Journal of Innovative Technology and Sustainability Education
Homepage : https://journal.i-ros.org/index.php/JITSE
Email : jitse@i-ros.org

e-ISSN 3109-2454
Vol. 1, No. 2, August 2025

Rebranding and Restructuring Strategy of Physics Education Study Program in PTS NTB: UNDIKMA Case Study

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DOI : https://doi.org/10.63230/jitse.1.2.74

Sections Info

Article history:
Submitted: August 9, 2025
Final Revised: August 18, 2025
Accepted: August 18, 2025
Published: August 19, 2025

Keywords:
Enrollment Trends;
Higher Education Indonesia;
Physics Education;
Rebranding Strategy.

ABSTRACT

Objective: *This study investigates the declining enrollment trend in the Physics Education Study Program at Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika (UNDIKMA), a private higher education institution in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The objective is to identify the factors contributing to reduced student interest and to propose strategic interventions to revitalize the program amid increasing competition between public and private universities.* ***Method:*** *A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining longitudinal analysis of enrollment data with qualitative insights from interviews, surveys, and document reviews. Comparative data from similar study programs at both private and public universities in the region were also examined. Additionally, SWOT and TOWS analyses were conducted to generate strategic recommendations.* ***Results:*** *The findings reveal a consistent decline in enrollment, influenced by limited career prospects for physics education graduates, dominance of public universities in the region, outdated curricula, and weak promotional strategies. Comparative analysis underscores structural disparities in institutional reputation and resource allocation between private and public institutions.* ***Novelty:*** *This study highlights the urgent need for contextually adaptive strategies to sustain science-based teacher education in non-metropolitan regions. The proposed interventions – curriculum restructuring, digital rebranding, alum engagement, and hybrid learning formats – offer an integrated framework for enhancing program appeal. The research contributes to policy discourse on sustaining strategic academic programs in private institutions by emphasizing the importance of institutional identity and targeted communication.*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, higher education in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation, driven by the growing number of institutions and intensifying competition among both public and private universities. The decentralization of education, national selection policies, and demands for quality assurance have placed considerable pressure on higher education institutions to remain relevant and competitive (Aphar et al., 2024). One direct consequence of these dynamics has been the disparity in program attractiveness, particularly in science-based teacher education programs such as Physics Education, which have seen a notable decline in student interest, especially in private universities (PTS).

This phenomenon is exemplified by the case of the Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika (UNDIKMA), a private university in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), where enrollment in the Physics Education Study Program fell from 20 students in 2020 to 15 in 2024, reaching its lowest point at only nine students in 2023. Similar declining trends have also been recorded in other private universities in NTB, including Universitas Hamzanwadi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, Universitas Samawa, STKIP Taman Siswa Bima, and STKIP Bima. This downward trend not only threatens the

institutional sustainability of these programs but also jeopardizes the regeneration of professional science educators in regions outside of Java (Yusa & Saputra, 2019).

Various studies suggest that prospective students' decisions are heavily influenced by perceptions of job prospects, academic service quality, and institutional accreditation status (Handoko & Iqbal, 2021; Aphar et al., 2024). However, these studies have predominantly focused on popular majors such as Management, Communication, or Medicine. At the same time, research on science-based teacher education programs—particularly in non-metropolitan areas like NTB remains limited (Qomariyah & Mufarrikoh, 2024). There is still a lack of systematic investigations into the declining interest in Physics Education programs at private universities, especially considering both internal factors (curriculum, promotion, management) and external ones (national policy, public university dominance, labor market preferences).

The decline in interest in science education programs at private universities has also been examined in other contexts. Yusa and Saputra (2019), for instance, argue that students often shift their choices away from PTS due to perceived limitations in quality and career opportunities. Simamora et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of technology-based learning innovations, such as e-modules, to enhance students' motivation and engagement in science education. Moreover, Handoko and Iqbal (2021) apply a predictive Naive Bayes approach to identify trends in student program choices and reveal that reward-based strategies may enhance the appeal of less favored programs.

