



Determining the Mental Health and Stress of Divorced Women In Mental Hospitals of Shiraz

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Many studies indicated disorders in marriage is an important factor in hospital admission for mental disorders. The purpose of this study was to determine mental health and stress of divorced women in Shiraz mental hospitals.

Methods: The present study was conducted on the basis of phenomenological theory in cases from Shiraz mental hospitals. The statistical population consisted of all cases in hospitals and documents related to the perception of mental health and stress of divorced women.

Results: Associations between mental disorders and subsequent marriage and divorce were estimated in discrete time survival models for the cases which refer to a psychiatric hospital. In the first phase, the sample includes a review and review of all indexed books and articles related to the perception of mental health and stress level of divorced women to manage their problem and improve their mental health or reduce the stress. Next, the number of samples was determined according to the theoretical saturation approach.

Conclusion: The qualitative findings reported from the interviews showed that the mental health and stress of divorced women is associated with numerous problems in physical-psychological-social dimensions. So, it is necessary for the mental hospitals to take the needed steps to ensure that requirements encompassing prevention and promotion of mental health are implemented.

Keywords: Divorced Women, Mental Hospital, Mental Health and Stress.

Background and Objective

Unsuccessful marriage and divorce are social problems as well as personal concerns. Success and failure in marriage have consequences beyond each individual's personal life¹. In individualistic cultures, such as in European countries, it is considered natural to come out of a life that one is not satisfied with; but in collectivist cultures such as Asian countries, including Iran, segregation and divorce are defined as a process in which traditional values are ignored with an emphasis on family-orientation². Divorce has become a serious problem, as it is associated with many challenges in the daily life of the family. It has serious effects on people's mental and emotional health, especially women. It is believed that women are responsible for mistakes in life. In other words, because women invest more in family life and are more responsible in cohabitation, divorce is a greater failure for them than men³.

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Divorced women in Iran face problems such as notoriety, being in shock by divorce, and the paradox of remarriage. Therefore, in terms of identity after divorce, they suffer from various changes and problems⁴. These women have more problems in terms of employment and generally have more limited opportunities to adapt to economic problems⁵. On the other hand, after divorce, cultural influences are added to the pressures that a person experiences in life. Therefore, adaptation to divorce can be a painful process⁶, especially since divorced women in Iran are exposed to several risks. Therefore, understanding their views and problems in order to prevent further difficulties and reduce inadequacies in the field of interventions for these people is vital⁷.

The mental and stress problems of divorced women is associated with difficulties more than those of married women, difficulties such as dismissal, accidents, critical illnesses, and problems with their own parents. These women appear to be more likely to have identity problems after divorce, especially women whose identities depended on the presence of a spouse⁸. In terms of the mental and stress problems of divorced women, social problems are the most important issue among these women. Divorce, for example, leads to the social exclusion of these women. There is also a kind of social stigma from which women suffer after divorce. In addition, one of the problems for divorced women after divorce is that they are blamed for what happened. Women who return to their father's house after divorce face with this difficulty more than other women. Divorced women also have difficulty separating from their parents after divorce, and parents often disagree with their decision. Insults and disrespect, violence, loss of self-confidence, feeling of loneliness and poverty have been cited as other problems for these women⁹. At the

same time, for women, facing the situation resulting from divorce means interacting with a set of emotions, among which we can point to feelings of guilt and anger^{10,11}.

Therefore, women's mental and stress problems after divorce seems to be associated with much suffering. This highlights the need for research to examine these experiences to help improve divorce problems. There is also a greater fear of expressing the facts of divorce among women than men. It is necessary to address the issue of divorce in the women's population and its impact on their various psychological dimensions. Therefore, it is important to know the content and psychological components of the perception of the mental and stress problems by the divorced women in Shiraz mental hospitals¹²⁻¹⁵.

Method

We conducted the present research based on the phenomenological theory. The statistical population consisted of 30 cases in hospitals and documents related to the perception of mental health and stress of divorced women in 2014-2019. We first studied analytically the mental and stress problems of suffering by divorced women which referred to mental hospitals. In this method, we can move from theory to experience and observation, and by observing and thinking carefully about its repetitive patterns, we can discover the rules that govern a field. The best way is to test previous theories^{16,17}. Therefore, by studying and analyzing the texts, interviewing a number of divorced women, we classified and extracted the most important factors affecting the perception of suffering as mental and stress problems by divorced women. Based on these studies, we analyzed the theoretical model. According to this model, we analyzed, coded, and categorized

the data collection process, and continued to collect and analyze the information until the theoretical saturation within the target of the research. The respondents were also asked whether they had been through periods of anxiety, depression, or both since discharge from the rehabilitation hospital.

