

Culture of Violence

Kervens C. Dabresil

Independent Research, Coral Springs, FL, USA

Email: kdabresil8@gmail.com

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Abstract

By examining a variety of statistics that have been gathered, this study sheds light on the issue of the culture of violence and mass shootings in America. The findings are based on the investigation conducted to uncover the reasons that explain the prevalence of mass shootings in the U.S. compared to other industrialized or developed nations. This research paper brings light to two of the biggest questions involving gun violence and mass shootings. First, what is considered a mass shooting, and, most importantly, how can mass shootings be prevented? The research conducted for the purpose of this paper provided the answer to both of those questions and what people believe to be the main causes of mass shootings and gun violence.

Keywords

Violence, American Violence, Cultural Violence, Mass Shootings, Gun Violence

1. Introduction

The nation with the most weapons per person is the United States. According to the most recent statistics, there are more than 400 million firearms in a country with 335 million inhabitants. Every year, 268 individuals are injured by firearms, or about 97,820 people annually. In the last ten years, there have been 40,000 gun-related fatalities on average. A child will have seen hundreds, perhaps thousands, of violent actions on television by the time they are an adult. It's conceivable that exposure to violence in the media at a young age numbs us to it or justifies it as a way to handle conflicts.

School shootings and Mass shootings have been dominating the United States for decades and have only gotten worse since technology and social media advancement. It has left the country's residents asking many questions. What is the main issue with these horrendous acts? Are Americans obsessed with violence, or

is there an underlying issue causing all this violence? What explains the propensity toward gun violence and mass shootings in America? Why do Americans perceive violence, such as shooting a group of strangers, as a solution to many social and personal problems?

First, two big questions must be dissected and understood clearly. What is a mass shooting and, most importantly, how can mass shootings be prevented? There is no unified agreement on the definition. According to the nonprofit research organization “The Gun Violence Archive,” a mass shooting is any occurrence in which four or more people are shot or killed, excluding the gunman (Grantham-Philips, 2022). Contrarily, Everytown’s current definition excludes the shooter and refers to a shooting in which four or more individuals are shot and killed (Grantham-Philips, 2022). The term “mass shooting” is not defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Instead, the FBI defines “mass murder” as any occurrence involving the deaths of four or more individuals, which may involve the use of firearms (Grantham-Philips, 2022). According to USA TODAY, a mass shooting occurs when at least four individuals are shot, even if no one is killed. When at least four people are killed in an incident, it is considered a mass killing (Grantham-Philips, 2022).

This research paper will address the issues surrounding violence and the main reasons that explain the prevalence of mass shootings in the U.S. compared to other industrialized or developed nations. We will analyze it to determine the main reason and provide a solution. Data was acquired from a random sample of participants who were asked a range of questions about what they thought were the reasons for the prevalence of mass shootings in order to properly discuss the results of this issue. For purposes of discussion and decision-making, the utilization of research in criminal justice is crucial. Conducting research may be utilized to educate people who not only work in related disciplines of criminal justice but also those who are interested in jobs in this subject.

2. Culture of Violence

Since Europeans arrived on this rock, there has been violence. Many have tried to figure out why that is. Are Americans just naturally evil, or is there another factor at hand that may explain the prevalence of mass shootings in the U.S. compared to other industrialized or developed nations? Society has been trying to find reasons that could explain the prevalence of mass shootings in the U.S. compared to other industrialized or developed nations. People are not safe walking down the street; kids are not safe in school. Where can the average American feel safe and what is the reason for all of this violence? What is the cause of all of these mass shootings in America compared to other countries?

All industrialized nations, including the US, have a higher likelihood of mass shootings than developing nations due to foreign-born perpetrators, ideological motivations, fame-seeking motivations, schools, open spaces, and firearms (Silva, 2022). In developed nations, mass shootings account for 73% of incidents and 62%

of fatalities (Silva, 2022). Rifles, military, and police sites, and perpetrators of mass shootings were more frequent in developing nations (Silva, 2022).

