

EXPLORING THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN POLICE CADETS

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Abstract: China's social media development is attracting scholars to shift their research topics from international to domestic. Researchers bring negative comments on platforms such as "Xuexi Qiangguo". Our study focuses on general situation of young college students using of social media, as well as aim to understand perceived stress, job values and knowledge sharing. We selected senior cadets of police college, who are young undergraduate students, and also have an important mission of political capacity building. Based on the previous questionnaire and statistic methods, our research found that students using "Xuexi Qiangguo" social media app more correlated to less stress, higher commitment to police work, and more knowledge sharing in prosocial, self-efficacy and real-world behaviors. Our research shows high correlation between using of the "Xuexi Qiangguo" and better students. It also provides frameworks for exploring the app's education function to young students.

Keywords: Xuexi Qiangguo; Perceived stress; Job value; Knowledge sharing

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media platforms like Facebook and Google have played significant socio-economic and cultural roles globally [1]. As tools for promoting public safety, current international research on police use of social media primarily explores what police tend to do on these platforms [2, 3]. Other studies focus on the impact of social media use on policing work [4], such as improving police-public communication [5]. Previous research has mainly concentrated on the most popular platforms in Western countries. An International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) survey indicated that Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the three most widely used social media platforms by police agencies [6]. Recently, scholars have begun to recognize the importance of Chinese platforms. In fact, the global ecosystem of social media platforms is largely dominated by American and Chinese companies [7, 8]. China's high-tech giants like Alibaba, ByteDance, Baidu, and Tencent are key players in the social media platform industry [9, 10], with Alibaba and Baidu providing technology and data for the construction of China's social system [11]. In China, the number of college students using social network applications like WeChat, QQ, and Weibo is rapidly increasing [12]. The development of China's social media platforms, such as Weibo, Douyin (TikTok in China), and Bilibili, provides online users with powerful infrastructure for open communication, collaboration, and mobilization [13, 14].

Douyin, the video-sharing platform owned by ByteDance, has become one of the most downloaded applications globally. These developments have prompted scholars to study Chinese social media platforms like Douyin, iQiyi, WeChat, and Kuaishou [15-18]. Despite the increasing diversity of internet platforms and the growing prominence of interactive platforms like Bilibili, Kuaishou, Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and "Xuexi Qiangguo", most research focuses on a few platforms like Weibo and WeChat. Meanwhile, Western scholars have begun to project their own views by accusing the government manipulates public opinion through the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform, falsely claiming that platform users are punished for low scores in study groups [19]. Domestic research on the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform, however, is more concentrated in the field of ideological education [20-23]. In the book "Patriotic Education in a Global Age", Randall Curren and Charles Dorn offer profound reflections on civic virtue, promoting and furthering academic research on patriotic education [24]. The rapid adoption of social media technologies by youth and college students, among whom high levels of social media use are particularly common, can help us develop new methods for patriotic education.

Police cadets are future law enforcement officers. As young college students, they are active users of social media platforms. Social media platforms influence police cadets in various ways. Understanding their social media use, particularly the extent of their use of the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform, is crucial for deepening our understanding of future police officers and clarifying Western arrogance and prejudice.

Considering the social characteristics of police cadets, our study, based on understanding the general situation of social media use among them, focuses on three aspects: Perceived Stress, Job Value, and Knowledge Sharing behavior, by analyzing the stress, their professional values, and specific prosocial performances in knowledge sharing.

1.1 Social Media Use and Stress

Cohen's (1983) research showed that when life's stress exceeds a person's adaptive capacity, it increases the risk of illness, and the perception of stress can lead to negative emotional states. Psychological stress is considered a broad physiological and behavioral process that can lead to poor health habits, increased disease risk, and accelerated illness [25]. Students experiencing psychological stress use social media to cope and find sources of support, as well as to procrastinate or pass the time. Students view social media as a way to release academic pressure [26]. Mao found among 200 students that WeChat was used for relaxation and stress relief [27]. Hou [12], while studying WeChat addiction, also found that participating students used WeChat to cope with loneliness and stress.