In the context of Islamic higher education, Elimar et al. (2024) demonstrate that promotional strategies integrated with cultural values and local approaches are effective in attracting students from strong cultural backgrounds. Digital and collaborative approaches in promotional efforts and curriculum restructuring are also increasingly recommended (Muhardi et al., 2024).

This research is crucial in addressing the causes and strategic solutions to the declining interest in Physics Education programs at private universities, particularly in NTB. By adopting a mixed-method approach, this study aims not only to diagnose the underlying problems but also to formulate data-driven, actionable solutions through rebranding and restructuring strategies. This aligns with the principles of quality assurance and higher education transformation based on the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI), as mandated by national education policy (Wahyuni et al., 2021).

Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) identify the key factors behind the low enrollment in the Physics Education program at UNDIKMA and other PTS in NTB; (2) compare the program management and promotional strategies between public and private universities; and (3) formulate adaptive rebranding and curriculum restructuring strategies using SWOT and TOWS analysis based on local context. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a strategic reference for institutional leaders and policymakers in sustaining strategic academic programs critical to the development of national science education capacity.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research approach and type

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the declining interest in the Physics Education Study Program at UNDIKMA and other private universities

(PTS) in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB). The quantitative approach was used to analyze longitudinal data on student enrollment trends and their correlation with institutional indicators such as tuition fees (UKT), accreditation status, and institutional type (public vs. private). Meanwhile, the qualitative approach focused on exploring stakeholder perceptions, internal challenges, and program management strategies (Sugiyono, 2020; Manalu, 2020).

This research is classified as an exploratory case study, centered on UNDIKMA as the primary unit of analysis. The study includes comparative assessments with three other PTS in NTB: Universitas Hamzanwadi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram (UMMAT), and Universitas Samawa (UNSA). It also features a descriptive analytical dimension, aiming to identify strategic patterns and variables associated with program sustainability and attractiveness.

Data sources and collection techniques

Quantitative data in this study were collected from several institutional and national sources, including student enrollment records at UNDIKMA from 2020 to 2024, accreditation status of the institution and study program issued by BAN-PT, tuition fee structures (UKT) obtained from the PDDikti database, and comparative enrollment data across similar programs at other institutions available in PDDikti. Complementing this, qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with program heads, faculty members, and institutional leaders, as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving students and alums. Additional insights were obtained through field observations and document analysis of academic and promotional activities, providing a comprehensive understanding of the internal and external factors influencing enrollment trends.

Data analysis techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to examine annual enrollment trends, conduct cross-program comparisons, and identify correlations between key variables such as student numbers, tuition fee structures (UKT), accreditation status, and institutional type. This approach provided an objective basis for uncovering patterns that explain the declining appeal of the Physics Education Study Program. Meanwhile, qualitative data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model (Miles et al., 2014), which involves three interconnected steps: data reduction, through the process of selecting and focusing on relevant themes from interview transcripts and field notes; data display, by organizing findings into thematic narratives and summary matrices; and conclusion drawing, which entails formulating insights through inferential interpretation grounded in field data. Together, these quantitative and qualitative analyses offered a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to enrollment decline.

Strategic analysis (SWOT and TOWS matrix)

Findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were integrated into a SWOT analysis framework, identifying internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. Subsequently, these inputs were synthesized into a TOWS matrix to generate contextually relevant and practical strategies for rebranding and restructuring the Physics Education Study Program. This process was designed to offer

actionable recommendations for institutional revitalization in alignment with local realities and future challenges (Muhardi et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The enrollment crisis in physics education: Trends and root causes

Longitudinal enrollment data at UNDIKMA reveals a marked decline in student interest in the Physics Education Study Program. New student enrollment dropped from 20 students in 2020 to just 15 in 2024, hitting a critical low of 9 students in 2023. This downward trend contrasts sharply with increasing enrollments in more vocational or health-oriented programs, such as Public Health (263 students in 2024) and Physical Education (635 students in 2024). The data suggest a significant shift in student preferences toward programs with direct employability and practical outcomes.

