in my classes (piano, guitar, keyboard, etc.)	4.16	0.95
IT05	I have a budget allocated by the school management for the purchase of materials for the music class	3.79	1.00
IT06	I am supported by the School Administration for music lessons and activities	3.90	0.94
IT07	My school is involved in a program of educational renewal	3.90	0.93
IT08	I support my lesson design with recent literature and research	4.15	0.89
IT09	I perceive that the subject of music is satisfactorily valued by students as a curricular element of academic importance	3.67	1.00
IT10	I perceive that the subject of music is satisfactorily valued as a curricular element of academic importance by the students' families	3.23	1.15
IT11	I perceive that the school administration values and recognizes my teaching as a music teacher	3.62	1.00
IT12	I perceive that society values my work as a music teacher	3.57	1.06
IT13	I perceive that my fellow teachers at the school where I work recognize my work as a music teacher	3.80	0.96
IT14	I feel that my students' families recognize my professional work as a music teacher in the school	3.60	0.98
IT15	Do you feel that you sometimes have too much work and stress?	3.64	0.90
IT16	I am informed about the changes and modifications in the music subject in the framework of the general education legislation for primary schools in China	4.02	0.86
IT17	I teach according to the approach to aesthetic education foreseen for the subject of music in the current Curriculum Framework	4.14	0.85
IT18	I follow the guidelines of the current legislation to prepare my own curriculum materials and use them in planning my music lessons	4.11	0.86
IT19	I receive supervision and academic support from the Chinese Ministry of Education	4.00	0.92
IT20	I feel that the Ministry of Education, through its music supervisor, recognizes my professional work as a music teacher at the School	4.10	0.83
IT21	I have received meritorious recognition for my work as a music teacher from entities other than the Ministry of Education	3.93	0.96
IT22	I design my lessons according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and identify the objectives and expectations to be achieved in the music class	4.13	0.83
IT23	I do research on the Internet before assigning quests to my students	4.22	0.85
IT24	In general, in my school the music subject is conducted under favorable and normal academic conditions	4.20	0.80
IT25	I plan my music lessons so that the student achieves each of the Ministry of Education's objectives for music and I manage to meet the expectations set out	4.17	0.84

TABLE 3 Means of items with significant differences by years of primary education group (APEG).

Code	0.5–3 years	More than 3 years	Code	0.5–3 years	More than 3 years
IT01	4.20	4.35	IT16	3.95	4.14
IT05	3.71	3.95	IT19	3.93	4.12
IT11	3.53	3.78	IT23	4.17	4.33
IT12	3.49	3.71	IT24	4.15	4.29
IT14	3.53	3.73			

music education in the workplace responded to the questions with more positive results, and the most notable difference in mean scores occurred when teachers accompanied their pupils in music lessons

with harmony instrument IT04 ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.95$) [I use a harmonic instrument to accompany students in my classes (piano, guitar, keyboard, etc.)].

TABLE 4 Means of items with significant differences by employment status (LAB).

Code	Non-permanent	Permanent, official
IT05	3.59	3.91
IT06	3.58	4.08
IT07	3.70	4.02
IT19	3.85	4.09

With the exception of the question on whether the teacher's school is involved in an educational renewal program IT07 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.93$) (My school is involved in a program of educational renewal), all other questions were answered more positively by teachers who teach 0–5 h per week. The largest difference in means is for the question about teachers doing research on the Internet before assigning quests to their students IT23 ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.85$) (I do research on the Internet before assigning quests to my students) (Table 6).

As can be seen in Table 7, teachers with a monthly salary above 640 euros responded more positively than those with a monthly salary below 640 euros on the questions asked, with the biggest difference in the mean value being the teachers' belief that the music subject, as an academically important course, is evaluated satisfactorily by the students' families IT10 ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.15$) (I perceive that the subject of music is satisfactorily valued as a curricular element of academic importance by the students' families). It is noteworthy that teachers with a monthly salary of less than 640 euros responded more favorably to "I am supported by the School Administration for music lessons and activities" (IT06) ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.94$) and "Do you feel that you sometimes have too much work and stress (IT15) ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.90$)?" It shows that teachers who were satisfied with their monthly salary responded more positively to the analyzed items, with the biggest difference being the teacher's belief that society values his or her work as a music teacher IT12 ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.06$) (I perceive that society values my work as a music teacher). It should be noted that the mean value of the responses was higher for teachers who were dissatisfied with their salaries in response to the question about teachers feeling that they are sometimes overworked and under too much pressure IT15 ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.90$) (Do you feel that you sometimes have too much work and stress?).

