

A Review of Organizational Identification Research

Lihua Tang

Beijing Institute of Economics and Management, Beijing 100018, China

Abstract: Organizational identification is a mature research field in the field of organizational behavior. Firstly, this paper systematically introduces the concept of organizational identification. In addition, the empirical research results of organizational identification are summarized, including the research on antecedents, outcome variables and intermediary variables of organizational identification. In the process of summary, the variables are divided into organizational level and individual level. Finally, the future research of organizational identification is prospected.

Keywords: organizational identification; leadership style

1. Concept of organizational identification

Organizational identification is a cross concept developed from the social identification of social psychology (social identification refers to the individual's recognition of the organization's membership, values and emotional maintenance, social identification) and cultural identification (cultural identification refers to the individual's sense of belonging and organizational commitment to the organizational culture and organizational values). It was first proposed and constructed by March of Stanford University and Simon of Carnegie Mellon University in 1958. However, in the 20 years since organizational identification was proposed, researchers have paid little attention to it. In the 1970s, some scholars even once regarded organizational identification as an integral part of attitudinal organizational commitment (AOC) [1]. Since then, some researchers have often confused the two concepts, greatly hindering the understanding of organizational identification. Until Ashforth and Mael (1989) explained organizational identification by summarizing the correlation between social psychology theory and organizational behavior research, and introduced social identification theory into the field of organizational behavior research to explain organizational identification, the concept of organizational identification began to receive renewed attention as an independent variable, and gradually became an important research topic in the field of organizational behavior and social psychology [2].

However, although the research on organizational identification has been more and more extensive in the theoretical circle since the 1980s, due to different research concepts and perspectives, scholars often summarize and define organizational identification from different research perspectives based on their own research problems. Some scholars emphasized the cognitive characteristics of organizational identification. For example, Ashforth and Mael, from a cognitive perspective in 1992 respectively, believed that organizational identification was a special form of social identification, and that individual employees defined themselves according to their membership in a specific organization. Some scholars also emphasized the understanding of organizational identification from the perspective of emotional characteristics. For example, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) pointed out that organizational identification is a self-definition based on the expectation of individuals to the

organization and maintaining emotional satisfaction with the organization. In addition [3], Patchen defined the concept of organizational identification by integrating cognitive characteristics and emotional characteristics. Based on the theory of social identification, he proposed that organizational identification is composed of three mutually independent and closely related phenomena: "organizational cohesion, organizational support, and perception of shared characteristics with other organizational members" [4]. To sum up, so far, there has not been a broad consensus on the concept of organizational identification in the academic community. In order to better understand organizational identification, this study combed and summarized the definitions of organizational identification proposed by scholars in different periods, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Organizational Identification Definitions.