The downward trend is not unique to Physics Education. Other science-based education programs such as Chemistry Education, Mathematics Education, and Biology Education at UNDIKMA have also experienced similar declines, as illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 1. Interestingly, the only non-science education program Non-Formal Education also experienced a downward trend, reinforcing the argument that professional and pragmatic considerations dominate student choices.

Table 1. Number of new students in the undergraduate study program at UNDIKMA in the last 5 years

Study Program	Year Class				
	2020	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
S1 Educational Administration	49	46	34	48	46
S1 Guidance and Counseling	73	46	111	89	170
S1 Forestry	48	58	73	62	63
S1 Public Health	144	171	213	217	263
S1 Management	116	237	401	443	411
S1 English Education	89	76	105	93	117
S1 Biology Education	38	23	45	21	44
S1 Veterinary Education	135	174	255	321	273
S1 Physics Education	20	15	15	9	15
S1 Chemistry Education	17	9	11	11	20
S1 Non-Formal Education	19	8	9	14	22
S1 Mathematics Education	28	27	35	21	31
S1 Physical and Health Education	333	329	482	531	635
S1 Information Technology Education	56	76	84	116	189
S1 Civil Engineering	35	44	75	92	86
S1 Educational Technology	53	56	48	32	54

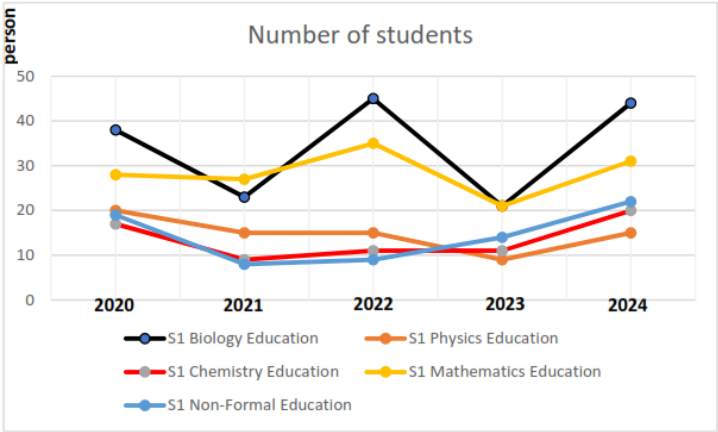

Figure 1. Number of new students in the education study program at UNDIKMA in the last 5 years

This phenomenon extends beyond UNDIKMA. For instance, Physics Education at Universitas Hamzanwadi reported only 29 students in 2024, while UMMAT and UNSA also showed stagnant or declining numbers (see Figure 2). This is alarming, especially in light of PerBAN-PT Regulation No. 18 of 2024, which recognizes student enrollment numbers as a key accreditation indicator.

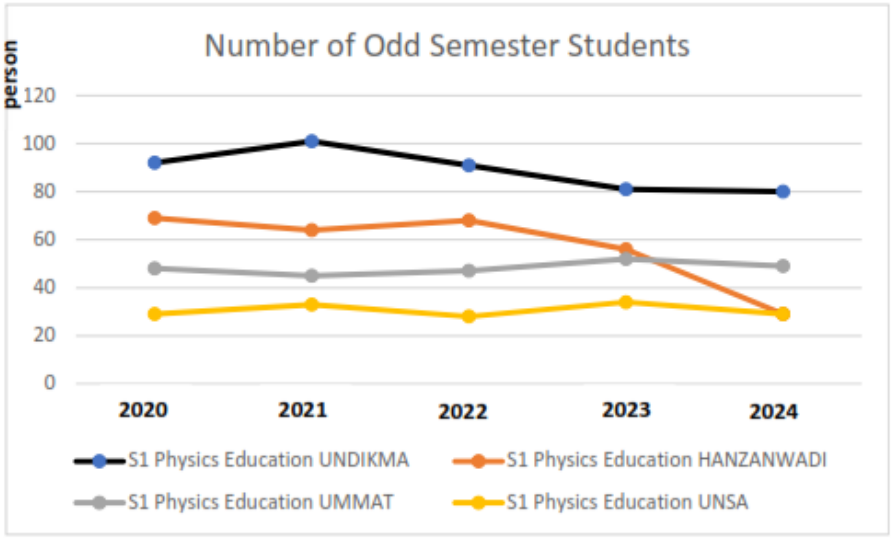

Figure 2. Number of students in the physics education study program in odd semesters at several PTS in NTB