Compared to other professions, the nature of police work is a significant stressor; always preparing for the worst is a deeply ingrained motto in the police mindset [28]. Senior police cadets who have undergone six months of practical training in police stations have already had direct experience with the stress of police work. However, for cadets who need to balance social media use with efforts to prepare for the civil service exam, does the use of the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform, impose an additional burden on police cadets?

1.2 Social Media Use and Job Values

Various professions (social workers, teachers, journalists, etc.) have explored job values [29]. Students in educational programs oriented towards clients and students (e.g., social workers and teachers) tend to value altruistic values more than those in programs not oriented towards clients or students (e.g., journalists). Currently, few is known about the job values of police cadets. Although the job values of police cadets have not been explicitly studied, some international research has examined their motivations for choosing police work. These studies indicate that many factors are important in choosing a police career, such as the opportunity to help others and the willingness to enforce the law [30, 31]. Another factor that seems to attract people to become police cadets is that policing is perceived as an exciting and adventurous profession. Furthermore, practical reasons are also important, such as job security and stable salaries, leading individuals to choose police work [32]. Research on motivations for becoming a police officer suggests these motivations can be described as dimensions of job values, namely intrinsic values, extrinsic values, and altruistic values.

Extrinsic values relate to the instrumental aspects of work, providing external rewards or satisfaction. They include values such as pursuing financial success and high income, job security, promotion opportunities, status, and power. Hartung et al., based on Super's career development lifecycle theory, considered work values like management, workplace, security, prestige, and income as belonging to extrinsic values [33]. Furthermore, Leuty and Hansen revealed that these work values, along with achievement, are moderately positively correlated with extrinsic rewards. Lifestyle is also considered an extrinsic value [34]. Intrinsic values are reflected in an internal psychological satisfaction derived from the work itself. They include general values such as autonomy, interesting and meaningful tasks, challenge, variety, emotional intimacy, community contribution, altruism, and personal growth. Creativity, challenge, variety, achievement, lifestyle, aesthetics, and autonomy (or independence) are categorized as intrinsic values. Work values like creativity, challenge, variety, and achievement are moderately positively correlated with intrinsic rewards [35].

Job values are crucial for any industry as they are closely linked to organizational stability and competitiveness. Given the importance of job values for cadets, from an educator's perspective, it is necessary to study the relationship between police cadets' job values themselves and their use of social media platforms.

1.3 Social Media Use and Knowledge Sharing

According to Duggan and Brenner [36], 83% of young people aged 18-29 disseminate information through social media platforms. For police cadets facing the upcoming civil service exam, the behavioral manifestation that best reflects noble job values is arguably the sharing of exam knowledge. Knowledge dissemination among police cadets helps foster a knowledge-sharing culture within the university and is a primary way for police colleges to help cultivate knowledge-based officers, who can make valuable contributions to knowledge flow in future public security work. Although the use of different social media for informal learning is becoming increasingly common among students, among the different knowledge exchanges occurring within and between university stakeholder groups, knowledge sharing among students is an aspect rarely focused on in the existing literature on knowledge sharing in the university context. Although some papers use survey methods to explore knowledge-sharing behaviors among college students [37], systematic exploration of the various ways students share knowledge remains scarce.

Social media makes it easier for users to make new friends, enhance online harmony, expand social networks, and mobilize collective action more effectively. Social media platforms can help facilitate offline social interactions among college students. Among the different knowledge exchanges occurring within and between university stakeholder groups, knowledge sharing among students in the university context is an aspect rarely focused on in the existing literature [38]. By re-examining the extent of use of the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform, we will explore the behavioral characteristics of knowledge sharing among police cadets during preparation for the most important career exam, the civil service exam, by designed questionnaires.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Participants

The police cadets in the study were all senior public security majors who had completed internships at local police stations. They were all aged 21 or 22, originally from two student cohorts totaling 100 people (85 male, 15 female). Six male students transferred due to academic performance and did not participate in the survey. The remaining 94 individuals, including 15 females, all participated. When responding to the questionnaire, the researchers explained the purpose of the survey to all cadets, and participation was stated to be entirely voluntary. The questionnaire did not record names or ID numbers. At the time of completing the questionnaire, all cadets were preparing for the civil service examination. Ultimately, all cadets joined the police force.

