

Exploration of the Social Factors in the Attitude of Parents towards the Girl-Child Education in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined parents' attitudes regarding a girl child's education with a focus on a few chosen towns in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study's survey design was descriptive in nature. Using a multistage sampling technique, four towns in Oye Local Government, Nigeria, were chosen using a purposeful sample technique. 52 respondents were chosen from each municipality using the quota sampling technique. Using a convenience sampling technique, 156 respondents in total were chosen. The research findings indicate that parents in the studied areas have a positive attitude towards the education of girls, despite the possibility that some sociocultural elements, such as religion, culture, and parent educational attainment and poverty, may lessen the likelihood of girls' education. The study suggested that enlightenment campaigns and girl-child education policies could enhance and boost parents' positive attitudes toward girl-child education. The government should also provide free or more inexpensive education for girls.

Keywords

Attitudes, Girl Child, Parents, Education

1. Background to the Study

It is evident that male children in African society are more likely than female children to receive special attention for their education, economic and social advancement, or attraction (Ajaegbo, 2018). In most African societies, it is culturally accepted that male offspring inherit their father's kingdom and hold important roles within the family; female offspring, on the other hand, are viewed as belonging to

other families because they marry outside of their own to form new families. As a result, they were not granted complete access to school (Oyedirán & Oyewole, 2021). Furthermore, formal education was considered a tool for policy making in Nigeria because it has been shown that girls' formal education had consequences for population growth, health, nutrition, fertility, infant mortality, and changes in women's productivity and earnings (Akinkahunsi, 2020).

Mohammed, Lawal, and Hamza (2014) assert that girl child education is the type of education that equips girls with the skills necessary to successfully fulfill their special roles in the nation's service and, in reality, to advance their own personal growth. At the same time, it gives someone a way to prepare to learn and develop skills that will help them throughout their time on this earth. The effectiveness of girls' reality is derived from such process. An educated lady knows her environment and is adept at navigating society. A nation's success is determined by its residents' character, enlightenment, and children's education, not merely by the strength of its defenses or the quantity of its foreign exchange earnings. As a result, education is a girl's right everywhere and the means by which she can change her own life as well as the life of her community. However, this study looked into parents' attitudes regarding a girl child's education while focusing on a few chosen communities in the Oye local government in the Nigerian state of Ekiti.

According to Ekejiuba (2015), women in Nigeria experience poverty at a higher rate than men due to differences in educational attainment and the high rate of early marriage, which further impoverish and discriminate against women. Due to cultural and gender-based prejudice, girls in Africa were not given the chance to start school at a young age. They were cuddled, adored, and confined to the house to take care of the house, marry, have kids, cook, and serve the males. In many low-income nations, especially those in the Sahel and South Asia, there are much more males than girls enrolled in primary education. In 1993, for instance, the percentage of primary school-age boys enrolled in low-income countries (apart from China and India) was 22% higher than the percentage of girls enrolled (World Bank, 1996). Education for girls is a cure-all for poverty, dysfunctional families, and social regression; as a result, development has had multiple severe setbacks throughout the years (Oyedirán & Oyewole, 2021).

However, it is noted that there is a significant achievement disparity between boys and girls in Kaduna state, Nigeria, and that girls make up the majority of illiterate children in this state. A lot of work needs to be done to educate girls in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in this specific area (Uruakpa, 2015). It follows that society ought to accept this and see the opportunity for growth it presents. Every young girl in the country has the capacity to become a mother. Starting from the premise that the girl is a human being and that access to a better, more affordable education is a fundamental human right, nothing should stand in her way.

In the meantime, a girl's future prospects are largely determined by her parents'

attitude toward her education. Parents who support educating girls have a higher chance of watching their kids develop into healthy, content, and imaginative adults. Due to the fact that children are their future source of financial stability, women who are less educated are more inclined to have more children (Birabil & Oge, 2020). The majority of African nations have the view that women should perform household chores, hence young women are viewed as having potential jobs at home. They usually forget about their parents after they are married and concentrate on their new house. Because a wealthy man's possessions and assets are primarily divided among his male descendants, dads in particular are sometimes worried about the future of their family name. Even in situations where there are no male children, the females are not acknowledged, which can lead to homelessness for both the wives and the children in the event that they are not educated, and to the child being forced into a loveless marriage where they will be treated like trash and used as punching bags (UN, 2018).

