



Long-Distance, Strong Connection

Shaping Family Resilience in the Face of Long-Distance Marriage

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Highlights

- There are many couples who live their married life by living separately for a while but remain committed to marriage.
- The separate marriages or commuter marriages can still be carried out because the couple has a strong commitment to keeping their marriage intact even though they do not live together.
- The process of family resilience in commuter marriage couples can be formed due to several protective factors, such as commitment, effective communication, family support, openness, positive coping, mutual support, collaborative conflict resolution, face- to-face meetings, socializing, health and trust.

Abstract

A long-distance marriage occurs when a married couple lives separately for various reasons but remains committed to keeping their marriage intact. Despite the separation, they still maintain their marriage by maintaining marital satisfaction above distance and physical contact limitations. This study explores marital satisfaction in commuter marriage couples through family resilience in dealing with marital circumstances while living apart. The research method used was a systematic literature review using PRISMA guidelines. Several databases were used to search for articles: Proquest, Science Direct, Ebscohost, Scopus, and Sagepub. The inclusion criteria used in this study include journal articles published in English and open access, articles that discuss family resilience in long-distance marriages, articles that focus on couples who travel apart at least three nights per week for at least three months, articles published between 2013-2023, and research that uses quantitative, qualitative and by using the keywords "marital satisfaction" AND "resilience" AND "long distance marriage" OR "commuter marriage" AND "quality". From the search, 4348 articles were found, and 8 articles that met the inclusion criteria were selected. The results showed that married life with couples living apart could maintain marital satisfaction due to family resilience. The process of family resilience in commuter marriage couples can be formed due to several protective factors, such as commitment, effective communication, family support, openness, positive coping, mutual support, collaborative conflict resolution, face-to-face meetings, socializing, health and trust.

Keywords: Commuter Marriage; Family Resilience; Marital Satisfaction; Systematic Literature Review.

INTRODUCTION

The family is a small social system consisting of a series of parts that are interdependent and influenced by internal and external structures (Friedman, 2010). Family is defined as kinship in which individuals unite in a marriage bond with parental status. In a broad sense, a family has members who have personal and reciprocal relationships in carrying out obligations and providing support that is formed during birth, adoption, and marriage (Stuart, 2014). In general, families form households or live together (Mas'udah, 2023). But these conditions can differ due to various reasons such as education, health and employment.

The main demand in fulfilling the family economy is to have a job. Limited job opportunities are one of the reasons for working outside the city or abroad. This phenomenon causes married couples to face a marriage situation where one of them has to work from different areas so that they live separately temporarily (Ramadhini & Hendriani, 2015). At the same time, long-distance marriages can also be caused by family or environmental demands that force partners to live separately (Lee, 2018).

Based on the 2021 United States Census in America, the male population who works outside the city is 22.4% and 18.5% female of the total population of 154,314 people. The survey results show that 41.1% of a total of 63,114 couples undergo long-distance marriages (United States Census, 2021). This data shows that there are many couples who live their married life by living separately for a while but remain committed to marriage. Prameswara and Sakti (2016) shows that separate marriages or commuter marriages can still be carried out because the couple has a strong commitment to keeping their marriage intact even though they do not live together.

Commuter marriage is a marriage in which husband and wife consciously decide to live separately in different places to pursue career opportunities that involve relocating to different places, (Rhodes, 2002). According to Lindmann (2017) commuter marriage is a couple with multiple incomes who live separately for their professional careers. Commuter marriage has several characteristics, namely: the period of separation experienced by couples ranging from three months to 14 years, the distance that separates the couple between 40-2.700 miles, the couple only meets once a week to a few days a month, and the distance that varies between the main house and the place of residence. work (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Scott, 2002).

Commuter marriage has several impacts on couples, including communication problems, time differences resulting in limited space to communicate with each other, lack of direct physical relationships, increased boredom, lack of affection, and costs (Anderson, 2008). According to Elbaliem et al. (2020) Long-distance marriages result in a lack of intimacy between husband and wife. Commuter couples rarely share personal information and have lower marital satisfaction than married couples who live together. Therefore, more effort is needed so that married couples who live separately can achieve marital satisfaction. Efforts that can be made to maintain marital satisfaction by commuting is to establish intense communication.