The causes of this trend include limited civil service (ASN) recruitment for physics teachers, the dominance of public universities (PTNs) in national student selection systems, and increasingly pragmatic public attitudes toward academic major selection. Together, these factors contribute to the systemic marginalization of science education programs in private higher education institutions.

Comparing PTNs and PTSs: Structural gaps and institutional competitiveness

A comparison with public universities reveals stark disparities. At Universitas Mataram (UNRAM), student enrollment in the Physics Education program increased from 368 in 2020 to 405 in 2024. Meanwhile, UIN Mataram consistently maintained a range of 109 to 136 students per year during the same period, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of new students in the physics education undergraduate study program in the last 5 years at PTN and PTS in NTB

Undergraduate Program in Physics Education	Status	Number of Odd Semester Students					UKT/smt (juta)	Accreditation
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024		
UNRAM	PTN	368	405	400	387	400	-	Unggul
UIN MATARAM	PTN	132	117	109	136	113	0,4 – 4,1	Baik Sekali
UNDIKMA	PTS	92	101	91	81	80	3,9 - 4	B
HANZANWADI	PTS	69	64	68	56	29	3.2 -3,6	Baik Sekali
UMMAT	PTS	48	45	47	52	49	1 – 1	B
UNSA	PTS	29	33	28	34	29	2 – 4	Baik Sekali

Public universities benefit from "Excellent" accreditation status and more flexible UKT (tuition) schemes, both of which enhance their appeal to prospective students. More importantly, PTNs enjoy a better institutional brand image, with higher perceived academic quality and public trust. As demonstrated by Haryanegara et al. (2024), digital revitalization efforts such as redesigning university websites and building a cohesive brand identity have significantly influenced student interest. PTSs, in contrast, still face significant communication gaps in projecting a competitive academic image.

Internal response analysis: Curriculum, promotion, and reputation management

Interviews with internal stakeholders at UNDIKMA highlighted several key internal challenges. Chief among them is the rigidity of the curriculum, which remains poorly aligned with the needs of 21st-century science education. According to Manalu et al. (2022), the integration of digital literacy and STEM-based projects is essential for improving program relevance and competitiveness.

Promotion also emerged as a critical weakness. Reliance on conventional marketing methods and minimal use of digital platforms have hampered outreach efforts, especially to Gen Z prospective students. Wahyu Aji et al. (2025) emphasized that WordPress-based institutional branding significantly enhances credibility and user experience for academic websites—an area where UNDIKMA and other PTSs must improve.

Rebranding and restructuring strategy: SWOT and TOWS analysis

Based on the field findings, a SWOT analysis was carried out to map UNDIKMA's internal and external conditions. The analysis identified several strengths, particularly its institutional identity as a Lembaga Pendidikan Tenaga Kependidikan (LPTK) or teacher training institution, as well as the existence of strong local partnerships. Conversely, the program faces weaknesses such as limited digital promotional capacity and an outdated curriculum that reduces competitiveness. In terms of opportunities, advancements in educational technology and the increasing demand for science teachers in remote areas present potential avenues for growth. However, these are counterbalanced by significant threats, including the dominance of public universities (PTNs) and a national policy environment that tends to be less favorable toward private institutions. To translate these insights into actionable strategies, the SWOT variables were synthesized into a TOWS matrix, which is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. TOWS strategy analysis

TOWS Strategy Type	Strategies
SO	Leverage institutional identity to partner with local schools; integrate field-based curriculum
WO	Improve digital branding and promotion; introduce scholarships and teaching internships
ST	Engage alumni as program ambassadors; offer hybrid/flexible classes
WT	Redesign curriculum; rebrand program; partner with ed-tech industry

The most promising strategies identified involve STEM-integrated practical curricula, affirmative scholarship programs, flexible class delivery models, and alumni-driven digital rebranding.

