International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)
Vol. 15, No. 6, December 2026, pp. 5042~5051
ISSN: 2252-8822, DOI: 10.11591/ijere.v15i6.39690

Quality in training and academic support for Guatemalan primary school teachers

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Mar 26, 2026
Revised Oct 26, 2026
Accepted Nov 4, 2025

Keywords:

Academic support
Primary school teachers
Quality of training
Teacher motivation
Teacher training

ABSTRACT

This study explores two aspects of the teaching profession: the motivation for entering the teaching profession and the professional support received in the schools where primary school teachers in Guatemala typically work. A quantitative, descriptive-exploratory design was used for a total of 428 teachers from urban, state-run schools, comprising intact groups. To collect the data, an online survey-style questionnaire was administered, with content validity assessed by expert judgement, internal consistency analyzed using Cronbach's alpha, and sample adequacy and factor validity assessed using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests. The findings regarding motivation to enter the teaching profession show that intrinsic factors outweigh extrinsic ones, with the desire to make a difference in students' lives, to work with them and to develop professionally within their subject area standing out. The findings regarding the various types of support available for their teaching work show that, on average, teachers value most highly observation and feedback on their own teaching, the induction programs they have attended, and the list of informative websites. Significant gaps were identified in the lack of mentoring support and external collaborative networks.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a construct that has long been the subject of study due to its central role in understanding the driving force behind human behavior [1], [2]. Put simply, motivation is what drives people to do what they do [3], or the internal state that activates, directs and sustains behavior [4], [5]. From another perspective, motivation is highly valued, as it enables people to produce, do, work and/or create [6]. Teacher motivation, for its part, can be defined as the set of reasons that influence a teacher's willingness to engage actively in their teaching work, tackle classroom challenges and maintain a meaningful professional practice over time [7]. Thus, this multidimensional and dynamic construct becomes essential in the school setting, particularly for teachers who, in fulfilling their role, need to mobilize others to take action [8].

Teachers play a central role in achieving one of the goals set out in the United Nations' 2030 global development agenda [9]. Sustainable development goal (SDG) 4 (quality education) promotes teacher training by emphasizing teacher qualifications, digital skills and those related to artificial intelligence, but progress towards 2025 is uneven and many countries are lagging behind [9], [10]. Despite their vital role, insufficient attention has been paid to their professional motivation and the support they receive within their schools. What is known, however, is that the proportion of teachers meeting the minimum national qualification standards has increased. This proportion has remained virtually unchanged since the launch of the sustainable development agenda, with an average of 15% of teachers worldwide failing to meet the minimum qualifications required in their countries [11].

The UNESCO report [12], [13] acknowledges the lack of data on teachers in Latin America. For some dimensions of analysis, only isolated data from countries in Latin America and the Caribbean is available, and exclusively for the primary level, obtained from the supplementary questionnaires of the regional comparative and explanatory study (ERCE) administered to teachers and head teachers [14]. The data are not strictly representative of the teaching population: they are drawn from teachers of reading, mathematics and science in years 3 and 6 from schools that participated in the ERCE sample. Nor can the findings be extrapolated to other levels of the education system.

With regard to Guatemala, as part of the commitment to accountability for progress on the UN 2030 Agenda, a review report was produced that assesses in detail the progress made in implementing five SDGs identified as strategic priorities for the country, which has a diverse and multicultural population: good health and well-being, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, life below water, and partnerships for the goals, excluding SDG 4 on quality education [15]. The previous progress report on the UN 2030 Agenda mentioned, in relation to teacher training, only the establishment of the Laboratory for Innovation in Teacher Policy, to contribute to a model for initial teacher training [16]. However, the proportion of teachers with the minimum qualifications required for pre-school, primary and secondary education is unknown, as Guatemala does not provide reports on this matter [13].