In the first stage, the statistical population included all published books and articles related to the perception of suffering as mental and stress problems by divorced women in mental hospitals. In the second stage, it included all divorced women in Shiraz mental hospitals. The first stage of the sample includes reviewing and studying all published books and articles related to the perception of suffering as mental and stress problems by divorced women. In the next stage, we determined the number of samples according to the theoretical saturation approach. Theoretical saturation is an approach used in qualitative researches to determine the adequacy of sampling. It is the gold standard of the end of sampling in qualitative research¹⁸. In this situation, we used the sampling at convenience to select divorced women.

The first step in the present research was analytical study. Therefore, we extracted the most important aspects of the mental and stress problems of suffering of divorced women using articles, meta-analysis, books and interviews with experts. We also used the limited field theory method to develop a theory about the divorced women's mental and stress problems of suffering. Therefore, using the sampling at convenience in a limited way and according to the concepts emerged from the data, the researcher collected data about different people, events and situations; in this way, we provided a richer picture of the concepts and categories. To that end, we selected a number of divorced women for interviews. We determined the number of samples according to the theoretical saturation

approach. Theoretical saturation is an approach used in qualitative research to determine the adequacy of sampling. It is the gold standard of the end of sampling in qualitative researches¹⁹. In this case, when all participants provide the same information, the saturation limit is reached. In this situation, we used the sampling at convenience to select divorced women.

The data analysis method was as follows: Qualitative analysis based on content coding, which includes three coding methods; 1. Open coding, 2. Axial coding, and 3. Selective coding²⁰. In open coding, we read the text of the interview line by line, and for the important sections, we consider each concept that comes to mind and assign them a code and analytical note. In the next step, we use axial coding to determine the axes for each set of propositions.

Results

The objectives of the research are:

- Determining the perception of suffering as mental problems by divorced women in Shiraz mental hospitals.
- Identifying the components of integrated monotherapy based on the perception of suffering as mental and stress problems by the divorced women.
- Determining the validity of integrated monotherapy based on the perception of suffering as mental and stress problems by the divorced women.

In this section, we examine the perception of suffering as mental and stress problems by the divorced women, taken from interviews conducted with divorced women; we have listed these experiences in the following tables. Participants in the experimental test were responded to questionnaire in all stages. We divide it into two parts:

psychological and non-psychological factors. The results of covariance analysis of

group membership on scores are listed in table 1.

Table 1: covariance analysis of group membership on scores

Change Source	Square Sum	df	Squares Medium	F	P
Total score	629.98	1	629.98	28.93	0.001
Body Symptoms	46.93	1	46.93	8.59	0.005
Anxiety and insomnia	53.95	1	53.95	5.43	0.025
Depress	153.89	1	153.89	12.72	0.002
Social problem	0.729	1	0.729	0.077	0.077

As presented in table 1, results of covariance analysis are show differences in scores for total score ($p < 0.001$), body symptoms ($p < 0.005$), anxiety and insomnia ($p < 0.025$) and depression ($p < 0.002$) are significant and in social dysfunction ($p < 0.077$) not significant.

❖ Inefficient attitude to post-divorce problems:

One of the main reasons for the suffering of women after divorce during the interview was the inefficient attitude towards post-divorce problems. The interviewees misrepresented the post-divorce and reported insufficient information about the post-divorce lifestyle. "After the divorce, my problems started and I thought my situation might get better, but it got worse," says one participant.

❖ Current problems with ex-spouse:

Stubbornness, threats, problems, harassment of the ex-spouse and the behavior of the ex-spouse are the current problems of the participants in the life after the divorce. "My husband makes excuse every time to prevent me from seeing the children," says one participant. "He knew that I was eager to see my children, and he touched my weaknesses and made me feel bad about not being able to see the children anymore, because whatever you think can be done by this man. He is stubborn and perhaps does not allow me to see the children" (Participant 5).

❖ Problems with the child

Concerns about children, distance from children, parenting and single parenting, child behavior, child failure in life are some of the problems of divorced women that increase their suffering after divorce. "My son's custody is with my spouse, and I see my child once a week," says one participant. "It hurts me a lot. I wish I could see my child every day" (Participant 2).