Teachers who did not need to work overtime responded more positively to the items analyzed. It should be noted that teachers who need to work overtime were more positive on the questions of knowing that the new Art Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) published by the Chinese Ministry of Education IT01 ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.81$) and Do you feel that you sometimes have too much work and stress? IT15 ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.90$). These two questions were the highest rated (Table 8).

As can be seen in Table 9, teachers who do not intend to leave teaching in the future generally answered the questions posed more positively than those who intend to leave teaching in the future, with the question that showed the greatest difference being that teachers have support from the school administration for music lessons and subject activities IT06 ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.94$) (I am supported by the School Administration for music lessons and activities). It shows that the results were more positive in the responses of teachers who believe that the social background of the students contributes to the teaching

objectives of the school music classes, the question with the greatest difference being that of teachers accompanying students in music classes with harmonic instruments IT04 ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.95$) [I use a harmonic instrument to accompany students in my classes (piano, guitar, keyboard, etc.)].

Additionally, Table 9 shows that teachers who are musically active outside teaching responded more positively than those who were not, with the biggest difference being the teacher's belief that the music subject, as a curricular element of academic importance, is evaluated satisfactorily by the students' families IT10 ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.15$) (I perceive that the subject of music is satisfactorily valued as a curricular element of academic importance by the students' families) and that, as a music teacher, he/she has received meritorious recognition for his/her teaching work as a music teacher from entities other than the Ministry of Education IT21 ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.96$) (I have received meritorious recognition for my work as a music teacher from entities other than the Ministry of Education). It is also shown that teachers who have the basic facilities required to carry out music teaching responded more positively than those who do not have the basic facilities required, the major difference being that teachers teach according to the approach to aesthetic education envisaged for the subject of music in the current Curriculum Framework. Teachers who have noticed the special attention paid to multiculturalism and the phenomenon of ethnic minorities in China responded more positively than those who have not, with the biggest difference being that music teaching in the teachers' schools is carried out under favorable and normal academic conditions IT24 ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.80$) (In general, in my school the music subject is conducted under favorable and normal academic conditions).

By way of summary, Table 10 summarizes the list of questions that were relevant in the study, relating them to those items of the respondents' socio-demographic profile, habits and educational context, which also differ significantly between the groups. The most frequently asked questions that play a decisive role are "Do you plan to leave teaching in the future (DEJ)," "I have the basic facilities required to carry out music teaching (instruments, music players, staffed blackboards, etc.) (INSTREQ)" and "In the development of music education, have you noticed the special attention paid to multiculturalism and the phenomenon of ethnic minorities in China (MULTCUL)."

5 Discussion

Based on the information provided by the community of primary music teachers in Wuhan, this article offers a scientific description of the reality of music education at this stage of education from several focuses of interest.

The analysis of the dimensions of the questionnaire used to collect the information shows a greater concern of teachers for the categories Materials and resources, Current legislation, Assessment, Methodology, Current situation of music in schools, and Professional self-perception.

Regarding Materials and resources, the participants indicated that they preferably use the piano, the blackboard with staves and music players. These results coincide with those of Cai's study (2023), which shows that primary music teachers in Wuhan are not very technologically advanced, as these types of resources are part of a

TABLE 5 Item means with significant differences in EST, INS, PARA, AUMUS, AUMUL, ESTU and PAREST.