In America, there has been this acceptance and culture of violence that has existed since the Europeans landed on this rock. The American people perceive violence as a solution to many social and personal problems. For example, shooting a group of strangers. Simply reduces the easy access to guns and requires anyone with a gun to do a monthly mental health screening. That would most likely reduce the number of mass shootings. The number of school shootings will also be reduced. America is not the only country with a gun violence problem, but yet it is the only one with restrictions in its constitution. Many other countries have the right to bear arms, but the United States takes it to another level. The United States seems to let anyone that wants a gun have one regardless of whether they have mental health issues or not.

2.1. First Mass Shooting in U.S History

“Howard Unruh, a war veteran, killed 13 people by shooting from a window down into a crowded street” (Magazine, 2015). On September 6, 1949, when he was 28 years old, American mass shooter Howard Unruh shot and killed thirteen people while strolling around his neighborhood in Camden, New Jersey. The “Walk of Death” was the name given to the tragedy. After being imprisoned for sixty years, Unruh was determined to be criminally insane and passed away in 2009 at the age of 88 from a chronic illness. Although there were many mass shootings before Howard’s Unruh “walk of death”, according to the FBI definition of a mass shooter is “Four or more victims in a single incident (usually in one spot)” (Follman, 2012). That definition makes Unruh the first, but certainly not the last, mass shooter in history.

2.2. School Shootings in U.S History

Studies show that 1 in 4 mass shooting victims are children and teens, which leads to school shootings, one of the biggest issues that are still affecting our nation (Gun Violence Archive, 2022). This exposure to violence is not only traumatic but also contributes to the increasing prevalence of school shootings, which remain one of the most pressing issues affecting the nation. According to the Gun Violence Archive, mass shootings claimed the lives of over 600 children and teens in 2022 alone. School shootings have had a devastating impact on the United States, claiming numerous lives and leaving many others injured (Gun Violence Archive, 2022). According to recent data, between the 2000-01 and 2021-22 school years, there were 1,375 school shootings across public and private elementary and secondary schools. These shootings resulted in 515 deaths and 1161 injuries (Education Week, 2022).

Alarmingly, the 2021-22 school year was the deadliest, with 327 incidents leading to 81 deaths and 269 injuries. Most of these shootings (about 61%) occurred in high schools, followed by elementary schools at 23.6%, and middle schools at

12% (Education Week, 2022). It seems like the people of this “great nation” live in fear and always have to be cautious of their surroundings. “The deadliest school shooting in the United States was the Virginia Tech massacre, with 33 fatalities and 23 injuries. The next deadliest school shooting (based on fatalities) was the Sandy Hook Elementary massacre in Newtown, Connecticut, with 27 fatalities” (Statista Research Department, 2022).

3. Literature Review

3.1. Mental Health and Mass Shooting Studies

Evidence gathered from prior research studies that demonstrate that people with mental illness are not often aggressive and are not to blame for mass shootings weakens the efficacy and validity of the argument. This section focuses on the reasons why these researchers disagree with the thesis because the evidence that will be subsequently provided in this study supports it. Mass shootings by unstable people are reported in the media, which draws attention to them and feeds the myth that mental illness frequently leads to violence. According to epidemiologic research, the vast majority of individuals with severe mental problems never commit violent crimes. Suicide, which accounts for more than half of all US gun-related fatalities, is closely linked to mental illness (Swanson et al., 2015).

According to a nationwide public opinion poll conducted in 2013, 46% of Americans said People with major mental illness are “much more dangerous than the normal population.” People with schizophrenia are viewed as highly dangerous by Americans (Swanson et al., 2015). According to data from the 2006 General Social Survey: 60% of respondents said they believed the person in question to be dangerous to others, either very likely or probably (Swanson et al., 2015). News coverage of violent incidents, such as mass shootings, has contributed to the public’s belief that there is a substantial correlation between mental illness and violence. According to two studies, negative public perceptions of people with major mental illnesses are strongly related to the news media’s coverage of high-profile violent crimes committed by these individuals. The truth is that mental illness is not a major risk factor when it comes to the potential for violence (Wolf & Rosen, 2014).