Sociocultural, religious, and economic aspects account for the majority of factors influencing parents' attitudes regarding educating their girl child (Birabil & Oge, 2020). In the Islamic faith, the majority of women are forbidden from attending school and are placed in "purdah", or isolation. Their prospects of achieving emancipation or empowerment in society are compromised by their lack of education. This lessens their likelihood of defending their fundamental rights (Vikoo, 2016; Schultz, 2012). Additionally, female children cannot afford attending school due to poverty (Oriola, 2019). Sexual harassment is a result of their sentencing to Hawk (Oriola, Owoseni, & Olatunbosun, 2021). Shuaibu bemoaned the fact that some people are coerced into prostitution, babysit, or work as housemaids when they should be in school.

In order to make ends meet for the family, they are scarified, and their labor is exploited without giving them a say in how the economy is run (USA, 2013). They are now emotional wrecks due to the practices of divorce, wife beating, widowhood, and violence (Oriola, 2018). According to Mohammed et al. (2014) and UNICEF (2017), gender discrimination has become deeply ingrained in the minds of most Nigerians and people worldwide, despite the government of Nigeria explicitly stating in Section 6.1.3 of the 1999 constitution that "For (the) Nigerian women to enjoy the full benefits of contemporary living, they require basic education to contribute to the development of the country". In this regard, the government will encourage women's and girls' participation in education, regardless of where they live or what their circumstances may be (FRN 2001). Shuiabu provided support for these viewpoints by stating that we should acknowledge the significant role women play in the development of our country and that education is the best legacy a parent can give their girl child. To be more precise, the goals of this study are to: 1) ascertain the attitudes of parents toward the education of girls; 2) determine the consequences of low rates of girl-child education in the study area and the factors that contribute to them; and 3) identify potential solutions to the issue of low rates of girl-child education in the study area.

2. Theoretical Framework

According to Vroom's 1970 theory of motivation, people are more likely to take action toward a goal if they see its value and can see how their actions will contribute to its accomplishment (Chaiklin, 2015). Therefore, it is thought that parent's belief in the merit of education and their ability to achieve the purpose or objective of education will either positively or negatively multiply their motivation to educate girls. This is crucial because the theory addresses the current push for girl-child education in society and states that those involved in the field must be motivated in particular ways because they are involved in the sociocultural, political, and economic spheres of society where the majority of the social, political, and economic facets of the community in which the majority of parents prevented their daughters from attending school (Wicker, 2014).

Stated otherwise, this study demonstrates that motivation is a function of expected value, meaning that force is equal to valence times expectation. Whereas valence is the strength multiplied by the likelihood that a specific action will result in the desired outcome, force is the motivation's strength (Olibie, 2013). This theory is relevant to the research because it acknowledges the significance of girls in society and the ways in which parents and other social actors such as religion, availability of fund, positive policy towards girl-child education and education of parents can inspire them to work toward national development based on the importance of the efforts' results (Obiageli & Paulette, 2015). According to the notion, parents will support their daughter's education if they anticipate her to perform well in school. Therefore, the degree of parental attitudes on their daughter's education is linked to the optimistic expectancy.

3. Methods

Descriptive research design is the method used for this investigation. In order to get the most recent views on parents' attitudes on girl-child education in the Oye local government in 2023. Oye Local Government is one of the local government in Ekiti State Nigeria. The study area was selected because of its easy accessibility to the researcher. Three towns: Oye, Ayegbaju, and Ilupeju were purposively selected from the Oye local government. The sample size formula (Daniel, 1999) was used to generate the sample size for this study because the total population of the sample size is more than 1000. With quota sampling technique, 52 respondents were selected from each of the local government randomly. A total sample of 156 respondents was selected for questionnaires and administered randomly within the 3 selected towns. The respondents were selected based on their availability at home at the time of instrument distribution. The respondents were properly informed about the procedures (that their responses would be kept private and basically used for an empirical study) before the commencement of the distribution of the questionnaire. Data was gathered by administering questionnaire, which was an instrument of the study validated using the Education Endowment Foundation's SPECTRUM database (ASQ Scale)