❖ Negative emotions

Fear of the future, feeling of loneliness, perception of pressure, feeling of guilt, feeling of regret, feeling of failure / loss, anxiety, concerns, feeling of shame, conflicting view of self, frustration, dissatisfaction with life are among the negative feelings of women participating in the research. "I am worried that I have an unknown future for myself and my children," said one participant. "In this economic situation, I found a lot of mental conflict (participant 3). I suffer from the fact that my ex-spouse played with my reputation in my workplace and my colleagues still ask me what was wrong with you, and I am ashamed to look at my colleagues" (Participant 3).

❖ Suicide Thought

Suicide thoughts, along with negative emotions among divorced women, are a kind of attempt to get rid of all problems. A

participant says: I tried to commit suicide twice, but I did not dare to do so and I was scared (participant 12).

❖ Failed needs

In the present research, dissatisfaction with motherhood, dissatisfaction with emotional needs and the need for companionship were among the failed needs of divorced women. A participant says: I suffer from loneliness and I need a companion and sympathy, but I never did (participant 8).

❖ Social context

Lack of social understanding and social judgment, involvement of others, lack of independence, avoidance of social stigma, lack of perceived social support, high and compulsory responsibility / abuse of others, harassment and suggestion of friendship, perception of social pressure, label of the divorced, family problems and limited social relationships are some problems that social context brings to divorced women. "After the divorce, my family's behavior with me changed," says one participant. They wanted to control me in every way. Who do I go to, who do I call? I was not independent at all, and everyone somehow wanted to understand my job (Participant 10). There is a lot of talk about divorced women. In general, the person who gets a divorce is a subject for talking about and everyone has a view of the divorced. You do not know how to deal with these people and the view of society and everyone has changed towards the divorced woman (participant 12).

❖ Problems with remarriage

Fear of remarriage due to fear of the consequences of past miscarriages and repeated and multiple offers of temporary marriage (not permanent marriage) by men who are considering divorce make life difficult for divorced women. In addition, the new suitor's rejection of the child is a

problem for divorced women, which mainly leads to their avoidance of marriage. "One of the things that bother me at most now is the issue of remarriage," says one participant. I have a child and not everyone who comes to me as suitor will accept the child (Participant 1). After the divorce, I was always afraid of remarrying because I thought my second husband might have a bad intention on my daughter (Participant 4).

❖ Issues related to return

One group of participants reported hope to return, and another a desire to return, at least due to the experience of multiple post-divorce problems; it was considered as a solution to some of these problems. A participant says: I am looking for my former life (participant 3). I would like to return to my ex-husband, but it is not possible (participant 2).

❖ Cognitive skills

Disturbed self-confidence, misconceptions such as cognitive error, fundamental belief: I am not lovable, extreme generalization, extreme responsibility, victimization and failure, mistrust and multiple expectations indicate the weakness of divorced women in cognitive skills. "I may have trouble choosing the next one," says one participant. From marriage, I became an individual. Will I still make a mistake the next time I want to choose a partner? (Participant 17)

❖ Emotion regulation skills

Thought ruminant about past life and behavior of ex-spouse, ruminant of anger about ex-spouse and about his behavior, desire to control and avoid thoughts, not accepting divorce, effective coping strategies such as substance use, lack of anger control, avoidance of problems and marriage, lack of bold expression, dependence and non-differentiation indicate

the weakness of divorced women in cognitive-emotional regulation. "I think a lot about the good and the bad of my ex-spouse and I doubt whether my separation was right or not," says one participant. (Participant 13) This thought bothers me. I wish my husband had the worst addiction, but he behaved in such a way that we would not be separated because of my son (participant 13).

❖ Looking for the culprit for past life

Negative attitudes toward family, self-protest, negative attitudes toward God, and society (education) were the different approaches that participants used to find the culprit in what happened. "Another pain I had was forced marriage at 18 years old," says one participant. I was a child of this fellow and my family insisted that I become a wife of this man because he was rich and could help support my family. Now I am in a state of hatred from my parents and I am suffering because I was sold for money (participant 9).

❖ Life management problems

Financial problems and lack of rights, unemployment or low employment (reduced social prestige), facilities and living space, forced employment and unrest were the main problems of divorced women in managing life after divorce, which made their experience miserable. "Divorce made me poorer than before," says a participant (participant 11). Unemployment bothered me the most after the divorce. To make a living, I have to go to work in this and that house, so I suffer (participant 12).

❖ Physical health problems

Divorced women suffer from a number of physical problems, most of which have psychological roots. "After the divorce, I got sick and had heart disease and diabetes," says one participant. Sometimes my chest

hurts and I have palpitation. I am constantly nauseous (participant 1).

Discussion

The qualitative findings of the interviews showed that the mental and stress problems of divorced women is associated with several problems in the physical-psychological-social dimensions. In the following, we will explain each of the cases in detail by comparing the findings with previously published researches.