Because individuals behave according to their ideas and prefer to support policies that are based on those assumptions, public views and attitudes toward people with mental illness are crucial for determining public policy. Therefore, the public will also be more likely to support. Regardless of whether those policies are necessarily effective and fair, they restrict the liberties of people with mental illnesses. This is because the public as a whole believes that people with mental illnesses are dangerous and pose a threat to their safety. According to Swanson’s research, “The goal of recent gun control legislation, which was to keep weapons out of the hands of mentally ill people in an effort to minimize violence, is incorrect. In actuality, this merely reinforces the false notion that there is a causal relationship between mental illness and violence.”

After viewing all the evidence, the idea of reducing easy access to guns and requiring mental health screening still stands because the one thing that these articles have not touched upon is that although studies show that people with mental illness do not pose a high threat, they are still part of the problem. I'm trying to convey that the monthly mental health screening would most likely reduce the number of mass shootings that happen. Although that won't stop gun violence and mass shootings, at least it will reduce the number greatly. The idea of unstable people having guns with few restrictions is still highly dangerous.

3.2. The Media Role

Given this evidence, this still does not negate the idea of a monthly mental health checkup for gun owners, but it does bring up another issue that may be the cause of these violent acts, "The media". The media not only influences but plays a huge role in the diverse response to gun violence in America. When the media frames an issue so that the attention of the general public is captured, lawmakers are more likely to focus their efforts on the issue (Parham-Payne, 2014). On the other hand, Wanda Parham-Pay also believes the media wants the public to think most of the gun violence is being committed by minorities, mainly black and brown people.

According to James Garbarino's collaborative research with Catherine P. Bradshaw, and Joseph A., the media's focus on juvenile gun violence may appeal to young people, leading them to carry out "copycat" shootings or attempt to "outdo" widely publicized school shootings. For instance, several recent school shooters claimed that they devised a "better" school ambush by studying the "mistakes" of previous well-known school shooters (Garbarino et al., 2002). Researchers believe negative short-and long-term psychological impacts, such as rage, withdrawal, post-traumatic stress, and desensitization to violence, may occur in children exposed to gun violence. Each of these consequences has the potential to perpetuate the cycle of violence. Some kids may be more likely to experience negative consequences if they are exposed to gun violence. Children affected by gun violence, people who are in close proximity to violent actions, people who are exposed to high levels of violence in their neighborhoods or schools, and people who are exposed to violent media are all groups that are at risk (Garbarino et al., 2002).

According to Randy Borum and his collaborators, Dewey G. Cornell, William Modzeleski, and Shane R. Jimerson's research evidence, they believe that the solution to preventing school shootings is first creating a threat assessment. Threat assessment, which focuses on identifying whether the person (or group) genuinely poses a threat or is acting in a threatening manner for another reason, is an alternative to profiling and a potential strategy for preventing violence (Borum, Cornell et al., 2010). Similar to previous studies of violence, threat assessment research is hampered by the moral and practical need to act when confronted with risk. A control group's potentially dangerous members cannot be allowed to behave unchecked. However, it is possible to demonstrate that schools that use a threat

assessment approach, in comparison to other approaches, can achieve desirable outcomes, such as resolving student conflicts, identifying needed services, reducing subsequent misbehavior, and retaining students in school (Strong & Cornell, 2008).

In Joy D. Osofsky's research, he emphasized how almost all children are affected by media violence, whether it be on television, in movies, or online. There is now a study on the impact of media, family, and community violence on children. Children are exposed to violence in their neighborhoods, in their homes, and in the media. Over the past ten years, violence in the United States has been described as a "public health pandemic." "The National Summary of Injury Mortality Data shows that the murder rate among young individuals aged 15 to 24 has increased significantly since 1950, reaching a level of 37 per 100,000 persons in 1991." (Osofsky, 1999) Despite recent decreases in crime, the murder rate among males aged 15 to 24 in the United States is 10 times greater than those in Canada, Australia, France, and Germany. It is also 15 times higher than in France and Germany. Only a few South American developing nations, like Colombia and Brazil, as well as genuine conflict zones, have a greater murder rate among young men than in the US. Abuse of any kind, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, is a common occurrence in American households. The brutality of American culture is unmatched elsewhere, and it constantly bombards young people through television, movies, and the Internet (Osofsky, 1999).