and using questionnaires adapted from the Validating Scales for health, social and environment research HSER by Boateng et al. (2018). The independent variables otherwise called the master variables of this study are the Social Factors in the Attitude of Parents. In this study, the independent variable (the social factors) were measured with elements such as religion, culture, and parent's education and poverty. Girl child education is the dependent variable with elements such as school enrollment and good mental health. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data that were gathered. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis were used to examine the data produced for this quantitative approach.

4. Results

Table 1. Distribution of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (n = 156).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Below 20 years	5	3.2
20 - 30	82	52.6
31 - 40	54	34.6
41 - 50	15	9.6
Gender		
Male	72	46.2
Female	84	53.8
Marital status		
Married	101	64.7
Single	55	35.3
Type of marriage		
Monogamy	112	71.8
Polygamy	5	3.2
Not Applicable	39	25.0
Level of education		
Secondary	10	6.4
NCE/OND	20	12.8
University Degree/HND	121	77.6
Master's degree	5	3.2
Occupation		
Artisan	38	24.4
Civil/Public Servant	31	19.9
Self employed	5	3.2
Private Sector/Company Worker	47	30.1

Continued

Trading	30	19.2
Unemployed	5	3.2
Income per annum		
Less than 400,000	96	61.5
400,000 - 900,000	45	28.8
1 million - 5 million	5	3.2
Above 5 million	10	6.4
Tribe		
Yoruba	126	80.8
Igbo	10	6.4
Hausa	5	3.2
Others	15	9.6
Religious affiliation		
Christianity	112	71.8
Islamic Religion	44	28.2

Source: Field Work, 2022.

The respondents' socio-demographic information was displayed in **Table 1** above. 52.6% of respondents were in the 20 - 30 age range, 34.6% were in the 31 - 40 age range, 9.6% were in the 41 - 50 age range, and 3.2% were under 20. 53.8% of the respondents were female, and 46.2% were male. 64.7% of respondents reported being married, compared to 35.3% who were single. This might also enable students to learn about the education of girls. 3.2% of married people were in a polygamous family, whilst 71.8% of married people were in a monogamous marriage. Regarding the respondents' educational background, 77.6% had earned a postgraduate degree or a university degree, 12.8% had either an NC or an OND, 6.4% had completed secondary school, and 3.2% had earned a university degree. This might also entitle them to knowledge of the study, and their educational background might affect how they feel about educating girls. 31.1% of them were employed by private companies, 24.4% were craftspeople, 19.9% were civil or public workers, 19.2% were traders, and 3.2% were neither self-employed nor jobless. Additionally, the income data revealed that, on average, the respondents made less than \$400,000 per year, 28.8% made between \$400,000 and \$900,000, 6.4% made over \$5 million, and 3.2% made between \$1 and \$5 million. The majority of respondents (80.8%) belonged to the Yoruba tribe, followed by the Igbo (6.4%), Hausa (3.2%), and other tribes (9.6%). Furthermore, according to religion, 28.2% of people were Muslims and 71.8% of people were Christians.

In order to gauge the respondents' opinions about the education of girls, 39.1% disagreed and 30.1% strongly disagreed that parents in their neighborhood are no longer sending their kids to school. This demonstrates a favorable outlook on

Table 2. Attitude of parents towards girl-child education and factors associated (n = 156).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Parents here don't send their girl-child to schools		
Strongly agree	9	5.8
Agree	20	12.8
Neutral	19	12.2
Disagree	61	39.1
Strongly Disagree	47	30.1
Girls in my community do not attend tertiary schools at all		
Agree	20	12.8
Neutral	14	9.0
Disagree	86	55.1
Strongly Disagree	36	23.1
Parents rather prefer their girl-children to get married than attend schools here		
Strongly agree	10	6.4
Agree	15	9.6
Neutral	27	17.3
Disagree	82	52.6
Strongly Disagree	22	14.1
Parents have negative attitude towards education		
Agree	15	9.6
Neutral	13	8.3
Disagree	90	57.7
Strongly Disagree	38	24.4
Early marriage among girl-children is favored than formal education		
Strongly agree	9	5.8
Agree	30	19.2
Disagree	38	24.4
Neutral	29	18.6
Strongly Disagree	50	32.1
Our cultural belief does not encourage girl child education		
Agree	33	21.2
Neutral	20	12.8
Disagree	57	36.5
Strongly Disagree	46	29.5