Level of education (EST)					
Code	Grade	Master's degree	Code	Grade	Master's degree
IT01	4.18	4.38	IT18	4.05	4.21
IT03	4.11	4.35	IT19	3.90	4.18
IT04	4.03	4.40	IT20	3.97	4.33
IT08	4.09	4.27	IT21	3.84	4.10
IT12	3.65	3.42	IT22	4.04	4.30
IT14	3.67	3.48	IT23	4.15	4.36
IT16	3.93	4.19	IT24	4.12	4.34

¿Do you play an instrument? (INS)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT01	4.29	4.08	IT06	3.97	3.62
IT02	4.32	4.10	IT07	3.97	3.61
IT03	4.25	3.99	IT08	4.18	4.03
IT04	4.22	3.94	IT17	4.21	3.89

¿How much time do you spend practicing your speciality each week? (PRA)					
Code	From 0 to 3 h	More than 3 h	Code	From 0 to 3 h	More than 3 h
IT01	4.20	4.36	IT20	4.05	4.20
IT02	4.20	4.43	IT22	4.05	4.30
IT06	3.97	3.75	IT23	4.15	4.37
IT15	3.71	3.49	IT24	4.15	4.29
IT17	4.08	4.27	IT25	4.11	4.28
IT18	4.07	4.20			

Our school has a classroom dedicated to music (AUMUS)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT04	4.21	3.55	IT12	3.60	3.07
IT05	3.86	2.97	IT18	4.14	3.62
IT06	3.96	3.07	IT21	3.96	3.55
IT07	3.97	2.93	IT25	4.21	3.52
IT08	4.20	3.59			

Our school has a multimedia classroom that I can use in my music class (AUMUL)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT02	4.32	3.82	IT14	3.64	3.15
IT03	4.24	3.74	IT18	4.15	3.62
IT04	4.23	3.44	IT20	4.13	3.76
IT05	3.83	3.35	IT22	4.17	3.68
IT06	3.94	3.35	IT24	4.23	3.82
IT07	3.95	3.26	IT25	4.21	3.65
IT08	4.22	3.35			

(Continued)

TABLE 5 (Continued)

What I studied at university is aligned with my work as a primary school teacher (ESTU)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT05	3.88	3.36	IT11	3.66	3.39
IT06	3.97	3.53	IT12	3.66	3.10
IT07	3.97	3.54	IT13	3.85	3.54
IT09	3.73	3.37	IT14	3.67	3.21

Have you participated in any studies related to music education in your workplace? (PAREST)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT01	4.28	4.02	IT11	3.67	3.28
IT02	4.31	4.02	IT12	3.61	3.26
IT04	4.24	3.67	IT13	3.85	3.46
IT08	4.18	3.94	IT16	4.05	3.78
IT09	3.72	3.35	IT25	4.21	3.87
IT10	3.28	2.87			

TABLE 6 Means of items with significant differences for How many hours of music do you teach each week (HIMP)?

Code	From 0 to 5 h	More than 5 h
IT04	4.22	4.07
IT07	3.81	4.02
IT18	4.16	4.03
IT23	4.31	4.10

TABLE 7 Means of items with significant differences by SALM and SAT.

Monthly salary (SALM)					
Code	Up to 640€ approx.*	Greater than 640€ approx.*	Code	Up to 640€ approx.*	Greater than 640€ approx.*
IT01	4.21	4.36	IT19	3.95	4.12
IT06	4.00	3.61	IT21	3.88	4.08
IT10	3.10	3.59	IT22	4.09	4.24
IT15	3.69	3.49	IT24	4.16	4.29
IT16	3.97	4.14			

Are you satisfied with your monthly salary? (SAT)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT05	3.95	3.64	IT12	3.76	3.36
IT07	4.02	3.77	IT13	3.95	3.64
IT09	3.83	3.51	IT14	3.71	3.49
IT10	3.36	3.10	IT15	3.52	3.76
IT11	3.78	3.45	IT19	4.08	3.91

*In the original survey, asked in Chinese Yuan.

traditionalist teaching model that is not very advanced compared to the way in which the subject is taught in other countries with a clear incorporation of innovation and technology in music classrooms (Sun, 2020). Possibly, this is happening because the Chinese Ministry of Education is not changing the pedagogical thinking of teachers in

an innovative and up-to-date way. In addition, the economic factor may be a constraint that is preventing schools from acquiring more up-to-date and advanced technological materials for teaching music. Only by providing music teachers with sufficient materials and resources to support the music classroom can teachers be given more

TABLE 8 Means of items with significant differences for Does your work require overtime (HOREX)?