4. Methodology

This study's design is based on quantitative research, which employs a survey approach to collect data. A sample of 135 people chosen at random received each survey, which consisted of a total of 16 questions. Given the enormous number of participants in such a short amount of time, it was determined that the survey approach was best suited for this sort of research. Since it was able to be administered via face-to-face paper surveys, it was also the most adaptable sort of research methodology. Additionally, the survey approach was the best way to collect data anonymously without making participants feel as though their ideas would be used against them.

100% of respondents completed the survey, and about 90% completed all the demographic questions. The dependent variable in this survey was the tenth question, while the initial nine questions functioned as the independent variables. Each response was entered, processed, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The data was input into SPSS using a point scale format; for instance, the gender column would have a 1 for male respondents and a 2 for female respondents.

There were nine demographic questions in total on gender, ethnicity/race, education, income, military background, religion, political views, violent crime victimization, and country of birth in each survey. There were two gender-specific

answer options: male and female. The response choices for race and ethnicity were white, black, Latino, Asian, and universal. A high school diploma, some college, a bachelor's degree, and postgraduate education were the options for the education question. Participants were asked four dichotomous questions, which are yes-or-no questions, about their military background, religious affiliation, violent crime victimization, and whether they were born in the U.S. or not. They were asked about their political views, with the available responses being conservative, liberal, and non-affiliated. Last but not least, respondents were asked to describe their present socioeconomic standing in terms of their income, with no options for less than \$20,000, 40,000-\$60,000-75,000, and more than \$75,000 offered.

Participants were required to respond that they either strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, or strongly agree to the 7 questions regarding the reasons that explain the prevalence of mass shootings in the U.S. compared to other industrialized/developed nations.

Following completion, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) used descriptive statistics to examine each response. The data for each subcategory was then represented using these statistics, which were derived depending on each question. Each subcategory's frequency, percentage, valid percent, and cumulative percentage were shown in these tables. The data was turned into bar charts to represent the percentage of each response inside each categorization.

5. Findings

This section's data explains the descriptive and correlation analysis of the independent variables acquired for this study. A total of 135 randomly chosen participants were included in this study; of them, 71 were men (52.6%), 63 were women (46.7%), and 1 (0.7%) did not want to disclose their gender. Eight of the participants were white (5.9%), 54 were black (40.0%), 46 were Latino (34.1%), 4 were Asian (3.0%), and 23 identified as other or did not disclose their ethnicity (17.0%). The highest degree of education attained, 19 (14.1%) participants said they had a high school diploma, 50 (37.0%) said they had attended some college, 46 (34.1%) said they had a bachelor's degree, and 20 (14.8%) said they had post-graduate degrees, which are any degrees that are master's degrees or higher. Regarding whether they have served in the military, 19 (14.1%) of the participants responded yes. One hundred sixteen people (85.9%) said they had never served in the military. Sixty-nine respondents (51.1%) indicated that they were born in the US. Sixty-six respondents, or 48.9%, said they were not born in the United States. Fifty-one people (37.8%) said they had been the victim of a violent crime. Eighty-three valid (61.5%) respondents said they had not been victims of violent crime. One (0.7%) of respondents chose not to respond.

Additionally, when participants were questioned about their political views, 23 (17.0%) identified as conservatives, 31 (23.0%) as liberals, and 81 (60.0%) as unaffiliated. When asked if they are religious or not, 85 (63.0%) of the participants said yes, while 42 (31.1%) said they are not religious and 8 (5.9%) said they are

somewhat religious. Regarding their income and socioeconomic standing, 85 respondents (63.0%) stated that they make between \$20,000 and \$40,000, 31 (23.0%) between \$40,000 and \$60,000, 8 (5.9%) between \$60,000 and \$75,000, and 11 (8.1%) did not respond.

