
Cultivating Understanding: A Systematic Review of Factors Influencing Consumer Purchase Behavior in the Organic Food Landscape

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the global interest in organic food has steadily risen, prompting increased scholarly attention to unravel the complex motivations and barriers influencing its consumption. Despite a plethora of studies on the subject, there exists a lack of cohesive synthesis in literature. This study addresses this gap by conducting a systematic literature review that comprehensively analyzes the factors and challenges influencing the purchasing decisions of organic food. Drawing from 59 empirical research articles spanning from 2019 to 2023, various theoretical frameworks, including the Theory of Reasoned Action, Theory of Planned Behavior, Value-Belief-Norm, Attitude-Behavior-Context, and Value-Attitude-Behavior Hierarchy, were employed to categorize identified motives and barriers. The main findings of this systematic literature review encompass several key aspects: firstly, the provision of descriptive statistics about the chosen studies; secondly, a comprehensive synthesis of the factors discussed in the selected studies, employing various theoretical frameworks; thirdly, identification of potential possibilities for future research; and finally, the implications of these findings for scholars, managers, and policymakers seeking to enhance their understanding of organic food consumption-related issues. This review paper significantly contributes to education (SDG4) by sharing insights, drives innovation (SDG9) in sustainable agriculture, aids policymakers in building resilient, organic food systems in communities (SDG11), and fosters collaborative partnerships (SDG17) for holistic sustainable development.

Keywords: Barriers, factors, motives, organic food, purchase intention, purchase behavior

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of food consumption, the popularity of organic foods is anticipated to surge due to shifting consumer preferences. Historically, farmers refrained from synthetic methods, emphasizing personal use over commercial production [1]. The 1940s-1960s saw a shift to more efficient farming, sidelining organic practices in favor of mass production driven by industrialization [2]. Concerns arise from the environmental degradation caused by chemical use in agriculture, impacting the nutritional value of food [3]. Lifestyle-related diseases encouraged consumers to prioritize food quality, aligning with the "you are what you eat" concept [1]. This awareness spans various countries, showcasing a global transition to organic farming. Modern consumers, driven by health consciousness, favor organic

food devoid of industrial chemicals and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) [4]. The focus on using fewer artificial substances appeals to people who value their health [5]. An increasing eco-awareness and financial capacity contribute to the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices [6]. Marketers play a pivotal role in this narrative, promoting health benefits and necessitating an understanding of target consumer segments [1]. Despite the existing literature, specific consumer preferences for organic food remain undisclosed. The combination of health consciousness, environmental concerns, and economic capacity emphasizes the significance of organic food in shaping contemporary consumer behavior.

The literature reveals a substantial focus on organic food in four reviews, each exploring different factors. Rana and Paul [1] conducted a thorough analysis from 1985 to 2015, emphasizing elements shaping consumer behavior towards organic food. Scalco et al. [7] employed meta-analysis, examining the Theory of Planned Behavior to understand relationships between attitudes, norms, control perceptions, intentions, and behaviors. Massey et al. [8] delved into factors influencing organic food consumption, analyzing 124,353 consumers from 1991 to 2016. Their findings highlighted consumer prioritization of perceived credibility over information search and personal experience, emphasizing the importance of credence attributes in decision-making. Kushwah et al. [9] systematically analyzed motives and constraints in organic food purchasing decisions from 2005 to 2018, utilizing consuming values and innovation resistance theory frameworks. Notably, a gap in the literature exists for the period 2019 to 2023, prompting the present study to comprehensively evaluate this aspect. Therefore, this paper aims to bridge this gap by investigating factors influencing organic food consumption. Understanding these patterns is crucial for effectively reaching the target audience of organic food consumers. The article is structured to present the methodology, data analysis findings, consequences, and final remarks, contributing valuable insights for future research.

2) METHODOLOGY:

This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology to examine consumer behavior in organic food purchasing. The primary aim is to compile and analyze factors influencing consumers' decisions to embrace or resist organic food choices. This approach offers advantages such as systematic, transparent, and replicable synthesis of the literature, minimizing bias, and enhancing data analysis legitimacy. The methodology involves three universal steps: initial planning (formulating research questions and setting inclusion/exclusion criteria), review execution (selecting relevant databases), and reporting (assessing study quality, data abstraction, and presentation) as show in Figure 1.