Continued

Our religious practices do not favor girl education		
Agree	5	3.2
Neutral	20	12.8
Disagree	62	39.7
Strongly Disagree	69	44.2
Poverty is one of the factors that hinders Girl-Child Education in my community		
Strongly agree	47	30.1
Agree	62	39.7
Neutral	19	12.2
Disagree	20	12.8
Strongly Disagree	8	5.1

Source: Field Work, 2023.

schooling. There are still claims, meanwhile, that 12.8% of parents do not bring their kids to school. Of those who disagreed, 55.1% strongly disagreed that girls in their town do not attend post-secondary institutions. Additionally, 52.6% of respondents disagreed that parents would rather their daughter get married than go to school. This also indicates a favorable viewpoint about the education of girls. The statement that parents have a bad attitude toward education was refuted by 57.7% of respondents. Furthermore, 32% strongly disagreed with the statement that a formal education is preferable than an early marriage for girl offspring, while 24.4% disagreed (**Table 2**).

Even said, 19.2% of respondents continued to concur that some parents prefer early marriage. Furthermore, 29.5% strongly disagreed and 36.5% disputed that their cultural beliefs do not support girl-child education. This actually demonstrates that cultural beliefs and girls' education have a good link. However, 44.2% of respondents strongly disagreed that their religious traditions are against the education of girls. Nonetheless, 39.7% of respondents concurred that one of the things preventing girl-child education in their neighborhood is poverty. This is supported by accertion of [Rumsey \(2024\)](#) which says child marriage is most often a choice poor parents are forced to make in order to survive in crises like COVID-19. It is sad and heart-breaking to see girls being robbed of their life choices. This means that in order to alleviate the deprivation of girls' education, the religion mentality must be addressed. This is supported by the submission of [Tabe-Ojong Jr. & Nshakira-Rukundo \(2021\)](#) which says "Applying inverse probability weighting with regression adjustment, we find that religiosity increases parental educational aspirations for children in general and girls in particular".

The consequences of low rates of schooling for girls are seen in **Table 3**. 75.6% of respondents said they personally strongly disagreed with the statement and did not favor girl-child education for various reasons. Furthermore, 43.6% of

Table 3. Reasons & effects of low rates of girl-child education (n = 156).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
I as a person do not support girl-child education due to some reasons		
Strongly agree	4	2.6
Neutral	5	3.2
Disagree	29	18.6
Strongly Disagree	118	75.6
Illiteracy among girl-child could lead to early marriage		
Strongly agree	70	44.9
Agree	68	43.6
Disagree	5	3.2
Neutral	13	8.3
Illiteracy among girl child could lead to unwanted pregnancy		
Strongly agree	70	44.9
Agree	67	42.9
Neutral	14	9.0
Strongly Disagree	5	3.2
Illiteracy among girl child could lead to child exploitation and abuse		
Strongly agree	84	53.8
Agree	53	34.0
Disagree	10	6.4
Neutral	9	5.8
Illiteracy among girl child could lead to poverty in the community		
Strongly agree	64	41.0
Agree	52	33.3
Neutral	10	6.4
Disagree	25	16.0
Strongly Disagree	5	3.2

Source: Field Work, 2023.

respondents and 44.9% of strongly agreed that illiteracy among girl children could result in early marriage, which could crush the girl's aspirations for the future. Moreover, 44.9% strongly concurred that illiteracy in female youngsters could result in unintended pregnancy and consequently, there will be more fatherless births, raising the nation's poverty rate. 34% strongly agreed that child neglect, abuse, and exploitation may result from illiteracy in girls. In addition, 41% strongly agreed and

33.3% agreed that poverty in the community could result from illiteracy among girl children. This becomes even more crucial in managing the nation's illiteracy rate among girls.