In addition, in commuter marriages, family resilience becomes important because the physical distance that separates family members can complicate communication, disrupt intimacy, and create difficulties in making decisions together. Family resilience is the ability of individuals and family units to demonstrate positive behavior patterns and functional competence in dealing with stressful or unfavorable situations. According to Walsh (2016), the key to resilience has three important components, namely belief systems (making meaning, positive outlook, and transcendence or spirituality), organizational processes (flexibility, connectedness, social and community resources), and communication processes (clear information, emotional), sharing, and problem solving). Families in a commuter marriage have challenges and pressures

that may be different from those living together. Therefore, having high family resilience can help families stay together and overcome many challenges. To overcome the challenges and pressures associated with commuter marriages, family resilience is the most important key in maintaining a marriage relationship.

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that influence the effectiveness of family resilience in dealing with commuter marriages, and to understand how effective coping strategies in commuter marriages can affect marital satisfaction.

METHOD

Objective

This study aims to identify factors and coping strategies that influence marital satisfaction in commuter marriage couples. The writer conducted a systematic literature review using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021), as shown in Figure 1.

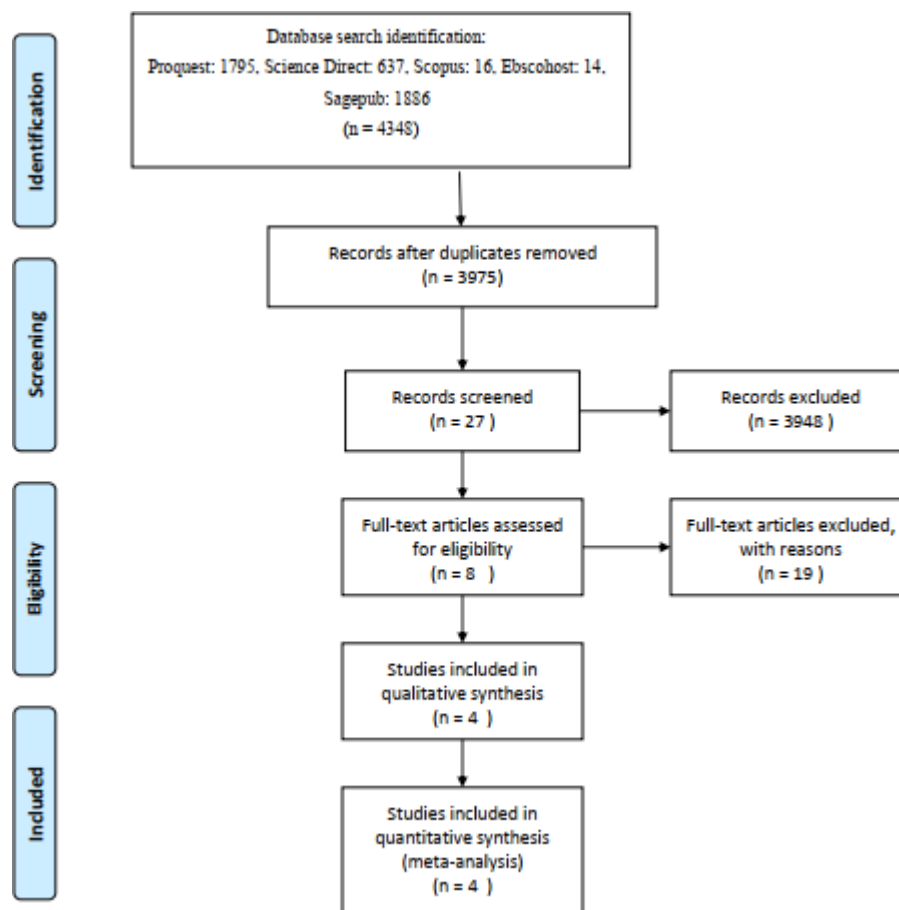


Figure 1. Flowchart in article selection using PRISMA guidelines

Search strategy

In conducting this systematic literature review, the writer collected the latest articles from trusted online databases such as Proquest, Science Direct, Ebscohost, Sagepub, and Scopus. In April 2023, a literature search was conducted using the keywords ("marital satisfaction" AND "resilience" AND (long-distance marriage OR commuter marriage) AND "quality"). In addition,

a manual search was conducted to ensure that all aspects of information missing in the electronic database were covered.