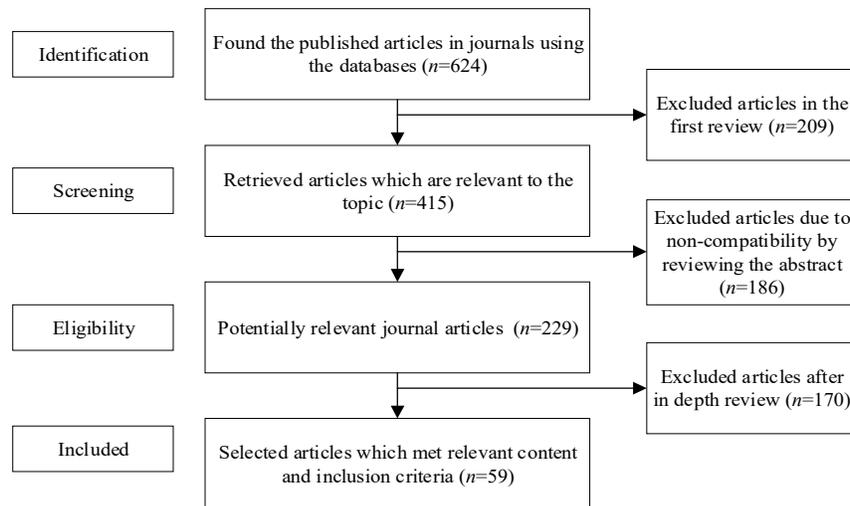


Figure 1 SLR Methodology

The systematic literature review included six distinct inclusion criteria: prioritizing the examination of determinants in the specific context of organic food consumption, encompassing studies published between 2019 and 2023, including those selected for publication in the upcoming year, being limited to studies published in English, considering only peer-reviewed journal articles, measuring motives and barriers based on empirical evidence, and evaluating the focus on consumers' perspective of organic food consumption by examining the title, abstract, keywords, and, in some cases, the introduction of the selected studies. Four exclusion criteria were included: focusing on the relevancy of the selected literature, not considering conference papers and thesis dissertations, excluding duplicate studies, and not including studies published before 2019 as this study specifically covers the period of Kushwah et al. [9] and Scalco et al. [7] studies. Eleven academic databases were searched for relevant articles for the systematic literature review. The review began with a search of the SCOPUS database using the keywords: ("organic food" OR "organic eatable products") AND ("factors" OR "barrier" OR "motivation" OR "deterrent" OR "driver" OR "motive" OR "determinant" OR "drives") AND ("intention" OR "purchase intention" OR "intention to purchase") AND ("Behavior" OR "behavior" OR "purchase behavior"). The methodology aligns with that of Rana and Paul [1] and Scalco et al. [7] in their respective literature

reviews on consumer behavior in purchasing organic food. We concentrated on research that made a clear distinction between natural and organic food to get accuracy. A comprehensive list of 624 studies was found using both forward and backward search tactics, according to the findings of our investigation. After the first screening, 209 items were excluded due to strict inclusion requirements. After reviewing the abstracts of the remaining 415 papers, 186 articles that were incompatible or duplicates were eliminated. The remaining 170 articles underwent further examination based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, resulting in the identification of 59 relevant articles that met the study's requirements. These selected papers underwent a comprehensive assessment, collecting data on various aspects such as the theoretical framework, study location, research methodology, sample characteristics, and primary motives and barriers

3) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

(a) Geographic Scope

Figure 2 in the research findings gives an overview of the geographical scope covered by the selected studies. While many countries are included, the count considers only those with multiple publications. Additionally, when studies included data from multiple countries, we recorded data separately for each country. The predominant focus was Malaysia (15 studies) and India (10 studies). The results suggest a growing emphasis on organic food consumption in both Malaysia and India, driven by factors such as health awareness, environmental concerns, and an increasing demand for sustainable agriculture.