Scholar	Year	Definition
Brown [5]	1969	Organizational identification is the reaction of individuals to self-concept in the specific relationship between themselves and the organization. Organizational identification consists of the attraction of the organization, the consistency between the organization and individual goals, loyalty, and the relationship between individuals and organizational membership.
Lee [6]	1969 1971	Organizational identification contains the common characteristics of individuals' belonging, loyalty and existence to the organization, which vividly shows whether individuals identify with the organization and the degree of identification.
Patchen	1970	Organizational identification is composed of three mutually independent and closely related phenomena: organizational cohesion, organizational support and perception of shared characteristics with other organizational members.
Hall, Schnider, & Nygren [7]	1970	Organizational identification refers to the process and extent to which individuals gradually realize their individual goals and values and organically integrate with organizational goals and values, and this integration process and extent will lead to a strong emotional relationship between individuals and organizations.
Tajfel [8]	1978	The theoretical basis of organizational identification is social identification theory, which believes that the group to which an individual belongs is one of the important sources of self-concept. Applying the social identification theory to the organizational environment, organizational identification is an individual's recognition of his/her identification as a member of a specific organization, and this organizational membership enables individuals to have consistency in values and a sense of emotional belonging to their organizations.
Cheney [9]	1983	From the perspective of the dynamic process of the establishment of organizational identification, organizational identification is the process in which individuals connect and interact with the organizational context factors they belong to, and identify with the organization and a series of things related to the organization.
O'Reilly & Chatman	1986	Organizational identification is based on individuals' expectations of the organization, and maintains self-defined contact with the organization to achieve emotional satisfaction.
Ashforth & Mael	1989 1995	Organizational identification is a specific form of social identification, which is a psychological state in which individuals define themselves according to their membership in a specific organization.
Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail [10]	1994	Organizational identification is a psychological process in which individuals integrate their feelings as members of a specific organization into their self-definition, that is, individuals define their own psychological process according to the common characteristics of themselves and their organizations.
Pratt [11]	1998	Organizational identification refers to the recognition of the consistency between individuals and the organizational values they join.
Riketta	2005	Summarizes the concept of organizational identification from three different perspectives: cognition, emotion and sociology, and believes that organizational identification refers to the relationship between self-concept and organization. That is to say, the perception and view of individual organization members on their own treatment in the organization affect their understanding of "who they are".
Wang [12]	2006	Organizational identification emphasizes the psychological feelings that individuals, as members of an organization, have on the organization after they are connected and interact with many factors in their organization.
Bao & Xu [13]	2006	First of all, from the perspective of static relationship, organizational identification is a reflection of the relationship between the self-concept of individual members and the organization; Secondly, from the perspective of dynamic process, organizational identification is a specific process in which organizational members obtain self-identification from the organization.
Wei et al., [14]	2007	Organizational identification is a process in which individuals choose, acquire and maintain the identification of organizational members in a specific organization, and obtain self-definition from the organization. Organizational identification has two main characteristics: persistence and multiplicity.
Xi [15]	2008	The degree of acceptance and internalization of the values, business philosophy, business style and characteristics of other members of the organization pursued by the organization based on the perception of self-identification in the organization.
Wan [16]	2013	Organizational identification is a state in which people define themselves as members of an organization, and it is characterized by dynamics and multiplicity.
Su & Lin [17]	2019	Organizational identification is a process in which individuals redefine themselves based on the work situation of their organizations. It is a special form of social identification.

Source: The author arranges by herself.

By reviewing and sorting out the definitions of organizational identification by the above scholars, we can have a more systematic understanding of organizational identification. Although these concepts are heterogeneous, we can find that these different definitions are trying to answer the following core questions: first, they clarify the subject of organizational identification, that is, they answer the question about "who identifies"; Second, it clarifies the object of organizational identification, that is, it answers "What do you identify with?" The problem of; The third is to answer the question of "degree of identification" between the members of the organization and the organization; The fourth is to clarify the formation mechanism of organizational identification. Most definitions of organizational identification imply that organizational members have linked their organizational membership with his or her self-concept [4]. In other words, the formation of organizational identification is a process and degree that individuals seek to be consistent with themselves through the comparison process of "who am I" and "who are we" in the organization.

The relationship between these concepts is shown in Figure 1.

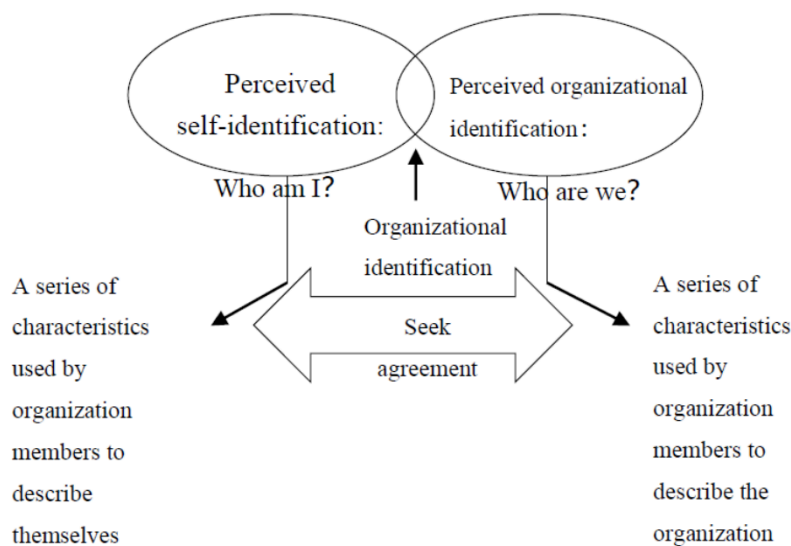


Figure 1. Formation process of organizational identification (Source: Xi (2008) [15]).