Code	Yes	No
IT01	4.42	4.19
IT05	3.46	3.90
IT06	3.60	3.99
IT12	3.34	3.64
IT13	3.54	3.88
IT15	3.89	3.55

scope for innovation and pupils a better environment for learning music.

In terms of current legislation, most of the participants were aware of the new Arts Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) and were planning and improving the curriculum in accordance with the latest legislative requirements. These results are similar to those of [Guo and Su's \(2023\)](#) study, which showed that, thanks to the reform of the new curriculum standards, the arts curriculum has received unprecedented attention from the whole society, and society's demand for music teachers' professional knowledge and skills has become more extensive, and the pressure on teachers to deliver a comprehensive curriculum has become greater ([Song and Hangzhou Normal University, 2023](#)). Therefore, it has become a basic requirement for music teachers to be familiar with the new curriculum standards and to use them flexibly to plan their lessons.

Regarding the Evaluation aspect, most of the participants indicated that they use evaluation tools regularly in their classes, with the main evaluation tool being practical tests, but with little use of written exams. The most common types of evaluation were summative evaluation and process evaluation. This result is in line with [Fu \(2022\)](#) study, which showed that students' creativity and responsiveness to music were almost completely lacking in the traditional evaluation model. Music is a global subject that integrates aesthetics, humanities and practice, and there is no absolute aesthetic standard or standard of practice. Wuhan primary school music teachers should take into account the actual situation of their students and flexibly design their evaluation methods, rather than favoring a single evaluation method. This situation may be due to teachers' excessive pursuit of modernizing evaluation methods and neglecting students' individual differences, which limits their musical development ([Ryan and David, 2021](#)). In addition, schools encourage teachers to exchange experiences related to music education with each other, which also encourages teachers to reflect and innovate on evaluation methods.

With respect to Methodology, the participants indicated that the teaching methods they used most in their classes were directive teaching methods, teaching methods that encouraged active participation of students and some specific method on music education (Orff, Willems, Kodaly...). This result fits well with [Liu's study \(2020\)](#), which showed that the current educational philosophy in China is still influenced by the concepts of traditional education and retains the traditional way of education, but primary music teachers in Wuhan combine western music teaching methods with traditional teaching methods, which exposes students to different ways of learning music, adds interest to music lessons, and means that teachers have been studying and understanding different

methodologies to help in the design of music teaching ([Sindberg, 2016](#)).

Regarding the current situation of music in schools, the Chinese Ministry of Education has been monitoring teachers, and the school administration's support for music lessons and activities is in a relatively positive state. Of note is the low level of pupils' parents' satisfaction with the music subject, as well as the perception of most teachers that the pupils' social and cultural environment does not contribute to the aims of the music subject. This result has similarities with [Wang \(2019\)](#) study, which showed that the musical environment shaped by family members has a great influence on the development of children's musical ability, but Wuhan primary music teachers neglected the importance of the family environment for children's musical learning ([Gornaya and Sirenko, 2020](#)). This phenomenon may be due, on the one hand, to the philosophy of traditional Chinese education and the examination from primary to secondary school to guide parents' thinking, which makes parents pay no attention to the development of their children's musical ability, on the other hand, to the lack of pedagogical thinking of music teachers who combine their students' family environment to adapt teaching to their needs.

Regarding teachers' professional self-perception, society, fellow teachers in the school, school administration and the Ministry of Education through the music supervisor rated Wuhan music teachers as reasonable, but most participants perceived the job as very stressful, while almost half of the participants were dissatisfied with their salaries. This result is very similar to that of the [Loerbroks et al. \(2014\)](#) study, which suggests that China is a collectivist society and that perceptions of individual autonomy and fairness associated with decision-making processes may be less important than in Western societies. Teachers' efforts are not commensurate with their rewards, but 94.6% of teachers are still willing to dedicate their lives to education, partly due to China's political and cultural environment, as well as the pressure to find employment, which makes changing careers not an easy task for primary school teachers ([Yin, 2022](#)).