Table 4. The Solutions to the problem of the girl child education (n = 156).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Free education should be provided to the girl children in the community		
Strongly agree	97	62.2
Agree	45	28.8
Neutral	10	6.4
Disagree	4	2.6
Compulsory education should be provided to the girl-child by the government		
Strongly agree	122	78.2
Agree	5	3.2
Neutral	25	16.0
Disagree	4	2.6
The parent should change their negative attitude toward the girl child education		
Strongly agree	108	69.2
Agree	39	25.0
Neutral	5	3.2
Strongly Disagree	4	2.6
More appointments should be given to women and law should be made to abolish early marriage		
Strongly agree	107	68.6
Agree	25	16.0
Neutral	19	12.2
Disagree	5	3.2
Law should be made to abolish early child marriage		
Strongly agree	93	59.6
Agree	44	28.2
Neutral	14	9.0
Disagree	5	3.2
There should be more enlightenment campaign for girl child education		
Strongly agree	118	75.6
Agree	28	17.9
Neutral	10	6.4

Continued

There should be more reward for girl child and their parent for girl child education			
	Strongly agree	103	66.0
	Agree	10	6.4
	Neutral	33	21.2
	Disagree	5	3.2
	Strongly Disagree	5	3.2

Source: Field Work, 2023.

In an effort to address the issue of girls' education in the nation, 41% of respondents pointed out that if the percentage of illiterate girls' children in the country keeps rising, the rate of newborn mortality will also rise. Consequently, 62.2% of respondents strongly agreed that community-based free education should be offered to girls, and 78.2% strongly agreed that government-run compulsory education should be given to girls. Additionally, 69.2% strongly agreed that parents ought to modify their unfavorable perception of girls' education. Furthermore, 68.6% of respondents strongly agreed that laws prohibiting early marriage should be enacted and that women should be appointed to greater positions. Furthermore, 59.6% of respondents strongly felt that early child marriage should be outlawed by law. Additionally, 75.6% strongly agreed that greater awareness campaigns for the education of girls should be initiated. Furthermore, 66% of respondents firmly agreed that parents and girls should receive greater rewards for encouraging their children's education (**Table 4**).

Research Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between religious belief of parents and girl-child educational enrolment.

H0: There is a significant relationship between cultural belief of parents and girl-child educational enrolment.

H1: There is a significant relationship between educational background of parents and girl-child educational enrolment.

Decision Rule:

Reject H0 if the calculated p-value through the statistical software is less than 0.05 level of significance, otherwise, we do not reject.

Table 5. Effects of independent variables on dependent variables.

		Girls in my community do not attend tertiary schools at all					Chi square	
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	X²	P-Value
Our cultural belief does not encourage girl child education	Agree	19.2%	1.0%	3.8%	4.8%	0.0%	5.271	0.261
	Neutral	17.3%	5.8%	5.8%	4.8%	0.0%		
	Disagree	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%		
	Strongly disagree	10.6%	0.0%	1.0%	1.9%	1.9%		

Continued

Education	Secondary	1.9%	1.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	24.708	0.075
	NCE/OND	12.5%	11.5%	0.0%	3.8%	1.9%		
	University Degree/HND	19.2%	1.0%	3.8%	4.8%	0.0%		
	Post graduate	17.3%	5.8%	5.8%	4.8%	0.0%		
Religion	Islamic	10.6%	0.0%	1.0%	1.9%	1.9%	15.741	0.003
	Christianity	43.3%	19.2%	8.7%	13.5%	0.0%		

Source: Field Work, 2023.

The aforementioned **Table 5** displays the impact of respondents' educational attainment, cultural attitudes, and religious convictions on the topic of girl-child education among parents in Oye Local Government, Ekiti State. The participants' cultural beliefs and educational attainment were judged to be statistically significant based on the table above. It follows that residents of Oye Ekiti's culture and educational attainment have little bearing on their views on the education of girls. This finding is supported by the assertion of **Fagunloye (2020)** that says "some parents don't think of a female child as a lesser being, is just that their cultural beliefs have clouded their minds. Some believe that, male children have certain rights or an authority position in the family that make them powerful, Yoruba calls it 'olóri idílé', while it is परिवार का मुखिया (parivaar ka mukhiya) in Hindi, most of us know it as 'head of the family'. These families believe a female child should be the one to wake up very early to do the house chores, while the male child is getting prepared for school". Furthermore, there is little evidence linking religious beliefs to girls' education. It can be concluded from this that people's religious beliefs have a favorable impact on their efforts to force girls to attend school.