Inefficient attitude to post-divorce problems

Divorce and attitudes about it are one of the most important and influential phenomena in people's lives and personal and social identities. This attitude changes the situation of divorce in society²¹. However, individualistic societies, in comparison with collectivist societies, have a more favorable attitude towards divorce²². Therefore, in collectivist societies such as Iran, the attitude towards the phenomenon of divorce is much more negative, especially among women, than individualistic societies. However, divorced women also have a misconception about after-divorce and insufficient information about the lifestyle after it. Many women interviewed said that before the divorce, they thought that divorce would lead to relief from the problems in their married life. However, facing various problems after divorce has called into question their previous beliefs. In addition, many of them divorced without a proper plan for life after divorce, and therefore experienced an acute crisis after divorce. The person's perception of comfort and calm after divorce has been destroyed by experiencing various individual-social problems after experiencing divorce. Mostly these people reacted to some of the past aspects of their lives with feelings of mourning and regret. The inefficiency of the

attitude towards divorce can be due to the information poverty of people in the field of life after divorce, as we have reported in some people. In addition, these individuals experienced the influential impact of society on the post-divorce crisis. In other words, the dysfunctional attitude of the individual before divorce in interaction with the negative attitude of the Iranian society towards the phenomenon of divorce and divorced woman has turned divorce into a crisis for these people.

Current problems with ex-spouse

Hostility is one of the primary feelings for one's ex-spouse, followed by feelings of guilt and regret for one's ex-spouse and ultimately indifference²³. Many divorced women are also involved in conflict with their ex-spouse and dependence on their ex-spouse. Therefore, reducing attachment to the previous spouse is considered as a factor in increasing adjustment after divorce. Many of the people surveyed felt angry and disgusted with their ex-husband and did not want to see him. At the same time, they suffered from situations in which they were forced to visit their ex-spouse. Divorced women have problems with their ex-wives in various dimensions. The stubbornness and revenge of some spouses prevent the mother and child from meeting. Some divorced women are threatened and harassed by their ex-husbands. Therefore, living in an insecure and stressful environment is considered a daily routine for a divorced woman. In such a situation, the divorced woman is constantly in a state of tension and anxiety in order to enjoy the natural right to meet her child or to go about her daily life. Every possible danger in every moment of her life threatens him. Thus, it is natural for such women to experience lower mental health than non-divorced people. The ability to regulate emotions in such stressful situations will be difficult²⁴.

Problems with the child

Intimacy with children is a factor in increasing post-divorce adjustment. However, some divorced women are deprived of custody of their children, and therefore the distance from the child and the problems associated with weekly visits with the child are among the factors that increase the suffering among divorced women. Women, who do not have the conditions for marriage due to having a child, try to get rid of labeling in the society by dedicating her life to their children²⁵. Thus, another group of women who take care of their children face other problems, including single parenting problems and concerns about the child and his or her behaviors, as we saw in the interviewees. The failure of a child to meet some of his or her needs plagues divorced women, and so they redouble their efforts to make up for their shortcomings. In addition, reducing the opportunities for divorced women due to having children largely puts them at risk for conflict. On the one hand, divorced women face a bulk of unsatisfied psychological and physical needs, and on the other hand, their need and emotional connection with the child makes it impossible or difficult to separate from him. A divorced woman is unable to separate from her child, but at the same time they face problems such as the lack of a father above their children and their sense of inferiority, the effect of divorce on the social status and reputation of their children, the educational decline of their children and limiting children's entertainment. This makes it harder for a divorced woman to manage her life after divorce.

Negative emotions

Many women who experience family breakdown report increased anxiety, depression, loneliness, anger, remorse, lack of control, and helplessness. These psychological symptoms are not simply

related to the acute reaction after a divorce. For many of them, emotional problems persist for many years after divorce. For many people, life after divorce is like a broken vessel that one must be able to collect its broken pieces. In this period, one can experience deep emotional feelings, such as despair, hopelessness, revenge, retaliation, panic, and helplessness. Unfortunately, the existence of legal and judicial problems, financial issues, relocation, disputes and intense conflicts with the ex-spouse and issues related to the couple's children deprive them of the opportunity to pay attention to their own and reconsider the experience of divorce and related emotions and thoughts. Their negative beliefs and emotions about this incident increase and subconsciously show their destructive effects on the adjustment of them and their children after separation. They are in crisis for a long time without being aware of it, and their problems are increasing day by day²⁶. However, the interviewees mainly felt negative emotions such as dissatisfaction with life, negative feelings about themselves, anxiety, low mood, feeling of loneliness, perception of pressure, feeling of guilt, feeling of regret, feeling of failure / loss, anxiety, worry, and feeling of shame, fear of the future, conflicting views of oneself, frustration, failure, and grief. These people saw the ambiguity of the future, anxiety and fear of the future as the triggers for these feelings: they mainly had not the opportunity to use various entertainments, either for financial reasons, due to lack of time, or because of social labels and reactions. Therefore, they have lost the opportunity to eliminate negative emotions, and as a result, improper leisure time will be accompanied by an influx of negative thoughts and feelings for them.