With regard to the situation of music education in Wuhan, a series of problems in primary school music education in Wuhan are revealed, especially in terms of the pressure on teachers' work, the school's own improvements and innovations, and parental support for students' learning of music, which affects teachers.

Teachers who work long overtime hours resulting in higher levels of stress, who lack time to practice their specialities and participate in extracurricular music activities, and who are not paid in proportion to the stress of their work, are demotivated. On the contrary, teachers who participated in extracurricular music activities for a long period of time were more innovative and they received more awards from students, families, and organizations outside the Ministry of Education. In addition, teachers who are not required to work extra hours have more time and energy to devote to instructional planning, which can improve the quality of music lessons. It is worth noting here that teachers who were required to work extra hours said that they did so mainly because their schools needed to organize more music activities, but teachers had limited energy.

The lack of attention to the music program in schools, the lack of facilities for the music program, innovations in education and encouragement for teachers to carry out research related to music education have led to the fact that teachers are still teaching using traditional educational methods and facilities, limiting the room for innovation in teaching and learning. On the contrary, music teachers

TABLE 9 Means of items with significant differences by DEJ, ORISOC, ACTMUS, INSTREQ and MULTCUL.

Do you plan to leave teaching in the future? (DEJ)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT04	3.97	4.23	IT18	3.92	4.18
IT06	3.59	4.01	IT19	3.81	4.06
IT07	3.62	4.00	IT20	3.88	4.18
IT08	3.99	4.21	IT21	3.73	4.00
IT11	3.34	3.72	IT22	3.96	4.19
IT13	3.53	3.89	IT23	4.03	4.30
IT14	3.44	3.65	IT24	4.05	4.25
IT17	3.96	4.21			

The social background of the students contributes to the teaching objectives of the music classes in our school (ORISOC)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT01	4.30	4.23	IT16	4.09	3.99
IT02	4.37	4.24	IT17	4.23	4.11
IT04	4.35	4.09	IT21	4.04	3.89
IT07	4.03	3.85	IT23	4.33	4.19
IT08	4.25	4.12	IT25	4.25	4.13

Are you musically active outside of education? (ACTMUS)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT07	3.97	3.72	IT19	4.06	3.85
IT08	4.20	4.03	IT20	4.17	3.91
IT10	3.31	3.03	IT21	4.01	3.73
IT14	3.66	3.44	IT22	4.20	3.97
IT17	4.19	4.02	IT25	4.22	4.03
IT18	4.17	3.97			

I have the basic facilities required to carry out music teaching (instruments, music players, staffed blackboards, etc.) (INSTREQ)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT01	4.35	3.97	IT19	4.06	3.84
IT02	4.38	4.00	IT20	4.16	3.92
IT03	4.29	3.96	IT21	4.00	3.75
IT04	4.29	3.85	IT22	4.23	3.89
IT05	3.85	3.66	IT23	4.33	3.95
IT08	4.23	3.97	IT24	4.26	4.04
IT17	4.27	3.82	IT25	4.27	3.90
IT18	4.21	3.85			

In the development of music education, have you noticed the special attention paid to multiculturalism and the phenomenon of ethnic minorities in China? (MULTCUL)					
Code	Yes	No	Code	Yes	No
IT09	3.74	3.47	IT18	4.18	3.89
IT10	3.31	3.00	IT19	4.07	3.78
IT11	3.68	3.42	IT20	4.18	3.85
IT12	3.64	3.34	IT21	4.02	3.67
IT13	3.86	3.60	IT22	4.19	3.94
IT14	3.66	3.40	IT23	4.29	4.03
IT16	4.10	3.76	IT24	4.28	3.92
IT17	4.23	3.88			

TABLE 10 Summary of the scale questions indicating where significant differences appeared.