2. Research on organizational identification

At present, the research on the antecedents of organizational identification in the theoretical circle has achieved very rich research results. This study systematically combs the existing literature on organizational identification, and summarizes many factors that affect organizational identification into individual level factors and organizational level factors.

2.1. Antecedents of organizational identification at the individual level

In order to reveal the different effects of individual differences on organizational identification, scholars began to explore whether individual factors such as organizational members' personality traits, gender, length of service, education level, whether they have a job mentor, job satisfaction, and individual needs will have an impact on organizational identification as early as the 1980s and 1990s, and what is the mechanism of the impact [18]. As far as the existing literature is concerned, many studies have confirmed that the personality traits of organizational members can have an impact on organizational identification, among which the extraversion and agreeableness of the Big Five personality traits can positively predict organizational identification [19], on the contrary, Neuroticism dimension is negatively correlated with organizational identification [20]. Other studies have pointed out that employees' sentimental personality helps to enhance their recognition of their organization, that is, the higher their sentimentality, the stronger their organizational recognition [21]. In terms of gender, studies have pointed out that female employees generally have higher organizational identification than male employees [22]. There are three different voices about the influence of employees' working years on organizational identification. One view is that employees' working years are positively correlated with their organizational identification. Many studies at home and abroad have consistently shown that employees' sense of

identification with the organization will continue to increase with their working years in the organization [21,23]. At the same time, some scholars have pointed out that although the working years of organizational members have a positive impact on organizational identification, with the continuous passage of working hours, the growth rate of employees' organizational identification has a diminishing marginal utility [24].

The other view is just the opposite of the first one. It believes that employees' working years will reduce their sense of identification with the organization. This is because with the continuous growth of employees' working hours in the enterprise, employees gradually find significant differences between their own values and the organization in the process of interaction with the organization, which will affect employees' identification with the organization. The third view is that working years have no significant impact on organizational identification. In terms of education level, many scholars have confirmed through research that the education level of employees has a positive impact on organizational identification [25]. and some studies have particularly emphasized that education level is only related to organizational identification, but it does not mean that the higher the education level of employees, the stronger their sense of organizational identification will be [26]. Although the above studies have illustrated the different effects of individual characteristics of demographic information on organizational identification, it should be noted that these variables are often difficult for organizations to control in practice, so their enlightenment on practical management is quite limited. Therefore, it is necessary for many scholars to explore the impact of other individual differences on organizational identification. Some studies believe that whether employees have a mentor close to them in the organization has a profound impact on employees' cognition and feelings. The care, help and professional support brought by the mentor will increase employees' sense of identification with the organization [27]. In addition, scholars also found that the higher employee's job satisfaction, the higher his/her recognition of the organization [28]. In the research on the antecedents of organizational identification, other researchers believe that the degree to which employees' personal needs are met by the organization affects employees' internal identification with the organization [20]. But this does not mean that the more satisfied employees' needs are, the higher their organizational identification will be. For example, Zhang pointed out in his analysis of state-owned enterprises in the transition period that the satisfaction of employees' economic interest needs is an important factor to stimulate employees to identify with their organizations [22], but at the same time, there is a marginal diminishing effect of this influence. In other words, the more employees' needs for economic benefits, the better, but when this demand is met to a certain value, its role in employees' organizational identification will be weakened. Coincidentally, Yu et al., based on Maslow's hierarchy of demand theory, explored the impact of employee needs on organizational identification from four aspects: basic needs, emotional needs, independent needs and development needs [29]. The study found that for basic needs such as material welfare, when demand equals supply, its impact on organizational identification is optimal, because when employees' basic needs reach a certain absolute value, The additional investment and supply of the organization will not encourage employees to make more emotional investment in the organization, that is, the growth rate of this role is slowing down. The satisfaction of emotional needs and growth needs is positively correlated with organizational identification. Some researchers have pointed out through empirical research that the matching degree of employees' individual values and organizational values has a positive effect on motivating employees' sense of identification with the organization. This is because when employees' values and organizational values are more consistent, employees will think that they have a lot in common with the organization and are an indispensable part of the organization, and then identify with the organization [22]. In addition, some studies based on their own research have also found some factors affecting organizational identification at the individual level. For example, reade pointed out that when employees judge that they are more likely to succeed in the organization, they will have a strong sense of identification with the organization. A schooler pointed out that intellectuals are different from other ordinary employees. Therefore, in the face of knowledge workers, organizations can promote employees' positive evaluation of the organization and form organizational identification by improving their subjective well-being and positive emotional experience. Wu and Zhang examined the impact of psychological resilience, a positive work behavior, on organizational identification from the perspective of matching, and found that psychological resilience has a significant positive impact on organizational identification [30]. At the same time,