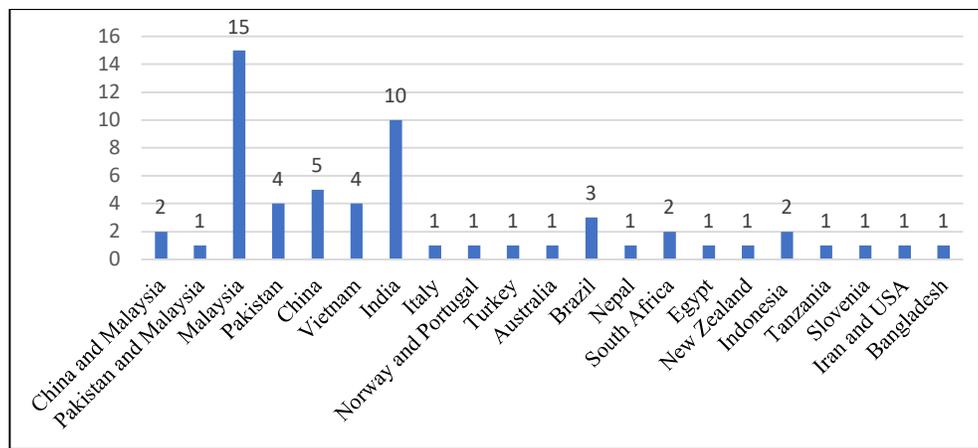


Figure 2 Geographic Scope

(b) Theoretical Models and Frameworks

Figure 3 below focuses on the most popular theoretical frameworks that researchers use to study factors influencing consumer behavior around purchasing organic food. The most popular framework emerging is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21]. Coming close behind, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) occupies the second rank when it comes to used theories as documented in previous studies [2, 22, 23, 24, 25]. Besides, Khan et al. [26, 27] used the goal-framing theory in investigating how motivational aspects like attitudes influence the sustainable consumption of organic food by consumers. In addition to these, some studies use different theories like the Protection Motivation Theory [28], and Behavioral Reasoning Theory [29] as well as the Theory of Consumption Values [3, 30], Self-Determination Theory [31], Social Cognitive Theory [32], Innovation Resistance Theory [33], Theory of Consumption Values and Value-Attitude-Behavior Model, Attitude Behavior Context (ABC) Theory, Biophilia Theory, and Value-Attitude-Behavior Hierarchy (VABH). These frameworks add substantially to the structured methodology for better understanding the multidimensional aspects of consumer behavior, such as the purchase of organic food, even though they differ fundamentally in their specific application and detailed operations.

Additionally, though many established theories apply in this area of research, some ventures choose to develop their theoretical frameworks to investigate the factors associated with decision-making among organic food purchases [10, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38]. Abdullah et al. [10] investigated in recent research how consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions are influenced by product attributes, the location of the product's sale, and promotional strategies. The results demonstrated a considerable positive correlation between these marketing strategies and the development of favorable attitudes, which in turn influences consumers' decision-making processes. Moreover, Alam et al. [38] examined variables influencing purchase intentions. Their findings showed that a customer's intention to purchase is greatly influenced by several factors, including attitude, willingness to pay a premium price, health consciousness, food safety concerns, and nutritional content considerations. Furthermore, Jose et al. [39] discovered the relationship between fear and buyers' intentions might be moderated by perceived price and trust. The cluster analysis results also suggested that

married women with children are more likely to choose organic food products. These studies provide valuable insights into the factors influencing customers' thoughts and decisions when it comes to buying organic food.

Coming to an end, the call for more research and especially new angles is highly evident. The literature available in the past has provided various theories enlisted as follows like Protection Motivation Theory, Behavioral Reasoning Theory, Theory of Consumption Values, Self-determination Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Innovation Resistance Theory, Theory of Consumption Values and Value-Attitude-Behavior Model, Attitude Behavior Context (ABC) Theory, Biophilia Theory, and Value-Attitude-Behavior Hierarchy (VABH). Future academic investigations should go further into these theoretical frameworks to improve our understanding and have a substantial influence on consumers' behaviors and decision-making processes around the purchasing of organic food products.