External stakeholder perception and career relevance

Surveys and interviews with high school students and guidance counselors revealed low perceptions regarding the economic and professional prospects of Physics Education graduates. Most view the major as lacking in career options beyond state employment (ASN), and few are aware of alternative career paths such as STEM trainers, educational consultants, or science content creators.

Kemeny (2024) argues for a redefinition of science education graduates—not merely as future teachers, but as societal agents capable of transformative, transdisciplinary work. This paradigm shift must be communicated through institutional narratives and graduate tracer studies.

Early implementation and practical implications

Several pilot initiatives were launched at UNDIKMA in late 2024, including interdisciplinary curriculum redesign, ICT integration into instruction, and alum engagement in promotional campaigns. While these have not yet resulted in increased enrollment, initial responses from current students and alums have been positive. There is a growing perception that the program is entering a phase of transformation. UNDIKMA's actions mirror successful strategies at other institutions such as Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), which has effectively leveraged digital branding to revitalize its institutional identity and academic attractiveness.

Coherence of findings and hypothesis validation

The findings from this study exhibit strong internal coherence, linking enrollment trends, stakeholder responses, and initial implementation impacts. These reinforce the central hypothesis: that the decline in Physics Education enrollment at private universities in NTB is not incidental but results from complex interactions among policy structures, sociocultural shifts, and institutional shortcomings.

Therefore, program revitalization must be approached holistically, integrating systemic reforms, evidence-based branding, and strategic communication. Only through such multi-pronged strategies can programs like Physics Education reclaim their relevance and contribute to national science and education development.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the declining interest in the Physics Education Study Program at UNDIKMA is not an isolated case but reflects broader systemic challenges faced by private higher education institutions (PTS) in Indonesia, particularly in non-metropolitan regions such as NTB. The enrollment data indicate a consistent downward trend, which is strongly associated with limited career prospects for physics education graduates, outdated curricula, and weak promotional strategies. These results resonate with previous studies showing that prospective students' decisions are significantly influenced by employment opportunities and perceived program relevance (Qomariyah & Mufarrikoh, 2024).

A key factor exacerbating the enrollment gap is the structural disparity between public universities (PTNs) and private institutions. PTNs such as UNRAM and UIN Mataram demonstrate consistently higher enrollments, supported by superior accreditation, flexible tuition schemes, and stronger institutional branding. This aligns with the findings of Aphar et al. (2024), who emphasize that digital branding and quality assurance are critical determinants of competitiveness. Similarly, Wahyu Aji et al. (2025) underscore that effective digital presence, notably through website redesign and online platforms, significantly enhances institutional credibility and outreach.

Internal weaknesses further reduce the attractiveness of Physics Education at PTS. The rigidity of the curriculum limits its alignment with 21st-century skills, particularly in integrating digital literacy and STEM-based approaches. This is consistent with the recommendations of Manalu et al. (2020), who highlight the urgency of curriculum modernization in non-metropolitan areas. Moreover, limited adoption of innovative learning methods contrasts with evidence from Simamora et al. (2022), who demonstrate that digital e-modules and technology-supported pedagogy can enhance student motivation in science education.

The qualitative findings also reveal persistent negative perceptions among students and stakeholders regarding the career relevance of Physics Education. Many continue to equate the program solely with teacher preparation for civil service positions, overlooking emerging career paths such as STEM trainers, educational consultants, or digital science communicators. This perception echoes Yusa and Saputra's (2019) argument that students often avoid PTS due to skepticism about employability. Addressing this challenge requires rebranding efforts that redefine the identity of Physics Education graduates, a notion supported by Kemeny (2024), who advocates for a broader societal role of science educators as transformative knowledge agents.