employees' performance of the psychological contract can shorten the psychological distance between employees and the organization, thus enhancing employees' sense of identification with the organization [31]. In addition, there are also studies from the perspective of psychological simulation, which have verified that the contact between employees' positive imagination and organizational leaders will increase the organizational identification of individual employees [32].

2.2. *Organizational identification: antecedents at the organizational level*

The exploration of the antecedents of organizational identification at the organizational level is a topic that scholars pay more attention to. They mainly study and confirm it from different perspectives, such as leadership style, leadership behavior, internal and external competition, organizational change, organizational reputation, organizational culture, communication level, management practice, and organizational support.

First, some researchers regard leadership style as a antecedent variable affecting organizational identification, and a large number of studies have confirmed service-oriented leadership style [19,29]. Transformational leadership style [26,12]. Moral leadership [14], inclusive leadership, democratic leadership style [19] and transactional leadership style [33], can positively affect organizational identification, while authoritarian leadership style negatively affects organizational identification [27]. At the same time, Lei et al. pointed out that modest and prudent leadership behavior can actively and positively promote employees' sense of identification with their organizations, while leaders' non contingency punishment behavior will lead to the depletion of employees' psychological resources, seriously affect subordinates' satisfaction with leaders and organizations, and thus weaken employees' sense of belonging and identification with the organization [34]. Huang et al. based on their empirical analysis of the four major commercial banks in China, found that in addition to positive reinforcement incentive behavior, negative reinforcement incentive behavior constructs a healthy, orderly and positive corporate culture by timely stopping and punishing employees' negative behaviors and bad thoughts, thus positively promoting employees' identification with the organization [35]. In addition, among the antecedents involved in organizational identification, organizational competition is a factor that researchers generally pay attention to. As early as the last century, some scholars pointed out that the fierce competition within the organization will lead to split behavior, leading to greater chances of friction and conflict between members of the organization. Employees are more inclined to safeguard the interests of individuals or small groups, and the cooperation and cohesion within the organization will decline, which will have a very negative impact on organizational identification [21]. Unlike internal competition, external competition can enhance employees' organizational identification by constantly strengthening their own values and understanding the boundaries of rules. This is because the above cognition is conducive to helping employees understand the difference between "us" and "them", strengthen their connection and emotion with the organization, and thus play a positive role in organizational identification [5,21]. Li broke the previous view of famous scholars Mael and Ashforth that internal competition will have a negative impact on organizational identification. By introducing the perception of organizational identification and organizational reputation [36], they discussed in detail the specific path and mechanism of internal and external competition affecting employees' organizational identification, Although the final results show that the path and mechanism of internal competition and external competition on employees are different, both internal competition and external competition are positively correlated with employees' organizational identification. At the same time, the research of Zhou et al. also supports the view of Li et al., that is, internal and external competition in the organization will produce factors conducive to employees' identification with the organization, and enhance employees' organizational identification [37]. In addition, researchers found that the speed and degree of employees' perception of organizational change is an important factor affecting their sense of identification with the organization through empirical research on Korean enterprises. At the same time, the study also clearly pointed out that employees' perception of the uncertainty brought about by organizational change can promote them to identify with the organization more [38]. In the same view as Kim et al., Chinese scholars Zhou believed that the higher the employees' awareness of organizational change, the stronger their recognition of the organization [39]. This is because when employees fully understand and master the objectives, procedures and other information of organizational change, they will face organizational change and understand the change