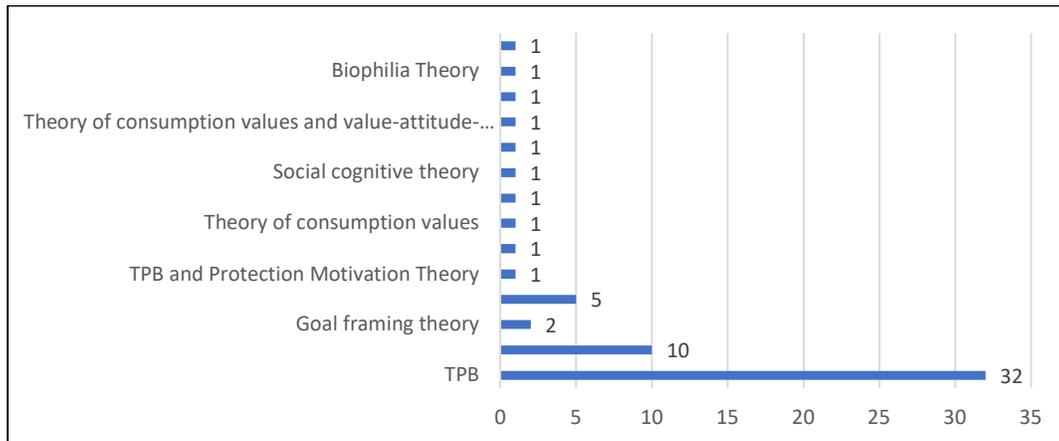


Figure 3 Theoretical Models and Frameworks

(c) Product Related Factors

Table 1 illustrates the product-related factors identified in previous studies that impact consumers' purchase intentions and behaviors specifically in the context of organic food. A review of prior research from 2013 to 2019 indicated several factors about the product that influence customers' intents and actions when it comes to buying organic food. Price stands up as one of the most important determinants among these; eight research show a positive association and two indicate a negative effect. This emphasizes how important price factors are in influencing customers' decisions to choose organic products. The availability of organic food comes next, with six research showing a favorable correlation. Food safety issues also show up as a recurring and important factor—five studies show that they have a favorable influence on customers' decisions to buy organic food. Organic food value is a further significant factor; four of the five studies that examined this relationship found that it positively influenced customers' decisions to buy organic food. Additionally, eco-labeling is significant since, according to three research, it positively correlates with customers' intentions to purchase organic food, whereas one study revealed a negative correlation. The quality of organic food, however, yields contradictory results; three studies show a favorable correlation, while four show no discernible effect. There isn't much agreement on nutritional content, though, with two studies showing a good impact and two finding no discernible association. In conclusion, although organic food availability, value, price, eco-labeling, and food safety concerns are important factors, the influence of organic food quality and nutritional content is still unclear, indicating the need for more research in these areas. Due to their direct correlation with the attributes of organic food, these variables—price, eco-labeling, availability of organic food, value, food safety, organic food quality, and nutritional content—are all regarded as product-related. They affect how customers view these things and their decision to buy them. While quality and eco-labeling concentrate on environmental and qualitative factors, pricing, and availability deal with practical ones. Food safety and nutritional content are related to several areas of health and safety. All these variables are essentially product-related concerns; they include a range of elements that customers take into account when making an organic food purchase.

Table 1. Product-Related Factors Influencing Consumers Purchase Intentions And Behaviors

Product related factors	Direction	Studies
Price	+significant	Abdullah et al. [10]; Alam et al. [38]; Basha & Lal [22]; Chauke & Duh [40]; Roseira et al. [18]; Shahriari et al. [2]; Shanmugam & Saththivam [20]; Ünal et al. [4]
	- Significant	Nguyen et al. [41]; Pham et al. [37]
	+ insignificant	Jiang et al. [36]; Kaur et al. [13]
	-Insignificant	Adhitiya & Astuti [3]
Eco-label	+significant	Alam et al. [38]; Li & Jaharuddin [16]; Parwez et al. [25]