2.2 Questionnaires

2.2.1 Survey on social media platform use intensity

Based on a pilot survey, researchers selected 18 social media platforms that police cadets might frequently use (Figure 1). Participating cadets were asked to rate their use frequency and time spent on each platform on a 1-5 scale (1=almost never use, 2=occasionally use, 3=moderate use, 4=use quite frequently, 5=use very frequently, almost daily).

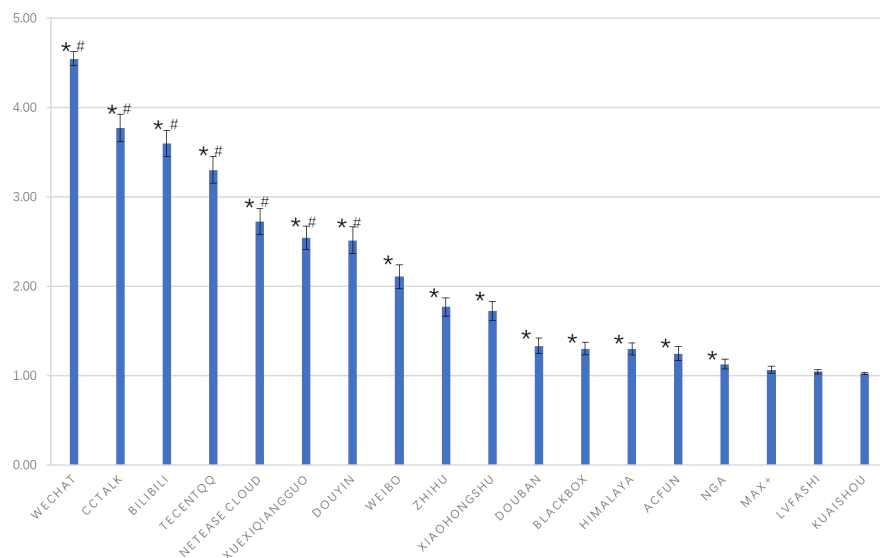


Figure 1 Ranking of Social Media Use Intensity for 18 Platforms

*Indicates One-sample t-test significantly greater than constant 1 ($p < 0.05$)

Indicates One-sample t-test significantly greater than constant 2 ($p < 0.05$)

2.2.2 Perceived stress scale

Referencing Cohen [25], the study employed the 14-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14) to assess the degree to which individuals felt stressed in their lives. After reversing the scores for 7 of the items, a higher total score indicated greater perceived stress.

2.2.3 Measurement of police job values

Based on Sundström, police cadets were asked to rate 12 work value statements related to the police work on a 1-5 scale [39], according to their personal perception of the police profession and the degree to which each statement matched their personal view (1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree). The 12 items formed three measurement parts: Extrinsic Values, Intrinsic Values, and Altruistic Values.

2.2.4 Knowledge sharing behavior

A 16-item questionnaire was designed based on Tseng [40]. The items targeted specific thoughts and behaviors during the civil service exam preparation period, divided into three parts: Prosocial Commitment, Self-efficacy in Knowledge Sharing, and Knowledge Sharing Behavior Performance. Participating police cadets also rated each item on a 1-5 scale regarding the degree to which it corresponded to the current reality, from completely disagree to completely agree.

2.3 Data Analysis

2.3.1 Descriptive statistics and grouping for social media platform use

SPSS 26 was used for descriptive statistics on the ratings of the 18 social media platforms. One-sample t-tests were conducted to compare the ratings against the reference values of 1 (almost never use) and 2 (occasionally use) to check for significant differences. Pearson's correlation analysis was performed on the ratings of platforms whose scores were significantly greater than 2.

Based on the ratings, cadets were simply grouped: those rating the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform 1 or 2 formed the Low Use Group (Low Group), and those rating it 3, 4, or 5 formed the High Use Group (High Group).