Given that this study's primary goal was to identify the factors explaining why the U.S. has more mass shootings than other industrialized/developed nations. Why America? When compared to all other industrialized/developed countries, why does American society allow and condone this unrelenting streak of violence?

when asked if it is the INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA (VIDEO GAMES, SOCIAL MEDIA, TV, MOVIES, ETC.),

8 (5.9%) participants strongly disagreed, 23 (17.0%) somewhat disagreed, 46 (34.1%) were neutral on the question, 27 (20.0%) somewhat agreed, 31 (23.0%) strongly agreed.

when asked if it is the OVERSENSATIVE POPULATION

8 (5.9%) participants strongly disagreed, 58 (43.0%) were neutral on the question, 19 (14.1%) somewhat agreed, 50 (37.0%) strongly agreed.

when asked if it is the BEING OUTCAST, LONELINESS, ISOLATION

12 (8.9%) participants strongly disagreed, 35 (25.9%) somewhat disagreed, 46 (34.1%) were neutral on the question, 35 (25.9%) somewhat agreed, 7 (5.2%) strongly agreed

when asked if it is the MENTAL ILLNESS

12 (8.9%) participants strongly disagreed, 12 (8.9%) somewhat disagreed, 39 (28.9%) were neutral on the question, 42 (31.1%) somewhat agreed, 31 (23.0%) strongly agreed.

when asked if it is the VIOLENT CULTURE/HISTORY

15 (11.1%) participants strongly disagreed, 54 (40.0%) somewhat disagreed, 39 (28.9%) were neutral on the question, 19 (14.1%) somewhat agreed, 8 (5.9%) strongly agreed

MISTRUST OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

4 (2.9%) participants strongly disagreed, 15 (11.1%) somewhat disagreed, 39 (28.9%) were neutral on the question, 54 (40.0%) somewhat agreed, 23 (17.0%) strongly agreed

when asked if it is the NORMALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

12 (8.9%) participants strongly disagreed, 4 (2.9%) somewhat disagreed, 19 (14.1%) were neutral on the question, 69 (51.1%) somewhat agreed, 31 (23.0%) strongly agreed.

The 9 demographics were used as the independent on the x-axis while the other 7 questions as dependent on each other on the y-axis were compared, and correlations were found. Based on the number of surveys completed, it was established that .005 was a good correlation; the correlation for race and education was at 0.483. Normalization of violence and education had an inverse correlation of -0.356. Income and education have an inverse correlation of -0.362.

Gender and being outcasted are correlated 0.373.

Correlations

		GENDER	BEING_OUTCAST_LONELINESS_ISOLATION
GENDER	Pearson Correlation	1	.373*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.047
	N	29	29
BEING_OUTCAST_LONELINESS_ISOLATION	Pearson Correlation	.373*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.047	
	N	29	30

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Social media and Military 0.338. Income and education have an inverse correlation of -0.362. Normalization of violence and income had an inverse correlation of -0.481. Over Sensitive and income inverse correlation of -0.372. Outcasted and violent cultures had a correlation of 0.533.

Regression was used to analyze the data, and the regression coefficients provided estimates and confidence ranges for each variable.

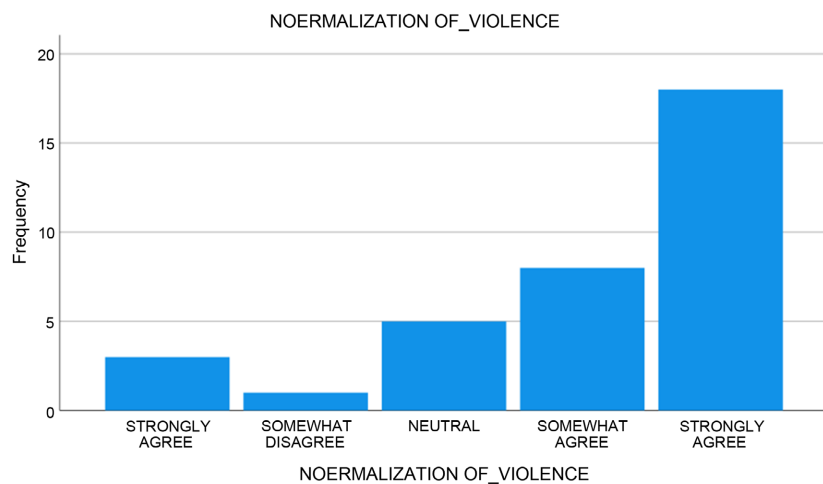
There was a separation of the independent and dependent variables.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.904	.276		3.282	.003
	BEING_OUTCAST_LONELINESS_ISOLATION	.179	.086	.373	2.086	.047