	-Significant	Pham et al. [37]
Organic food availability	+significant	Basha & Lal [22]; Chekima et al. [42]; Pham et al. [37]; Prakash et al. [17]; Roseira et al. [18]; Shahriari et al. [2]
Organic food quality	+significant	Basha & Lal [22]; Chekima et al. [42]; Ribeiro et al. [43]
	+insignificant	Adhitiya & Astuti [3]; Kaur et al. [14]; Shahriari et al. [2]; Shanmugam & Saththivam [20]
Organic food value	+significant	Chauke & Duh [40]; Kamboj [44]; Nguyen et al. [41]; Watanabe et al. [45]
	-Insignificant	Shanmugam & Saththivam [20]
Nutritional content	+significant	Alam et al. [38]; Nguyen et al. [41]
	+insignificant	Cheng et al. [46]; Pham et al. [37]
Food safety concern	+significant	Alam et al. [38]; Cheng et al. [46]; Lin et al. [30]; Nguyen et al. [41]; Pham et al. [37]

Note: +Positive relationship, - negative relationship

(d) Behavioral Factors

Table 2 shows that attitude stands out as a key factor, with several research showing a positive correlation between attitude and purchasing intentions and actions. Perceived behavioral control and subjective norms are also important; some research showed a strong influence, while others point to contextual differences. Extensive research on perceived environmental concerns typically demonstrates a positive correlation but with insignificant exceptions. The results of trust and perceived environmental knowledge are inconsistent, suggesting that more research is necessary. Along with motivational factors, health consciousness regularly demonstrates a beneficial association with consumer decisions. The fact that the relevance of these factors varies throughout research emphasizes how complicated they are. Interestingly, although certain factors—such as motivational factors and health consciousness—consistently influence consumer behavior, others—like perceived environmental awareness and trust—have inconsistent effects. This suggests possible directions for future study to fill in the knowledge gaps now present in the field. Behavioral variables may be used to categorize all these elements, including motivational factors, attitude, perceived behavioral control, perceived environmental concern, perceived environmental awareness, and health consciousness. This is because they all have an impact on how consumers choose and use organic food. Whether it's personal views, societal expectations, perceived control, trust, environmental concerns, knowledge, health consciousness, or motivation, these elements all affect individuals' behaviors and decisions about organic food. To put it briefly, they are all components of the behavioral aspects that influence consumer decisions about consuming organic foods.

Table 2. Behavioral factors influencing consumers' purchase intentions and behaviors

Behavioral factors	Direction	Studies
Attitude	+significant	Alam et al. [38]; Cheng et al. [46]; Dangi et al. [47]; Elhoushy [48]; Kamboj [44]; Khan et al. [49]; Ling et al. [50]; Pacho [51]; Prakash et al. [17]; Roseira et al. [18]; Safuan et al. [19]; Saleki et al. [52]; Shanmugam & Saththivam [20]; Stranieri et al. [21]; Ahmed et al. [53]
Subjective norms	+significant	Budhathoki & Pandey [12]; Dangi et al. [47]; Kusumaningsih et al. [6]; Ling & Ang [23]; Shahriari et al. [2]; Shanmugam & Saththivam [20]; Stranieri et al. [21]; Ahmed et al. [53]
	+insignificant	Ashraf et al. [54]; Elhoushy [48]; Nguyen et al. [41]; Prakash et al. [17]
Perceived behavioral control	+significant	Aitken et al. [55]; Alam et al. [38]; Ashraf et al. [54]; Elhoushy [48]; Khan et al. [49]; Prakash et al. [17]; Rahman et al. [56]; Saleki et al. [52]; Stranieri et al. [21]; Xing et al. [57]; Ahmed et al. [53]
	+insignificant	Kashif et al. [58]; Ling et al. [50]; Pacho [51]
Perceived environmental concern	+significant	Alam et al. [38]; Budhathoki & Pandey [12]; Kos et al. [32]; Li & Jaharuddin [16]; Ling & Ang [23]; Prakash et al. [17]; Roseira et al. [18]; Stranieri et al. [21]; Basha & Lal [22]; Ahmed et al. [53]
	-insignificant	Pham et al. [37]; Shanmugam & Saththivam [20]
Perceived environmental knowledge	+significant	Budhathoki & Pandey [12]; Eberle et al. [35]; Ling et al. [50]
	+insignificant	Shanmugam & Saththivam [20]
Trust	+significant	Anisimova & Weiss [11]; Basha & Lal [22]; Mohammed [59]; Prakash et al. [17]; Stranieri et al. [21]; Xing et al. [57]
	+insignificant	Ashraf et al. [54]; Watanabe et al. [45]
Health consciousness	+significant	Alam et al. [38]; Cheng et al. [46]; Li & Jaharuddin [16]; Parwez et al. [25]; Pham et al. [37]; Roseira et al. [18]; Shanmugam & Saththivam [20]