2.3.2 Processing of measurement scales

Based on the questionnaire structure, scores were calculated for each cadet's Perceived Stress, Extrinsic/Intrinsic/Altruistic Job Values, and Prosocial Commitment/Self-efficacy/Behavioral Performance in Knowledge Sharing.

2.3.3 Inter-group and paired comparisons

Independent Samples t-tests were conducted using SPSS 26 to compare the measurement results between the two groups (High vs. Low "Xuexi Qiangguo" use) for significant differences. Paired Samples t-tests were conducted between different measurement items.

3 RESULTS

3.1 General Situation of Social Media Use

From the descriptive statistics (Figure 1), we can see that the Chinese social and multi-purpose application WeChat is indeed an indispensable part of police cadets' daily lives, having become one of the most popular social media platforms globally. As college students facing the civil service exam, the learning-oriented social media platform CCTALK became the second most popular software after WeChat. Domestically, CCTALK is a well-known channel for online and video course learning and exchange, containing very little recreational internet content. Another well-known social media platform with similar use intensity is Bilibili, which serves both as a platform for video course learning and for recreational content, functionally somewhat similar to YouTube in Western countries. However, both CCTALK and Bilibili still show significant differences compared to WeChat use intensity: $t(\text{WeChat-CCTALK})=4.497$, $p<0.01$; $t(\text{WeChat-Bilibili})=5.499$, $p<0.01$.

Correlation analysis of social media platform use intensity (Table 1) showed that the learning-oriented CCTALK correlated with Bilibili and "Xuexi Qiangguo". Bilibili use also correlated with Douyin, which is primarily used for entertainment. Western scholars treated the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform as an extension of propaganda for manipulating public opinion and social control [41-43]. The questionnaire results reveal that students are exposed to and use a wide variety of social media platform types. In the subjective reports of police cadets, both "Xuexi Qiangguo" and Douyin are used as common social software, serving both learning and entertainment purposes, fundamentally different from the Western academic discourse [44].

Table 1 Correlation Analysis of Usage Intensity for 7 Social Media Platforms

Coefficient r	CCTALK	Bilibili	Tencent QQ	NetEase Cloud	Douyin	Xuexi Qiangguo
WeChat	-0.010	-0.081	0.027	0.129	0.000	0.047
CCTALK		-0.229*	-0.027	0.060	0.026	0.258*
Bilibili			0.271**	0.039	-0.424**	0.039
Tencent QQ				0.071	-0.185	0.176
NetEase Cloud					-0.035	0.090
Douyin						-0.029

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

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.2 "Xuexi Qiangguo" Platform Use and Perceived Stress

Based on the descriptive results of social media platform use intensity (Table 2), the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform, used for learning and resource acquisition, and the Douyin platform, used for entertainment, form a suitable pair for comparison. Therefore, similar to the "Xuexi Qiangguo" grouping, cadets were simply grouped based on their ratings: those rating 1 or 2 formed the Low Use Group, and those rating 3, 4, or 5 formed the High Use Group. For the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform, the High Group had 46 people, and the Low Group had 48 people. For Douyin platform use, the High Group had 42 people, and the Low Group had 52 people (Table 3). Among the police cadets preparing for the civil service exam, there was no widespread addiction or excessive use of Douyin despite its short-form, fragmented, and highly stimulating characteristics [45].

Table 2 Top 7 Social Media Platforms by Usage Intensity

Intensity	WeChat	CCTALK	Bilibili	Tencent QQ	NetEase Cloud	Xuexi Qiangguo	Douyin
Mean	4.54	3.77	3.60	3.30	2.72	2.54	2.51
Std.D	0.767	1.491	1.432	1.465	1.410	1.269	1.464

Table 3 Inter-group Comparisons (Xuexi Qiangguo vs. Douyin)

Inter-group Comparison		Xuexi Qiangguo Platform					Douyin Platform				
		N	Mean	Std.D	t-value	Sig p (2-tailed)	N	Mean	Std.D	t-value	Sig p (2-tailed)
Perceived Stress	High G.	46	2.79	0.611	-3.077	0.003**	42	2.96	0.599	-0.477	0.634
	Low G.	48	3.2	0.675			52	3.03	0.732		
Extrinsic Values	High G.	46	4.13	0.611	2.132	0.036*	42	3.96	0.576	-0.452	0.652
	Low G.	48	3.86	0.615			52	4.02	0.665		
Altruism Values	High G.	46	4.49	0.628	2.143	0.035*	42	4.37	0.766	0.446	0.657
	Low G.	48	4.49	0.628			52	4.37	0.766		