Code	Statement	Significant differences in:
IT01	I am aware of the new Art Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) published by the Chinese Ministry of Education	APEG, EST, INS, PAREST, SALM, HOREX, ORISOC, INSTREQ
IT02	In my daily teaching, I will prepare my music lessons according to the requirements of the latest published curriculum standards	INS, PRA, AUMUL, PAREST, ORISOC, INSTREQ
IT03	I use multimedia information technology in my music lessons (GarageBand, Seewo, etc.)	EST, INS, AUMUL, INSTREQ
IT04	I use a harmonic instrument to accompany students in my classes (piano, guitar, keyboard, etc.)	EST, INS, AUMUS, AUMUL, PAREST, HIMP, DEJ, ORISOC, INSTREQ
IT05	I have a budget allocated by the school management for the purchase of materials for the music class	APEG, LAB, AUMUS, AUMUL, ESTU, SAT, HOREX, INSTREQ
IT06	I am supported by the School Administration for music lessons and activities	LAB, INS, PRA, AUMUS, AUMUL, ESTU, SALM, HOREX, DEJ
IT07	My school is involved in a program of educational renewal	LAB, INS, AUMUS, AUMUL, ESTU, HIMP, SAT, DEJ, ORISOC, ACTMUS
IT08	I support my lesson design with recent literature and research	EST, INS, AUMUS, AUMUL, PAREST, DEJ, ORISOC, ACTMUS, INSTREQ
IT09	I perceive that the subject of music is satisfactorily valued by students as a curricular element of academic importance	ESTU, PAREST, SAT, MULTCUL
IT10	I perceive that the subject of music is satisfactorily valued as a curricular element of academic importance by the students' families	PAREST, SALM, SAT, ACTMUS, MULTCUL
IT11	I perceive that the school administration values and recognizes my teaching as a music teacher	APEG, ESTU, PAREST, SAT, DEJ, MULTCUL
IT12	I perceive that society values my work as a music teacher	APEG, EST, AUMUS, ESTU, PAREST, SAT, HOREX, MULTCUL
IT13	I perceive that my fellow teachers at the school where I work recognize my work as a music teacher	ESTU, PAREST, SAT, HOREX, DEJ, MULTCUL
IT14	I feel that my students' families recognize my professional work as a music teacher in the school	APEG, EST, AUMUL, ESTU, SAT, DEJ, ACTMUS, MULTCUL
IT15	Do you feel that you sometimes have too much work and stress?	PRA, SALM, SAT, HOREX
IT16	I am informed about the changes and modifications in the music subject in the framework of the general education legislation for primary schools in China	APEG, EST, PAREST, SALM, ORISOC, MULTCUL
IT17	I teach according to the approach to aesthetic education foreseen for the subject of music in the current Curriculum Framework	INS, PRA, DEJ, ORISOC, ACTMUS, INSTREQ, MULTCUL
IT18	I follow the guidelines of the current legislation to prepare my own curriculum materials and use them in planning my music lessons	EST, PRA, AUMUS, UMUL, HIMP, DEJ, ACTMUS, INSTREQ, MULTCUL
IT19	I receive supervision and academic support from the Chinese Ministry of Education	APEG, LAB, EST, SALM, SAT, DEJ, ACTMUS, INSTREQ, MULTCUL
IT20	I feel that the Ministry of Education, through its music supervisor, recognizes my professional work as a music teacher at the School	EST, PRA, AUMUL, DEJ, ACTMUS, INSTREQ, MULTCUL
IT21	I have received meritorious recognition for my work as a music teacher from entities other than the Ministry of Education	EST, AUMUS, SALM, DEJ, ORISOC, ACTMUS, INSTREQ, MULTCUL
IT22	I design my lessons according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and identify the objectives and expectations to be achieved in the music class	EST, PRA, AUMUL, SALM, DEJ, ACTMUS, INSTREQ, MULTCUL
IT23	I do research on the Internet before assigning quests to my students	APEG, EST, PRA, HIMP, DEJ, ORISOC, INSTREQ, MULTCUL
IT24	In general, in my school the music subject is conducted under favorable and normal academic conditions	APEG, EST, PRA, AUMUL, SALM, DEJ, INSTREQ, MULTCUL
IT25	I plan my music lessons so that the student achieves each of the Ministry of Education's objectives for music and I manage to meet the expectations set out	PRA, AUMUS, AUMUL, PAREST, ORISOC, ACTMUS, INSTREQ, MULTCUL

who have the facilities will teach according to the aesthetic pedagogy prescribed in the latest syllabus and subject, and they will also support their pedagogical design with the latest educational research findings.