Our study addresses this critical gap and provides the first comprehensive empirical assessment of teacher motivation and support; it aims to contribute to our understanding of the characteristics of teacher training in a country that, in particular, has not provided data on progress in improving the qualifications of its teachers. In this context, the research questions are: i) To what extent are teachers motivated to teach as a result of their teacher training? and ii) What kind of school support and induction do teachers value? To answer these questions, the following objective has been formulated: to identify the factors motivating entry into the teaching profession and the views of primary school teachers in Guatemala regarding institutional support in their teaching practice.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research design

This study forms part of the international collaborative project "Partnerships in higher education to ensure quality education and gender equality among teachers (2023–2025)", which involves Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. The methodological approach was quantitative in nature, with an exploratory and descriptive focus [17], utilizing an opinion survey adapted from the sustaining teacher quality (STQ) questionnaire [18]. Following the pilot study, minor adjustments were made after consulting six judges responsible for content validation, resulting in a final questionnaire comprising 34 items presented in sequential order. The questionnaire gathered information on demographic data, the characteristics of the teacher training program, and factors relating to the motivations for becoming a teacher and the various types of school support available to them in their work.

2.2. Participants

The study population consisted of primary school teachers. The non-probabilistic, purposive sample consisted of 428 teachers from municipal and urban schools in the Republic of Guatemala. The participants were drawn from intact groups, that is, groups that had already been formed [17], and the selection criteria were as: i) teachers with at least three years' teaching experience; ii) those with internet access to complete the online survey; and iii) those willing to participate voluntarily in the study.

Before administering the questionnaire, participants were informed of the study's objective and given instructions on how to complete it, with particular emphasis on the fact that the survey was anonymous and that express consent was required to take part. The sample thus consisted of 75.5% women (n=323) and 24.5% men (n=105), with an age distribution divided into four groups: under 20 years, between 21 and 35 years, between 36 and 50 years, and 51 years or older. The largest age group is 21 to 35 years old, comprising 186 people, which represents 43.5% of all respondents. Regarding the highest level of education attained, 51.9% of respondents stated they had completed higher education (n=222), followed by 23.4% with

postgraduate qualifications (master's degree, n=100), and 21.0% who indicated secondary education as their highest level (n=90). In terms of teacher training, 72.2% of respondents stated that they held a formal teaching qualification, whilst the remaining 27.8% did not have such specific training. In terms of employment status, 40.2% of participants stated that they were in permanent employment, suggesting a significant level of stability in professional practice within the sample.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

This section presents the instrument's metric characteristics and the linguistic diversity found in the classroom. It then analyses the two dimensions under study, which include teachers' motivation for entering the teaching profession and the professional support they receive at the schools where they regularly work.

3.1.1. Reliability and validity of the instrument

In order to assess the internal consistency and validity of the questionnaire administered to teachers via Google Forms, two key metrics were calculated: Cronbach's alpha, which measures the reliability or internal consistency of the responses, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy indicators together with Bartlett's sphericity test, which enable us to determine whether the data are suitable for factor analysis. The results show that the questionnaire exhibits very high overall internal consistency, with a value of α=0.95, indicating that the items in the instrument tend to measure the same underlying constructs consistently. Analysis by specific dimensions indicates that most groups of questions exhibit a high degree of homogeneity in the responses.

With regard to sample adequacy and factor validity (KMO and Bartlett), the KMO index results indicate that the instrument has a data structure that is highly suitable for factor analysis, as all values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.6. This suggests that the correlations between items are sufficiently strong and consistent to identify common factors or dimensions. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant across all dimensions ($p<0.001$), confirming that the correlations between items are non-zero and that there is a common structure within the data—an essential prerequisite for proceeding with factor analysis. Overall, the results show that the instrument has high reliability and sound statistical validity. These indicators support the use of the questionnaire as a reliable and valid tool for assessing the quality of teacher training and support, and it can be used in comparative studies, institutional diagnostics or continuous improvement processes in the field of education.

3.1.2. Linguistic diversity

The primary language reported by respondents is Spanish, which is by far the most common, accounting for 89.3% of the total. However, a significant diversity of indigenous languages was identified, including K'iche', Mam, Ixil, Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi' and other variants of Maya, as well as mention of sign language. This variety reflects the multicultural richness of the context in which teachers work, and highlights the need to consider inclusive strategies that value and strengthen indigenous language skills.

With regard to the language used for teaching, Spanish is also the most common, with 93.9% of respondents stating that they use it as their primary teaching tool. However, other languages such as English, K'iche' and Q'anjob'al are also reported, as well as references to bilingual contexts and sign language. This indicates that, whilst Spanish remains the predominant language in teaching, there are educational settings where indigenous languages or those of specific communities coexist, which presents both challenges and opportunities for a more contextualized and culturally relevant education.