measures taken by the organization with a more positive attitude, this is conducive to enhancing their sense of identification with the organization. Some studies also found that the higher the organizational reputation perceived by organizational members, the easier it is for them to deepen their recognition of the organization, and thus improve organizational recognition [28]. Su et al. investigated 200 employees of two major companies in Taiwan region through online questionnaires, and confirmed that there was a significant positive correlation between perceived corporate social responsibility, external reputation perception, organizational trust and organizational identification [40]. Huang explored the three different types of organizational culture, including innovative culture, support culture and bureaucratic culture, will have different role in the identification of organizations, and find that innovative culture and supporting culture can be promoted to promote employee organization recognition, while bureaucratic culture may cause employees' negative emotions and evaluations of the organization [35]. Therefore, the study believes that bureaucratic culture has a negative impact on organization recognition, but it is not significant. Li studied the influence of various factors of organizational culture on organizational identification [41], and pointed out that the major influencing factors were benefit orientation and professional dedication orientation. Schuh et al. believed that organizational culture was significantly related to organizational identification [42]. Researchers also pointed out that a positive organizational culture atmosphere is conducive to enhancing employees' sense of identification with the organization. In addition, studies have pointed out that the collectivistic organizational cultural atmosphere will have a positive impact on employees' organizational identification [26]. Yildiz conducted path analysis on the relationship between teachers' organizational identification and organizational communication level, and found that when members of an organization get more abundant, complete and in-depth information from their own organization [43], they are more likely to communicate and communicate with the organization and its members, so that employees can have centripetal force and cohesion, and also more likely to stimulate employees' sense of belonging and identification to the organization. In addition, human resource practice will also affect organizational identification to some extent. Li analyzed whether the practice of high-performance human resources can have an impact on employee organization's identification and specific mechanism [41]. It shows that the contents of the internal flow and incentive salary of high-performance human resources have a positive impact on the occurrence of the organizational identification of the organization, and the contents of personnel screening and extensive training play a negative role on the identification of the organization. There is a significant positive correlation between the selection of the salary plan and the organization identification of the salary plan. Many scholars also began to pay attention to the impact of organizational support on organizational identification. Their research shows that the stronger the sense of organizational support, the higher the degree of organizational identification [22]. Wang et al. took the staff as the research object to test the performance evaluation system, organizational learning and organizational identification, and found that the performance evaluation system and organizational learning have a positive impact on the organization's identification. In addition, there are some domestic and foreign scholars from the intensity of work boundaries and advertising factors to discuss the organization's identification [12]. Related conclusions have continuously enriched and expanded the results of the organization's identification.

2.3. Organizational identification: outcome variables at the individual level

Based on the existing literature, organizational identification has a very far-reaching impact on the organization itself and individual organizational members. Therefore, when reviewing the research on the outcome variables of organizational identification, we can roughly summarize them into individual level and organizational level.

First of all, a large number of theoretical and empirical studies at home and abroad have shown that the results of the organizational identification at the individual level are mainly concentrated in the attitude and behavior of employees. These attitudes and behaviors are mainly reflected in the work satisfaction of individual employees and organizational citizen behavior, innovative behavior, work performance, and departure intention. Dick et al. According to the dimension composition of the organization identification, the organization identification is divided into four dimensions, namely the cognitive dimension, emotional dimension, evaluation