Selection Criteria

From the results of the search for articles using the keywords above, the writer then read the titles and abstracts to ensure compliance with the inclusion criteria that had been set, including 1) those written in English and open access, 2) addressing family resilience in commuting marriages, 3) focused on couples who commuted separately at least three nights per week for at least three months, 4) published between 2013 and 2023, and 5) research using quantitative and qualitative. The initial process of this study began by selecting all titles and abstracts that fit the inclusion criteria. Further selection was made based on the inclusion criteria from all titles and abstracts. The process was implemented to ensure that the data collected for the research study were pertinent to the research goals and met the necessary standards to be examined and analyzed thoroughly.

Data Extraction

The information obtained from the article includes several elements such as the author's name, year of publication, journal title, country, research objectives, theoretical framework or model used, the conceptualization of the research topic, methodological approach used in the research, sample or participants involved in the research, and research results. In this case, the researcher collected important information from the article to evaluate its relevance, quality and credibility.

RESULT

In this study, the process of searching for articles started from 17 February 2023 – 3 April 2023. Searching for articles used search databases through Proquest, Science Direct, Ebscohost, Sagepub, and Scopus. Furthermore, articles are filtered based on title, abstract, duplication and keywords. The screening process resulted in 27 articles for re-screening and 3948 articles were not processed again because they did not meet the criteria or did not match the research questions related to family resilience in commuter marriages.

Of the 27 articles that met the criteria according to the title and abstract, eight articles were obtained which were reprocessed by checking the participant criteria, research design, and research results which showed the factors that influence family resilience in commuter marriage couples and coping strategies used by couples to remain maintain marital satisfaction. Meanwhile, the other 19 articles were not processed further due to incompatibility with the criteria for the participants, the research design, and the results did not mention a description of the factors that affect family resilience and the coping strategies used to maintain marital satisfaction. The final step is to filter the reference list. Based on the screening steps that have been carried out, eight articles were obtained that are relevant to the criteria for review in this study.

Table 1.

Eight articles that are relevant to the criteria for review.

No	Article Title and Authors	Participants	Methods	Findings	Country
1.	Familial relationship and efforts in retention of marriage among atomistic families in Indonesia (Mas'udah, 2022)	57 families/ couples who did not live together in East Java	Qualitative	Atomistic family coping strategies: Husband and wife must have face-to-face meetings, telephone communications, and social networking sites at least once a week or once a month or even once a few months.	Indonesia
2.	Pertinent African accounts of ambivalence and benefits in commuter marriages. (Kumswa, Agboola & Ethe, 2022)	17 participants they were married, had children and engaged in commuter marriages	Qualitative	Commuter marriage provides positive benefits such as improved quality of life, the opportunity to focus on work, relax, and reduce stress in preparing meals for the wife.	Nigeria
3.	Risk and protective factors of marital adjustment to cross-border work arrangement of Hong Kong Residents: The perspective of stationary spouses. (Lau, dkk. 2013)	304 couples spouses in Mainland	Quantitative	Family strengths have an important role in maintaining spouses' relationships. There are protective and risk factors. The most significant protective factor in maintaining marital relationships is positive coping. Risk factors are the absence of parents to become an incomplete family and the fear of infidelity.	Hong Kong
4.	Commuter couple's life satisfaction in Korea. (Lee, 2017)	55 working married women and 387 working married men (aged in their 20s to 50s) who reported that their partners live separately because of work	Quantitative	Commuter-marriage couples reported having lower levels of life satisfaction. Some activities undertaken to maintain the marriage are making time to return home more often, arranging schedules outside work to spend time with the spouse and socialising more.	Korea
5.	Commuters' psychosocial	224 respondents who lived	Qualitative	Resilience in parenting adjustment of commuter	Malaysia