3.1.3. Analysis of dimension 1: motivation for entering the teaching profession

This dimension explores the factors that influenced the respondents' decision to enter the teaching profession. Responses were assessed on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 'not at all important' to 'very important', and converted into numerical values for analysis (1 to 4). Among the most highly rated factors (with average scores above 3.0) in Figure 1, intrinsic reasons stand out, such as the opportunity to "make a difference in the lives of others", followed by "working with young people" and an interest in the specific subject area. These three factors were considered to be of great importance by 79.7%, 75.0% and 66.8% of respondents, respectively. Other reasons, such as job opportunities, job security, the social prestige of the profession and the guidance received during training, also scored above the 3.0 threshold. The items were grouped into intrinsic motivations (e.g. vocation, interest in students, social impact) and extrinsic motivations (e.g. job security, salary, prestige), and were compared statistically. Figure 2 shows that the average score for intrinsic factors was 3.59, whilst that for extrinsic factors was 3.03, suggesting a clear difference in the weight given to each type of motivation.

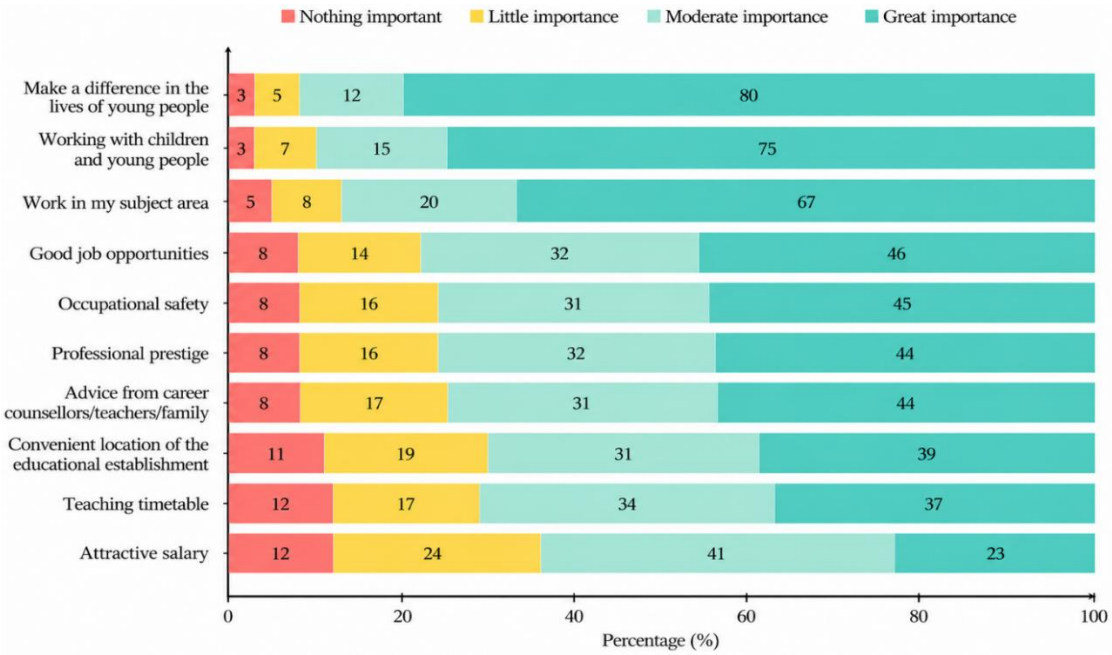


Figure 1. Factors influencing the decision to enter the teaching profession

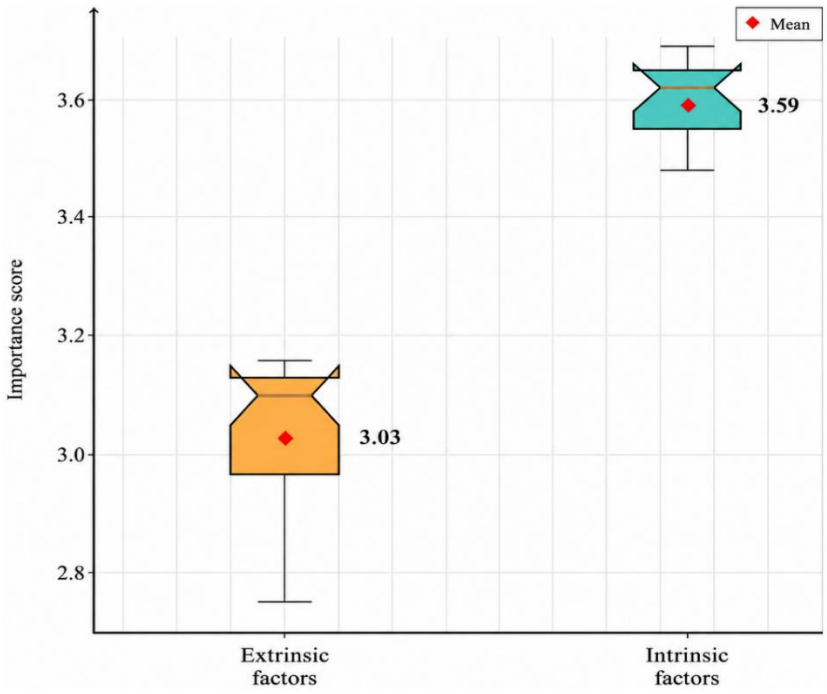


Figure 2. Comparison of intrinsic and extrinsic factors

3.1.4. Analysis of dimension 2: academic support

This dimension assesses the various types of institutional support that teachers receive during their first years in the profession, taking into account both coverage (i.e. how many teachers had access to each type of support) and perceived effectiveness (rated on a scale of 1 to 4). It includes resources such as mentoring schemes, professional development, websites, feedback and induction programs. The analysis helps to identify gaps between access and effectiveness, highlighting priority areas for strengthening teacher support mechanisms. The findings showed that the most common forms of support among respondents were feedback, induction programs, access to websites and professional development.

Figure 3 shows that feedback achieved a coverage rate of 70.1%, making it the most frequently received form of support. This was followed by the induction program with 62.4% coverage, websites with 61.7% coverage, and professional development activities with 60.7% coverage. Whilst these figures demonstrate a significant presence of these resources, assessments of their effectiveness remain at moderate levels, suggesting there is scope to improve their quality and relevance.

In contrast, support provided by an assigned mentor is shown in Figure 4 to have the lowest coverage, reaching only 27.8% of teachers. Furthermore, this type of support received the lowest perceived effectiveness, with an average of 2.15 points on a scale of 1 to 4. This combination of low coverage and limited effectiveness identifies it as a significant weakness in teacher induction systems and highlights the need to review both its design and its implementation.