	+insignificant	Budhathoki & Pandey [12]; Ling et al. [50]
Motivational factors	+significant	Khan et al. [26, 27, 49]; Li & Jaharuddin [16]; Mohammed [59]

Note: +Positive relationship, - negative relationship

4) IMPLICATIONS:

A thorough analysis of prior literature can discover useful insights, improving knowledge of a specific topic within the organic foods market. The study at hand provides a thorough examination of the factors that influence the consumption of organic food after 2018. By analyzing publication trends, theories, geographic coverage, motives, barriers, and their effects on purchase decisions, we gain a deeper understanding of this subject. Categorizing factors into individual and product-related aspects, considering consumer involvement, research methodology, and country status, the study underscores the need for further qualitative and quantitative research, especially in developing countries. Emphasizing the importance of investigating actual purchasing behavior over mere intention, the study contributes to existing knowledge and guides future empirical research methodologies on this significant topic. Employing various theoretical frameworks, including the theory of planned behavior, theory of reasoned action, goal framing theory, TPB, protection motivation theory, behavioral reasoning theory, theory of consumption values, self-determination theory, social cognitive theory, innovation resistance theory, theory of consumption values and value-attitude-behavior model, attitude Behavior Context (ABC) theory, biophilia theory, value-attitude-behavior hierarchy (VABH), the study organizes scattered research into coherent dimensions, aiding future researchers in determining relevant factors to investigate in their specific contexts. Additionally, the study facilitates the development of integrated models exploring the relationships between variables and customers' choices to purchase organic food, with the frameworks serving as tools for understanding mediating and moderating variables.

Besides, this paper also will significantly contribute to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), primarily SDG4 (Quality Education), SDG9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Firstly, by synthesizing information from 59 empirical research articles and applying diverse theoretical frameworks, the paper enhances knowledge dissemination on factors influencing the consumption of organic food. This thorough study is an invaluable resource for academics, decision-makers, and managers alike, providing educational value and enabling stakeholders to make well-informed choices. It increases understanding of organic food choices that are in line with SDG4 and raises awareness by combining descriptive statistics and considerations. Additionally, the study advances SDG9 by fostering innovation in the food and agriculture sectors, offering theoretical analyses of the use of organic foods, and supporting the creation of sustainable practices and infrastructure. By providing ideas for sustainable consumption patterns and assisting policymakers in improving the overall sustainability of the food system, the paper's insights into purchase decisions further help SDG11. Furthermore, in its capacity as a review article that promotes multidisciplinary cooperation, it serves as a catalyst for partnerships in sustainable development, which is in line with the goals of SDG 17.

5) CONCLUSIONS

This study fills a gap in the existing literature by conducting a comprehensive analysis of various factors influencing customer purchasing decisions regarding organic food, especially in the years following 2018. With an initial and thorough examination of these factors, the study reveals a significant increase in empirical studies on organic food, indicating a growing global interest. The review, based on 59 selected papers, covers aspects such as publication timeline, theories, dependent variables, moderators, control variables, research techniques, and geographic scope. The findings highlight a strong consumer interest in buying organic food in both developed and developing countries, identifying key factors influencing intentions and behaviors. The study offers valuable insights for marketers, encouraging a deeper understanding of factors influencing organic food preferences and providing guidance for retention strategies. The results also have implications for industries like packaging and eco-labelling, helping marketers target specific consumer segments effectively. The data is beneficial for farmers, those interested in forming organic food cooperatives, policymakers, food industry experts, and retailers. It addresses questions related to the availability of organic food, its cost implications, and its potential integration into consumers' lives.

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7) FUNDING STATEMENT:

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8) CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest".

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