	profile and their involvement in child rearing at home. (Roslan, Li, & Ahmad, 2013)	separately from their families, and only went home on weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis in Lembah Klang		couples is seen from different perspectives, positive and negative. Psychosocial aspects that influence are emotions, anxiety, and stress.	
6.	Reciprocal effects of marital idealization and marital satisfaction between long-wed spouses overtime. (Star, O'Rourke & Schwartz, 2022)	119 long-wed couples	Quantitative	Family resilience strategy in maintaining marital relations is to increase the idealization of marriage by building positive perceptions of partners and marriage, strengthening emotional bonds and good communication to build mutual trust and strong togetherness	Canada
7.	'Making time': Longdistance marriages and the temporalities of the transnational family. (Acadera & Yeoh, 2018)	30 participants. 15 were migrant wives and 15 were left-behind husband.	Qualitative	The key to maintaining a relationship is communication. Efforts made are often visiting immigrant husbands or wives because Singapore is felt to be close. In addition, making calls with Skype is also an effort to maintain the intimacy of transnational married couples.	Singapore
8.	Defying tradition: Gender roles in long-distance relationships. (Anand, dkk.2017)	93 participants	Quantitative	Factors that affect family resilience are marital relations and health affect the quality of the individual as a whole, gender roles socialization where women tend to adopt nurturing roles and provide social support in long-distance relationships, and health affects individuals	United States

DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review reveal that the comprehensive examination of eight articles has provided insights into the factors and strategies that can be employed in coping with commuter marriages. The review of family strength factors and strategies in commuter marriages provides a valuable understanding of the elements that contribute to couples' well-being and ability to deal with the challenges of maintaining relationships in situations of geographical separation and high mobility. This discussion section will explore the factors and

strategies that have been identified to enhance family strength in commuter marriages. As for the factors that affect family resilience in commuter marriage couples are Developmental context, Ideology, and beliefs, as well as Physical and Psychological adjustment. Strategies that can be developed to strengthen family resilience are: Increasing effective communication, dealing with conflicts in various ways, and engaging in activities to maintain marital relationships. These findings can provide practical guidance for couples facing marital challenges in the context of busy lives and high mobility.

Factors affecting family resilience in commuter marriage.

Developmental context

Developmental context refers to life stages and family conditions that can influence the experiences and challenges faced by couples in maintaining their relationship during work-related family separation. In this context, couples who are younger and have young children are more vulnerable to work-related family separation (Lau et al., 2013). Younger couples are often in the career-building stage and face pressure to fulfill their professional responsibilities. At the same time, they are also facing the demands and responsibilities of parenting young children. The presence of young children in the family can complicate work-related family separation as they require extra attention and support, especially from their parents. Developmental context also affects the level of work-family conflict and stress. Couples who are in a busy stage of development and have multiple responsibilities tend to experience greater pressure in maintaining a balance between work and family.

Conflicts between work demands and family responsibilities can lead to high stress, which in turn can affect couples' relationships and marital satisfaction (Lau et al., 2013; Suminar & Kaddi, 2018). Even so, research conducted by Kumswa et al. (2022) shows that if couples are accustomed to long-distance marriage, there will be an increase in quality of life, the opportunity to focus on work and personal goals, as well as leisure time and reduced stress attacks in preparing meals for their husbands. So that the quality of the marriage relationship also greatly affects the resilience of the family of commuter couples. Couples who have a strong marital relationship, support each other, and have good communication tend to be better able to deal with the challenges and stress caused by separation due to work outside the city or abroad. A healthy and close marital relationship allows couples to provide each other with emotional and practical support, and build the intimacy necessary to maintain balance in their relationship (Acedera & Yeoh, 2019).

Ideology and beliefs

Ideology and beliefs are important factors in influencing family strength in the face of separation due to overseas employment. The importance of the potential to return home also relates to identity management in the context of commuter couples. When immigrant women work abroad as the primary breadwinner, they may face conflicts between their traditional role as homemaker and their new role as breadwinner. Having the potential to return home gives them the opportunity to return home and fulfill the role of homemaker, thus creating a balance between their new identity and their traditional identity. The ability to maintain ties to traditional roles and responsibilities is also important for immigrant women in maintaining psychological balance and feeling connected to their family identity and values (Acedera & Yeoh, 2019).