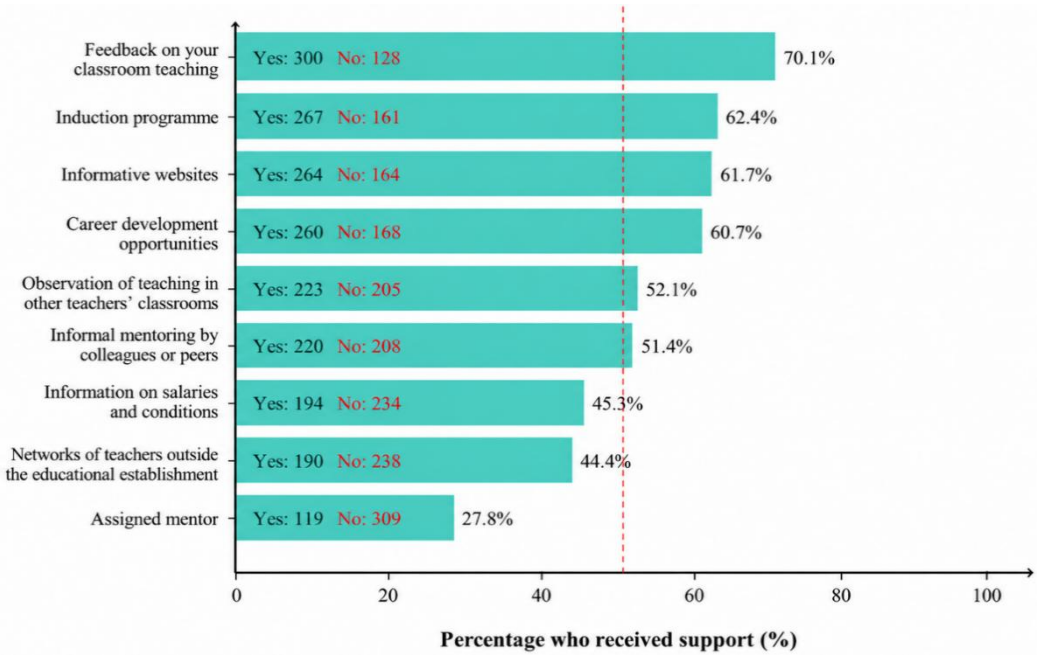


Figure 3. Type of support received

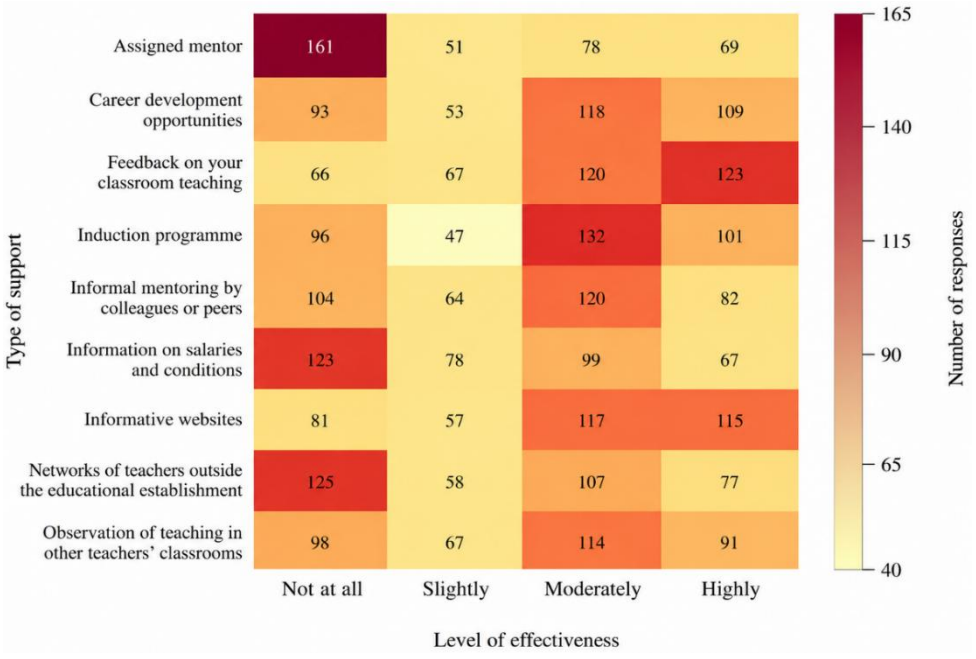


Figure 4. Distribution of responses regarding the effectiveness of the support

3.2. Discussion

This study is the first to assess teachers in the Republic of Guatemala in terms of the formative aspects of their teaching careers, their motivation for entering the teaching profession, and the professional support they receive at the schools where they regularly work. Research into the motivation for entering the teaching profession has shown that people have a combination of extrinsic, intrinsic and altruistic motives in their decision to become teachers. Extrinsic motives are the motivating forces for action that originate from external sources [19], [20], whilst intrinsic motives derive from a person's values, experiences and expectations [6].

In the results for the 'motivation to enter the teaching profession' dimension, intrinsic factors (3.59/4) predominate over extrinsic factors (3.03/4), reflecting a high level of vocational commitment and personal altruism. The overall score for this dimension was 3.20. The main reasons given by respondents for choosing a teaching career were the desire to make a difference in students' lives, the desire to work with children and young people, and the desire to work in their subject area [21], as they find working with children and adolescents enjoyable; due to their passion for the subject they teach [19], [22]. Our findings are consistent with those of [23], [24], who state that the desire to make a difference in the education of children and young people is one of the altruistic motivations for entering the teaching profession, particularly when teachers prioritize the well-being of their students over their own personal well-being. The least important factors in the motivation dimension were salary, the convenience of the school's location and teaching hours. With regard to professional prestige, 44% of respondents consider this to be a matter of great importance, in line with the research by Augustinienė and Stanišauskienė [25], which has shown a tendency for specific characteristics of prestige to dominate as an aspect of the teaching profession's appeal and to become a factor in career choice [26], [27].