Inter-group Comparison		Xuexi Qiangguo Platform					Douyin Platform				
		N	Mean	Std.D	t-value	Sig <i>p</i> (2-tailed)	N	Mean	Std.D	t-value	Sig <i>p</i> (2-tailed)
Intrinsic Values	Low G.	48	4.19	0.743	2.036	0.045*	52	4.31	0.653	0.267	0.79
	High G.	46	2.13	0.452			42	2.04	0.547		
	Low G.	48	1.92	0.54			52	2.01	0.478		
Prosocial Commitment	High G.	46	4	0.681	2.404	0.018*	42	3.88	0.705	0.813	0.418
	Low G.	48	3.62	0.821			52	3.75	0.829		
	High G.	46	3.57	0.693	3.004	0.003**	42	3.38	0.599	0.591	0.556
Self-efficacy	Low G.	48	3.09	0.844			52	3.28	0.945		
	High G.	46	3.38	0.891	2.254	0.027*	42	3.28	0.911	1.089	0.279
	Low G.	48	2.97	0.879			52	3.08	0.897		

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

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Judging by the motives for use, facing the pressure of employment exams, police cadets did not become addicted to Douyin. Users of the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform were primarily motivated by the need to acquire information resources for exam preparation. Comparing the Perceived Stress between the High and Low groups, we found that the "Xuexi Qiangguo" High Group had significantly lower perceived stress: $t(\text{High-Low}) = -3.077$, $p < 0.01$, whereas for Douyin, there was no significant difference in perceived stress between the High and Low groups (Table 3). High use intensity of the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform did not lead to higher perceived stress or become a task burden for students during exam preparation. Therefore, the negative views of Western scholars regarding the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform are groundless.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Police Work Requires Higher Job Values

From a human resource management perspective, an important distinction in work is between extrinsic and intrinsic values [46]. Extrinsic work values focus on the outcomes of work, for which people receive tangible rewards related to the economic functions of the job, such as salary, prestige, or job security. In contrast, intrinsic values focus on work outcomes associated with psychological rewards, such as recognition, growth opportunities, and flourishing [47]. Therefore, extrinsic or intrinsic work values can lead to a variety of motivations and require different management tools and practices. Without distinguishing between High and Low groups, for the overall student perspective, the extrinsic value of the police profession far exceeds its intrinsic value: $t(\text{Extrinsic-Intrinsic}) = 29.256$, $p < 0.01$. This aligns with reality, as police work is a stable civil service job and offers competitive local income for undergraduates.

Previous research on job values indicates differences in the importance placed on different work values by students in different professional programs. Comparisons of work values across different professions (teachers, preschool teachers, social workers, journalists) show that professions with clinical/client contact value the altruistic aspects of work more than those without such contact. As expected, since the police profession, like teaching and social work, is a people-oriented profession, it should be similar. For the overall students, Altruism as the highest: $t(\text{Altruistic-Intrinsic}) = 32.233$, $p < 0.01$; $t(\text{Altruistic-Extrinsic}) = 4.92$, $p < 0.01$.

The "Xuexi Qiangguo" High Group scored significantly higher than the Low Group on all three job value aspects: Extrinsic Values, Intrinsic Values, and Altruism (Table 3), whereas the Douyin High and Low groups showed no significant differences. Although higher "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform use associated with higher job values does not indicate causality, it can serve as an indicative characteristic. It can be inferred that in our daily work of selecting excellent police officers, subjective questions about the intensity of "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform use could be incorporated into the assessment process as one of the auxiliary reference selection criteria.