dimension and behavioral dimension [44], and respectively the research results show that the evaluation dimension in personal career identification and team identification has a significant positive impact on employees' work satisfaction. In addition, based on the theory of social identification, Karanika et al. studied how to influence the work satisfaction of employees in organization identification, and found that when employees have a strong sense of organization, employees have high satisfaction with their work, and research pointed out that research pointed out. The impact of the organization's identification on work satisfaction is mainly transmitted through work [45], especially vitality and dedication. In other words, due to a strong sense of organization, employees will ignore negative factors such as poor management, economic recession, or lack of resources, because the organization recognizes and cultivates employees in any case. "The feeling, the more employees agree with the organization, the more satisfied they are [46]. In addition, a large number of studies also found that employees' organizational identification can promote employees to show more organizational citizenship behavior [39]. Demir (2015) used multivariate variance to test the differences between public and private school teachers in organizational identification and organizational citizenship behavior [47]. The results showed that whether public or private schools, their teachers' organizational identification has a positive impact on teachers' organizational citizenship behavior, and the organizational identification and organizational citizenship behavior of teachers in private schools are significantly higher than those in public schools. Among many studies on organizational identification, the relationship between organizational identification and employee innovation behavior has always been the focus of researchers' enthusiasm [47]. However, it should be noted that in many studies, the relationship between the two is not completely consistent, and there are disputes. While most researchers believe that organizational identification plays a positive role in promoting employee innovation behavior [48], a small number of researchers point out that organizational identification may not play a role in employee innovation behavior, or even play an inhibitory role [21]. Some other studies explained the relationship from a negative perspective. For example, Lu and Peng also verified the relationship between organizational identification and organizational citizenship behavior of employees in 2018 [49]. Based on social identification theory and social exchange theory, they deeply analyzed the impact of workplace violence, such as workplace exclusion, on various dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior. Among them, the relationship between organizational identification, workplace exclusion and organizational citizenship behavior plays a mediating role, that is, workplace exclusion will consume employees' identification with the organization, thereby reducing employees' organizational citizenship behavior. In addition, there are also some studies that focus on the impact of organizational identification on employees' job performance. For example, Jiang and Liu think that teachers who have a high degree of organizational identification will work harder to improve their personal teaching and research level, which is conducive to the effective improvement of their job performance for teachers [50]. The research conclusions of Yildiz et al. also support the view that organizational identification can positively predict employees' job performance [43]. In addition, the enhancement of organizational identification is also conducive to reducing employees' turnover intention [46]. It is worth noting that most of the studies at home and abroad are committed to finding and verifying the positive effects of organizational identification on individual employees, ignoring that organizational identification may have a "double-edged sword" effect, so there is no obvious negative impact on organizational identification. According to the very limited research available, we can see that organizational identification may lead to some negative attitudes and behaviors of employees, such as pro organizational non ethical behavior [17].

2.4 Organizational identification: organizational level outcome variables

While scholars study the individual level of the organization's identification result variables, some scholars have also conducted some research on the organization level. Among them, Chinese scholars Bao Gongmin and Xu Bixiang pointed out in a study in 2006 that strong organizational identification can start the self-concept of employee group levels, and then cause changes in employees' psychological and behavioral changes, and improve organizational performance [13]. In addition, some studies have pointed out that in addition to the attitudes and behaviors of individual employees, it is also beneficial to the members of the organization to produce a positive psychological feeling that is closely related to the fate of the organization. And then effectively improve

the team cohesion and organizational performance. Stinglhamber et al. clarified the difference between organizational identification and emotional commitments, and whether there is a causal relationship between the two, the conclusion that the employee can increase its emotional commitment to the organization through the employee's identification.

3. Summary

Based on the systematic review of the above literature on organizational identification, we can see that scholars have explained the mechanism and role of organizational identification from different perspectives. It is precisely with the continuous enrichment and deepening of the academic exploration of the antecedents and outcome variables of organizational identification that the relationship between organizational identification and other variables has become increasingly clear. These research results enable scholars to regard organizational identification as a "magic bullet" to improve employees' work attitude and organizational citizenship behavior [39]. At the same time, there are inevitably some limitations and deficiencies in the study of organizational identification, which may become the focus of future research.

First, although most definitions of organizational identification imply that organizational members have linked their organizational membership with his or her self-concept [22]. However, in the existing research, few people pay attention to the research on how employees' organizational identification is produced and what results will be achieved by focusing on employees' self-concept. This seems to be a contradiction.

Secondly, although the current evidence of the beneficial results of organizational identification is extensive and growing [32], there is relatively little attention and research on understanding the specific potential dynamics that link organizational identification with employee behavior [31]. Although we know that organizational identification is usually good for employee behavior, we know little about why, how, or what benefits it has. For example, previous studies did not extensively consider the specific types of positive work behaviors and their potential psychological mechanisms related to organizational identification. On the contrary, most previous studies tended to conceptualize the behavioral consequences and potential mechanisms of organizational identification in relatively general and vague terms, as if the resulting positive work behavior is a unified structure, while the potential mechanism is a simple and single process. This neglect of the potential mechanism of organizational identification, to some extent, leads us to underestimate the practical value and application scope of organizational identification, and also severely limits our understanding of the dynamic process of organizational identification.

Thirdly, although a large number of studies generally believe that employees' identification with the organization is a key process for leaders to influence their employees' behavior [42]. However, few people have noticed such a problem: how do leaders affect the specific path of employees' organizational identification through different aspects of employees' self-concept, and thus affect employees' interpersonal relationships and behaviors? These problems need us to seriously consider and further explore.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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