In this context, positive outlook, spirituality and family member agreement are protective factors that can help couples maintain their relationship (Gustafson, 2006; Lau et al., 2009; Lau

et al., 2013). Positive outlook refers to an optimistic attitude and understanding that work-related family separation is temporary and can be overcome. Having a positive outlook can help couples face challenges and maintain hope in their relationship. Spirituality can also provide emotional support and strength for couples. Strong religious or spiritual beliefs can provide a framework of values and moral support in the face of adversity. Couples may seek comfort, hope and solutions through their spiritual beliefs and practices (Sumari et al., 2021). Additionally, in situations of work-related family separation, the traveling spouse has an important role in providing financial support to the family left behind. Financial support can help reduce the financial stress experienced by the stay-at-home spouse. The traveling spouse can also provide full control over family finances, which can provide a sense of stability and organization necessary in maintaining family finances (Afdal et al., 2020).

Family member agreements are also important in dealing with work-related family separation. Couples can make a mutual agreement on the commitments, expectations and actions they will take to maintain their relationship. This includes how they will maintain communication, provide emotional support, and prioritize family in important decisions. In the context of couples living apart due to working in different locations, autonomy or independence in making decisions related to travel and household management is an important factor in influencing the couple's subjective well-being (Lee, 2018). When couples have autonomy in making travel-related decisions, they can plan and organize their own itinerary without complete dependence on the other party. This gives couples a sense of control and freedom in managing their own time, allowing them to be more flexible in maintaining work-life balance. So it is important to regulate gender role socialization. Research conducted by Anand et al. (2018) shows that traditionally, women tend to adopt the role of caregivers and provide social support in long-distance relationships. They may be responsible for household tasks and support family members who stay at home emotionally. In this role, women play an important role in maintaining strong relationships and providing necessary support for the partner and children left behind. With autonomy in decision-making regarding travel and household management, spouses can feel in control of their own lives and feel more satisfied with the decisions they make. This can contribute to their subjective well-being, which includes happiness, life satisfaction and lower stress levels (Lee, 2018).

Physical and Psychological adjustment

Physical and psychological adjustment are important factors in building family resilience in commuter families. Commuter families face special challenges because family members travel frequently or their residence and workplace are far apart. These factors can affect the physical and mental health of family members, as well as overall family dynamics. Physical adjustments are important because of the long marriages with family. Time management factors, healthy sleep patterns, and a healthy lifestyle have a direct relationship with the health and resilience of couples in long-distance relationships. Research has shown that these factors play an important role in influencing the overall quality of individuals and their relationships (Anand et al., 2018; Lee, 2018; Liu & Umberson, 2008). The efforts made by couples to maintain marriage are to improve healthy eating patterns between partners and avoid unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and drinking alcohol. It is mentioned that alternative ways to reduce relationship stress in long-distance relationship couples can be meditation or yoga (Anand et al., 2018).

Commuting experiences, which involve traveling back and forth due to work, can also make a role in helping individuals build self-identity and feel more independent. In commuter

marriages, psychological distress can result from prolonged separation, high workloads, difficulties in maintaining work-life balance, and lack of quality time spent with one's spouse. When commuter couples face significant psychological stress, their idealization of marriage tends to decline (Star et al., 2022). This in turn can make a positive contribution to their overall psychological well-being. When family members feel a sense of identity and appreciation for their role as commuters, they tend to have higher self-confidence and resilience in the face of adversity. This can help families cope with stress and challenges that may arise from separation and high workloads. This process can strengthen their sense of responsibility, independence and decision-making ability (Lee, 2018). In addition, commuting experiences that involve developing adaptation, resilience and flexibility skills can also strengthen family resilience. Families who are able to adapt to environmental changes, face challenges with a positive attitude, and have flexibility in carrying out daily routines tend to be better able to deal with stress and maintain balance in family relationships (Roslan et al., 2013).

Strategies promoting family resilience in commuter marriage

Increasing effective communication

Communication make an important role in maintaining family strength in commuter marriages. Clear and open communication channels allow couples to express their needs, concerns and emotions, bridging physical distances and fostering emotional bonds. Good communication within the family can help resolve conflict, increase openness, and strengthen family bonds (Bornstein, 2003). The utilization of technology-based communication tools such as video calls, instant messaging, or scheduled phone conversations can help overcome the challenges faced by physical separation and enhance effective communication. Transnational couples need to prioritize their communication among all the other activities they have to do. This includes planning time for communication, managing work schedules, and prioritizing important family activities (Acedera & Yeoh, 2019).