All these results open a new window of exploration that goes beyond the overall data analyzed and requires future research to go further in discovering the causes of the problems that exist in music education in Wuhan primary schools from the teachers' perspective, as there is almost no scientific literature on this research topic.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to arouse people's concern and attention for music teachers in primary education in Wuhan (China), where relatively few in-depth studies have been conducted in this field. In addition, through the questionnaire survey, the problems of music teachers in Wuhan (China) at the present stage are discovered and suggestions can be planned on how to solve the problems in primary education in Wuhan (China) in the future, which is expected to contribute to the healthy development of music education in Wuhan (China) primary schools.

As theoretical implications obtained, it is worth noting how, after the founding of New China in 1949, the main function of Music Education was to serve the development of society and, at the end of the 20th century, aesthetic education was revitalized. Gradually, the content of Music Education became subject-based; from the 21st century to the present, Music Education in China has placed greater emphasis on students' aesthetic qualities as well as the cultivation of their own abilities. From ancient times to the present, the pace of reform of Music Education in China has never stopped and is improving with time.

Another highlight of the People's Republic of China's efforts to achieve universal nine-year compulsory education at primary and secondary levels is the growing awareness of Chinese parents of their children's musical development and their willingness to invest in their children's Music Education in addition to the compulsory nine-year education. However, the Huazhong region, where Wuhan is located, has a low to medium level of investment in Music Education among all regions in China, so the emphasis on Music Education in the Huazhong region still needs to be improved.

The teaching profession in China is increasingly becoming the most stressful and teachers the most vulnerable to burnout (Cao, 2011). With the advent of the new curriculum reform, the introduction of the appointment system (a system in which the employer hires the staff), the high demand for research results in degree evaluation, the various inspections, the mechanical and tedious nature of the work, and the pressure of grading and promoting students' performance, many teachers have to work more than 10 h a day, and some cannot even get adequate rest for weeks at a time. As music teachers suffer from physical and psychological problems, the dignity and well-being of the profession has become a reality that we must take seriously (Cao, 2011; Lorenzo et al., 2016; Perandones et al., 2013).

The profession of primary music teacher needs to be recognized and affirmed by parents, schools and society, but at the moment, primary music teachers in Wuhan are facing a series of problems, such as a weak material and economic base, the dilemma of not attaching much importance to the subject of music, the limitations of the school system and culture, and the pressure of promotion to higher education

in other subjects. With the advent of the lifelong learning era, the high academic qualification of teachers has become a social trend, and the requirements placed on them are becoming more stringent and comprehensive. However, the importance that parents, schools and society attach to music teachers, music programs and music activities has not yet increased, resulting in primary music teachers' dissatisfaction with their work treatment and the social environment, coupled with the demands of a high-intensity job. Over time, primary music teachers lose motivation for their work and the desire to further improve their personal competence.

School support for teachers is particularly important, and it is only when schools continue to innovate in education and carry out research related to music education that they will be able to introduce more facilities that will contribute to the music program. At the same time, schools should also innovate and develop teacher incentives to mobilize teachers and stimulate their professional development autonomy based on supporting and encouraging innovative exchanges and learning.

Parents can support their students to learn music outside the classroom while valuing their music program at school. Students with some musical foundation also act as an incentive for music teachers to innovate their music classes by having the ability to learn and use more instruments.

Using primary school music teachers in Wuhan as the subject of this study, this paper aims to raise awareness of and focus on music teachers in primary school music education in China, and it is hoped that this initial diagnostic assessment study of the current state of music education in Wuhan primary schools will help other cities in China to conduct further comparative studies.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

Participants participated in the questionnaire on a voluntary basis, data collection followed the principle of anonymity, and participants had the right to withdraw relevant data before the questionnaire was formally submitted back. Aside from that, formal consent commonly used in China for this type of research study was given for the anonymized data to be made publicly available to other researchers in a web-based database.

Author contributions

QZ: Conceptualization, Data curation, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. MS-S: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Software, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. OL: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

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