Discussion of Findings

From the result of the analysis, the respondents' attitude towards girl-child education, was positive towards education, there are still opinions that some parents do not send their children to schools especially to the tertiary schools. However, more than half of the respondents did not support that parents prefer their girl-child to get married than attend a school. This also reveals a positive attitude towards girl-child education. Though, few respondents still agreed that early marriage is favored among some parent. Also, many disagreed that their cultural belief does not encourage girl-child education, this shows a fair relationship between cultural belief and girl-child education in the study area. Religious practice, on the other hand was to a large extent in favour of girl-child education. However, some of them agreed that poverty is one of the factors that hinders Girl-Child Education in their community. This necessitates the need to address the poverty mentality towards the deprivation of girls from education.

In addition, while addressing the effects of low rates of girl-child education.

majority agreed that illiteracy among girl-children could lead to early marriage which could shatter the future ambitions of the girls. More so, many strongly agreed that illiteracy among girl-children could lead to unwanted pregnancy, and as a result, fatherless children will be born, increasing the poverty rate in the country, lead to abuse, exploitation and child neglect. While many agreed that illiteracy among girl-children could lead to poverty in the community. This made it becomes imperative to manage the girl-child illiteracy in the country. This is supported by the assertion of Rumsey (2024) which states that “to make ends meet, some families are now resorting to negative coping mechanisms to reduce their household financial burdens. These in turn causes spikes in child abuse, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, adolescent pregnancy, child labour and various other forms of violence against children, especially girls”.

To tackle the menace of girl-child education in the country, 41% of the respondents noted that if illiteracy among girl-children continues to increase, it would increase the infant mortality rate. Therefore, 62.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that free education should be provided to the girl children in the community, 78.2% strongly agreed that compulsory education should be provided to the girl-child by the government. 69.2% also strongly agreed that parents should change their negative attitude toward the girl child education. In addition, 68.6% strongly agreed that more appointments should be given to women and law should be made to abolish early marriage. Also, 59.6% strongly agreed that law should be made to abolish early child marriage. 75.6% also strongly agreed that there should be more enlightenment campaign for girl child education. lastly, 66% strongly agreed that there should be more reward for girl child and their parent for girl child education. The study hence found a strong negative relationship between culture, educational attainment, and religious belief with high rate of girl-child education.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been discovered that parents in the research area have a positive attitude toward the education of girls, even though there are several variables that may lessen the likelihood of educating girls, including poverty, lack of finance, and religion. Positive practices for educating girls were discovered in the research area. This disproves the traditional wisdom in Nigeria that a girl should pursue an education that will best prepare her for being a good wife and mother, raising a family, and taking care of the household on her own. The world needs to achieve faster sustainable growth, and emerging nations like Nigeria are no exception. All citizens, male and female, who have received a sufficient education, must actively participate in this process.

6. Recommendation

1) The government needs to defend girls' rights to an education. It is advised that the laws requiring parents to enroll all of their children, including girls, in formal basic education be strictly enforced.

2) Through awareness campaigns and adult education programs, parents' positive attitudes toward girls' education could be strengthened. Community leaders can reinforce the idea that parents should be encouraged to attend adult programs.

3) The government should make education for girls more accessible to the poor and free or inexpensive.

4) To encourage girls in both formal and non-formal educational systems, incentives such as scholarships and prize awards from the government and non-governmental organizations should be established. Additionally, this will support parents in their duty to care for girls.

Limitation of the Study

The researcher discovered that more findings should be done on advantages of girl-child education to the development of the nations and the world at large which could not be covered in this study.

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Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests that further study should explore studies on how far girl-child education as one of the MDG goals have been achieved in Nigeria.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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