In response, the SWOT and TOWS analyses conducted in this study provide a strategic roadmap for revitalization. Recommended interventions include restructuring curricula to incorporate STEM integration, introducing hybrid and flexible learning models, strengthening digital branding, and leveraging alums as ambassadors. These strategies are consistent with Muhardi et al. (2024), who argue that digital-driven restructuring combined with stakeholder engagement can restore the appeal of teacher education programs. Early implementation at UNDIKMA, though limited in scope, has shown promising signs of shifting stakeholder perceptions, suggesting that holistic and adaptive approaches may gradually restore enrollment sustainability.

Overall, the discussion highlights that sustaining science-based teacher education in private universities demands systemic reforms, integrated digital strategies, and clear communication of graduate relevance to society. Without these interventions, programs

like Physics Education risk further marginalization within Indonesia's rapidly evolving higher education landscape.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study has shown that the declining interest in the Physics Education Study Program at UNDIKMA and other private universities in West Nusa Tenggara is a multifaceted issue shaped by structural, institutional, and perceptual factors. Limited career prospects for graduates, the stronger appeal of public universities, outdated curricula, and weak promotional strategies have been identified as the primary causes of declining enrollment. Comparative data with public universities further highlight disparities in accreditation, tuition flexibility, and institutional branding, underscoring the urgent need for program revitalization. **Implication:** The findings emphasize the necessity for private higher education institutions in non-metropolitan regions to adopt holistic and adaptive strategies in sustaining science-based teacher education programs. Rebranding efforts, curriculum modernization, hybrid class formats, alum engagement, and digital marketing are critical not only for increasing enrollment but also for redefining the relevance of physics education graduates in society. Effective communication of institutional identity and societal contributions will be central to regaining public trust and enhancing competitiveness. **Limitation:** The study is limited by its focus on a single private institution in NTB, which may not fully capture the broader diversity of private higher education dynamics across Indonesia. Additionally, as the proposed strategies are still in early stages of implementation, the study does not provide long-term evidence of their effectiveness. **Future Research:** Further studies should investigate the long-term impact of strategic interventions such as STEM-integrated curricula, digital branding, and alums engagement on enrollment sustainability. Comparative research across different regions and disciplines also provides valuable insights into how private institutions can better adapt to the rapidly evolving higher education landscape.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the leadership and academic staff of Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika (UNDIKMA) for their support and collaboration during the research process. Special thanks are also extended to the program heads and administrative officers from Universitas Hamzanwadi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram (UMMAT), and Universitas Samawa (UNSA) for providing comparative institutional data and insights. We are also grateful to the students, alumni, and high school guidance counselors who contributed their perspectives through interviews and surveys. Their voices enriched the depth and relevance of this study This research would not have been possible without the facilitation of the university's internal research grant scheme and the valuable guidance from peer reviewers and academic mentors involved in the quality assurance process.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Dwi Pangga: Contributed to the conceptual framework, research design, and overall coordination of the study. **I Wayan Lasnawan**: Was responsible for methodology development, data collection, and descriptive statistical analysis. **I Gusti Putu Suharta**: contributed to qualitative data analysis, interpretation of findings, and sourcing relevant references. **I Wayan Widiana:** handled data management, and manuscript

drafting. **Cahyo Febri Wijaksono**: critical revision for intellectual content. All listed authors have reviewed and approved the final version of this submission.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest, either financial or personal, that may have influenced the content or outcome of this study.

ETHICAL COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

This manuscript complies with research and publication ethics. The authors affirm that the work is original, conducted with academic integrity, and free from any unethical practices, including plagiarism.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF AI OR DIGITAL TOOLS IN WRITING

The authors acknowledge the use of digital tools, including AI-based technologies, as support in the research and writing stages of this article. Specifically, ChatGPT (OpenAI) was employed for drafting assistance, language refinement, and restructuring sections of the manuscript; Mendeley was used for reference management and citation formatting; and Microsoft Excel supported quantitative data processing and visualization. All outputs generated with digital assistance were critically evaluated, revised, and verified by the authors to ensure academic rigor and ethical standards were upheld. The final responsibility for the manuscript rests entirely with the authors.

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