A study conducted by Mas'udah (2022) revealed how interactions are carried out in atomistic families and how efforts are made by married couples who do not live together. The couple can maintain their marriage despite not living together by trusting their partner, interacting with family members through face-to-face meetings, and communicating intensely through telephone and social media. The frequency of face-to-face meetings in couples who do not live together is quite difficult due to work factors, so it can be done once every six months at most. For commuter couples, long-distance relationships can make couples more aware of each other's presence, and this leads to a higher quality of communication. This experience can help improve the quality of an individual's relationship with their partner and family (Roslan et al., 2013).

Dealing with conflicts in various ways

Conflict is inevitable in any relationship, including commuter marriages. Couples need to learn to resolve conflicts through deliberation and find solutions that are satisfactory to both parties. Adopting an approach of listening to each other, understanding and appreciating each other's limitations can also help to better resolve conflicts (Mas'udah, 2022). Transnational couples need to ensure that they stay emotionally connected by sending simple messages such as 'good night' and 'good morning' every day. This can help strengthen their emotional presence and reduce the anxiety that commuting couples may feel (Acedera & Yeoh, 2019).

By dealing with conflict, commuter marriage couples can continue to strengthen emotional bonds and good communication between each other, thus building strong mutual trust and

togetherness (Star et al., 2022). Placing a high priority on family interaction when members are together and supporting the stationary spouse by taking good care of the family, listening to the traveling spouse's concerns, and showing acceptance of the spouse's limitations can help overcome the negative impact of family separation (Lau, 2006; Lau et al., 2008). In Hong Kong, other positive coping strategies of traveling spouses include keeping the separation reasonable and showing appreciation for the support of the waiting spouse (Lau et al., 2013) presence of social support can also be a way of dealing with conflict. Some commuters reported that coworkers were more sympathetic and tried to cheer them up due to the fact that they were away from their families. Social support from the work environment can help reduce stress and improve individual psychological well-being (Qadir et al., 2013).

Engaging in activities to maintain marital relationships

Couples in commuter marriages can engage in various activities to maintain their marital relationship. For example, taking more time to return home, arranging schedules outside of work to spend time with their partner and socializing more (Lee, 2018). By allocating more time to return home, couples can actively prioritize time together and family when they are in the same place. By spending quality time together, couples can nurture their relationship and create meaningful experiences together. Psychological adjustment of commuter couples also emerges as an important factor that can influence their subjective well-being. Coping strategies that can be done are where both partners can learn how to cope with stress and problems by developing effective coping strategies, such as meditation, exercise, or counseling (Anand et al., 2018; Umberson et al., 2013). Then they are also advised to ameliorate psychological distress by providing and facilitating emotionally supportive social contacts.

Couples can assist each other in forming positive and supportive social relationships, such as connecting with family, friends, or coworkers, or by improving physical health (Liu & Umberson, 2008). By increasing activities together, they can build positive perceptions of their partner and marriage involves focusing on the good and appreciating the positive qualities of our partner and our marital relationship. It involves recognizing and appreciating our partner's strengths, such as kindness, intelligence, or dedication in living a commuter marriage. In addition, it is important to build realistic expectations of long-distance marriage to reduce psychological pressure that can affect marital idealization. Increased idealization of marriage can increase satisfaction and well-being in long-distance marriages (Star et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Commuter marriage is a situation where a married couple has distance and time constraints to meet because of work, education, economic or other problems. Marriage couples in commuter marriage decide to continue their marriage even though there is limited time to meet physically. Despite the limitations, commuter marriage couples maintain their marriage by maintaining marital satisfaction beyond the limits of distance and physical contact by carrying out family resilience. There are several factors that affect satisfaction in a commuter marriage, namely: the level of control over travel duration, frequency of meetings, and autonomy in managing the household, parenting, realistic expectations, and health. In addition, the process of family resilience in commuter marriage couples can be formed due to several protective factors, such as: commitment, family interaction while together, support in caring for the family, listening to concerns, accepting limitations, maintaining intimacy and communication by calling and sending

news frequently, trust, face-to-face meetings, conflict resolution by deliberation, socializing, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

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