With regard to the area of academic support, 52.9% of respondents reported having received some form of support, with an average effectiveness rating of 2.52. The overall results of the survey revealed that, on average, teachers valued most highly the observation and feedback on their own teaching, the induction programs they had received, and the list of informative websites, amongst the various types of professional support available to them in their teaching work. Teachers' professional development is another key pillar of school support. Teachers who feel that they are growing, learning and keeping up to date within their institution are more likely to remain in their posts in the long term [28]. Teachers also particularly value opportunities for lifelong learning, provided these are tailored to their genuine interests and contextual needs [29]. Professional development and induction programs should not be viewed merely as a means of meeting training targets, but rather as a strategy for empowerment and vocational renewal. According to the Banco Mundial [30], the world's most successful education systems are those that invest in continuous professional development as a retention strategy, recognizing that teachers stay in the profession when they feel they are growing. As for information websites, these are crucial for teachers, as they centralize access to up-to-date educational resources whilst facilitating hybrid and personalized teaching [31]. In terms of academic support, Guatemalan teachers identified significant gaps in the provision of mentoring and collaborative networks. This finding is consistent with Mora [29], who states that mentoring programs have limited coverage and lack effective monitoring [32]. Mentoring, conceived as a space for peer learning, has in many cases been reduced to an administrative requirement with no real impact on continuing professional development.

As for the lack of collaborative networks, these are not easy to establish. According to Vaillant [33], classroom experiences are complex and characterized by unforeseen circumstances that teachers often try to resolve on their own. However, UNESCO [34] emphasizes that collaboration is essential at all stages of a teacher's career, as well as being key to its success. The lack of mentoring and gaps in teacher collaboration are not merely internal pedagogical issues, but structural failings with profound political implications that affect the stability, quality and equity of the education system, as they require a dedicated time commitment and a cultural shift towards peer learning. To address these gaps, it is proposed, for example, that formal induction programs be put in place, involving compulsory mentoring for teachers new to the education system, with mentors who have teaching experience and the necessary time and resources to carry out this role. With regard to collaboration, there is a need to encourage collaborative sessions that involve joint planning and analysis of teaching practice, linked to learning outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

The literature recognizes the potential importance of teacher motivation and school support for teachers' ability to carry out their work, given their influence on students' learning outcomes, as well as on the recruitment and retention of professional teachers. However, research in this area remains scarce. This study contributes to the literature on both topics by offering insights into teachers' own views, as well as providing timely evidence for the design of education policies focused on educational quality, with the aim of achieving SDG 4 by 2030, in a country where information on the current qualifications of its teachers is

limited. Our findings show that the motivations behind the decision to pursue a career in teaching were intrinsic rather than extrinsic, and were based on the opportunity to work in a subject area of their choice, making a difference to students' lives through their professional work with them. With regard to the effectiveness of school support, our findings show that teachers acknowledge having received some form of support in their professional work; however, they identified a lack of mentoring and collaborative work outside their institution.

As regards the limitations of this study, these relate to the data collection methodology. The non-probabilistic, purposive sampling method, whilst ideal for exploratory studies, does not allow for the generalization of the data and may have limited the results, in that they may disproportionately represent a specific group of teachers who, for example, have more free time or greater digital access, whilst excluding others. The methodological decision to conduct only an online survey, which is limited in its ability to explain the 'why' behind the opinions. Future research on this topic should include follow-up interviews to explore the teachers' responses in greater depth.

FUNDING INFORMATION

The authors state no funding is involved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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Fabiola Flores			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Carmen Coloma		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓					
Silvia Valdivieso		✓		✓	✓					✓	✓			
Henry Vallejo		✓	✓		✓				✓		✓			
María Simón	✓	✓			✓					✓				
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C : **C**onceptualization
M : **M**ethodology
So : **So**ftware
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Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis
I : **I**nvestigation
R : **R**esources
D : **D**ata Curation
O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft
E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
Su : **Su**pervision
P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Los Lagos (protocol code H028 and date of approval 7 March 2022) for studies involving humans.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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