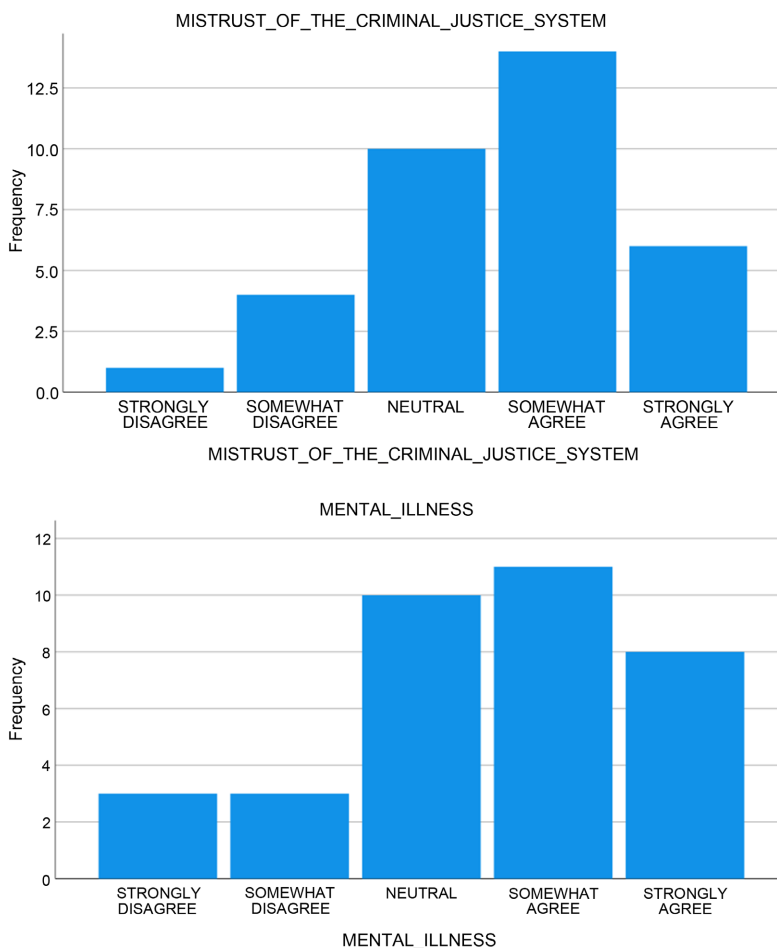
a. Dependent Variable: GENDER

According to the result, the Normalization of violence is the cause of the violent acts happening in America.



I honestly thought that mental illness or mistrust in criminal justice was the reason that people would be blamed for the violence.

Mistrust of the criminal justice system was second on the list with Mental illness being third, so the result wasn't too far from the assumptions



As you can tell from the results, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) provides those two reasons at the top of the list of the reasons people believe explain the prevalence of mass shootings in the US compared to other industrialized/developed nations. In my opinion, I sort of agree with this because, as I stated earlier in this paper, since the beginning of United States history, there has been this culture of violence that has upgraded itself to a new level due to the normalization of violence and the mistrust in the criminal justice system. Mental illness also being at the top of the list does not surprise me because, just like myself, I believed that mental illness was a number because many other people feel the same thing. The public's terrible misconception that all people with mental illnesses are aggressive and dangerous is reinforced by the media's portrayal of mental illness. However numerous medical professionals have refuted the idea that mental illness is the main contributor to gun violence (Green, 2020).

6. Conclusion

The solution isn't locking people up and throwing away the key; the solution is

investing in the community and investing in the youth. Mental health may not be at the top of the list, but it is a big part of the problem. Mass shootings have been ignored because they have become a part of daily life. Every time someone goes out, they have that thought in their head that something may happen. America has yet to find a real solution to the problem. They have been putting a Band-Aid on an open wound without first cleaning the wound. The bandage will stop the bleeding, but it will not heal the wound. This is what this country was built on, but honestly, not everyone should have machine guns. Nowadays, every person and their neighbors have access to a machine gun. Simply restricting easy access to firearms and mandating periodic mental health screenings for all gun owners would likely reduce the number of mass shootings.

I've explored various issues surrounding this topic, but there are still a lot of issues out there that haven't been explored. It would help if you could name some of those issues that haven't been explored.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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