4.2 Knowledge Sharing Behavior

Self-fulfillment and enhancing personal understanding and learning ability are motivations for knowledge sharing. Police cadets sharing knowledge with friends and classmates satisfies higher-level human needs and is also a concrete behavioral manifestation of police professional values. It can be stated without hesitation that the most important task for police cadets during their four-year undergraduate education is the civil service exam. Therefore, evaluating knowledge-sharing behavior during exam preparation can better assess cadets' professional values. The "Xuexi Qiangguo" High Group had significantly higher scores than the Low Group in Prosocial Commitment ($t = 2.404$, $p < 0.05$), Self-efficacy ($t = 3.004$, $p < 0.01$), and Knowledge Sharing Behavior Performance ($t = 2.254$, $p < 0.05$) within knowledge sharing behavior (Table 3), while the Douyin High and Low groups showed no significant differences. In terms of specific behavioral performance, the "Xuexi Qiangguo" High Group was more willing to share civil service exam knowledge and exhibited more knowledge-sharing behaviors.

From the perspective of Prosocial Commitment, an individual's willingness to voluntarily help, share, donate, and cooperate within a group reflects the relational dimension of social capital [48] and can promote their prosocial behavior, benefit others or achieving common goals. Prosocial fundamentally stems from altruistic motivations—moral

concern and emotional functions to express compassion for others [49]. Besides altruistic motives, egoistic motives are also key factors influencing individual prosocial behavior [50]. Individuals may attempt to maximize their reputation and welfare by helping others and expecting future reciprocal returns. Blau's social exchange perspective suggests that individuals contribute effort to help others in close relationships to enhance their own image [51], increase social approval, anticipate future help, and maintain ongoing relationships. Furthermore, egoistic motivations benefit skill improvement, mood, sense of distinction and importance, and contribute to further teamwork and cooperation.

From the perspective of Self-efficacy, it influences individuals' expectations about potential outcomes and subsequent courses of action. It is considered an important self-regulatory mechanism in the interaction between individuals and their environment. Beliefs in one's ability to complete specific tasks further influence the strategies used to achieve goals, the amount of effort expended, perseverance in the face of obstacles and adversity, the ability to recover from setbacks, and the feasibility of achieving goals. Social interaction contributes to collective beliefs about knowledge sharing; classmates pool their knowledge, skills, and resources, provide mutual support, form alliances, cooperate to solve problems, and improve the quality of member learning [52].

The emergence of prosocial is not only a matter of altruistic or egoistic motives in response to others' needs but also a response to members' identification with and commitment to their group. The "Xuexi Qiangguo" High Group may, through positive interpersonal relationships, help individuals enhance their sense of self-worth and self-esteem, achieved through instrumental help or emotional support in the sharing environment, which further influences individual achievement motivation. Similarly, when team members share common interests and goals with peers, they are more confident in their ability to contribute useful knowledge to others rather than feeling anxious in social situations. By establishing and maintaining relationships among members, the vicarious experiences generated by social models help them realize the possibility of behavioral achievement.

We selected senior police cadets preparing for the civil service exam as our research subjects, hoping to demonstrate, under the conditions of diversified social media platforms and the stigmatization of the "Xuexi Qiangguo" platform, whether members with dual identities as ordinary college students and police cadets face more stress, possess higher professional values, and exhibit better knowledge-sharing behaviors during exam preparation. Undoubtedly, our research results are positive and optimistic.

5 FUTURE STUDY

Results based on subjective reports and simple grouped statistical comparisons are still insufficient to describe clear causal relationships. Therefore, further, more objective and quantitative evaluation of social media platform usage is needed to analyze deeper usage patterns and underlying reasons. On the other hand, while work values are relatively stable for most adults as measured by self-report scales [53, 54], they may change over time due to professional experience, career maturity, and work outcomes. Although having gained sufficient understanding of police work through six months of internship, police cadets might adopt different coping strategies in stressful situations after starting work, potentially leading to changes in their work values. Therefore, maintaining these high levels of altruistic values during the educational process is an important issue facing police educators.

The current study provides a framework for discussion and analysis exploring the education of young college students and makes the future research needs and practical value of platforms similar to "Xuexi Qiangguo". Although there is increasing research on social media platform use, there is still much to be further explored regarding job values and specific behaviors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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