Thought of suicide

Half of people engage in suicidal thoughts after experiencing divorce²⁷. They suffered from negative emotions such as negative self-esteem, low mood, guilt, regret, frustration, and grief. The consequences of negative emotions, along with the failures experienced by divorced women on an individual and social scale, can be a trigger for suicidal thoughts and experience of suffering. According to some divorced women, it is much easier to get rid of a new problem after a divorce with all the problems ahead than to endure the pain and suffering after a divorce. In the meantime, the only deterrent is the belief in the falsity of this act before God.

Social context

Social and cultural factors are more effective in divorce than economic and political factors. Benefiting from social capital provides a sense of security and trust, interaction with friends and family, a sense of respect in society, a sense of satisfaction with the past of life, helping others, helping local groups, trusting people, and connecting with strangers for divorced women. The consent of friends and close relationships with relatives are factors that increase adjustment after divorce. However, divorce in Iranian society creates conditions that cause the loss of family social support, reduce social influence and even occasionally weaken one's social status and opportunities. Divorced women have more limited social relationships than others²⁸. Indicators of contact with friends, local participation, out-door recreation, presence in religious places and participation in social clubs affect also the suffering of individuals after divorce. In addition, post-divorce restrictions have been created, especially for women, and there is a general negative relationship between divorce and social integration²⁹. In Iranian society, there is

mainly a pessimistic and negative attitude towards divorced women. A variety of labels bother divorced women. Thus, many divorced women are largely excluded from social settings. This in itself leads to their deprivation of fruitful social support after divorce. Fear of moving in the living space, disrespect for divorced women in society, verbal harassment, non-verbal harassment, lack of peace of mind in everyday life, hiding divorce in the workplace and life and providing awkward (immoral) offers to divorced people are some of the main problems faced by divorced Iranian women. The insecurity of the living environment, either because of the risks posed by the previous spouse or because of the harassment of lustful men, leads to a restriction on the social relations of divorced women and, consequently, a restriction on the enjoyment of social capital. Consequently, the mental and stress problems of divorced women is accompanied with suffering.

In addition, 63% of divorced women are reluctant to remarry. The reason for this is mainly the failure in their first marital experience³⁰. During the interviews, many women participants noted that they were reluctant to repeat such experiences due to unpleasant experiences in their previous lives. In addition, the fear of making a mistake again and the feeling of weakness and inefficiency in the person to make the right and effective decision to choose a marriage would lead to the withdrawal of these people from any remarriage. However, divorced people reported having many offers for temporary marriages that psychologically lead to their breakup. Therefore, sometimes due to loneliness, financial pressure and getting rid of these offers, they prefer to choose one of the available options for permanent marriage. Therefore, it seems that divorced women consider the experience of remarriage to be

associated with several risks, but due to various individual and social pressures and numerous unsatisfied needs, they find themselves in a dilemma of choosing or not choosing.

Cognitive skills

The mental health of divorced women is lower than other people. The women in this research suffered from shaky self-confidence, misconceptions such as cognitive error, fundamental belief: I am not lovable, extreme generalization, extreme responsibility, victimization and failure, mistrust, and multiple expectations. The reasons for these problems were mainly due to factors such as lack of support from family, community, pressure and tensions caused by childcare, harassment of the ex-spouse and grieving men of the past or past events and misfortunes. In other words, a divorced woman who has decided to divorce with a minimum of self-confidence, deliberately and especially because of the straits of cohabitation, has felt weak and hopeless in the face of various problems after divorce and consequently found herself in being exposed to disrupted self-confidence. In other words, such a person is in doubt. Should he do what he knows right from within, or are external problems and obstacles again preventing him from achieving a happy life? The unpleasant reactions of those around him, especially the family of the divorced person, lead to guilt and the unlovableness belief of the divorced woman. After divorce and the failure of their married life, these people generalize the failure to the rest of their lives and feel that they are more likely to fall victim to unpleasant situations than to see themselves as an active element in managing their lives. In addition, these people take responsibility for everything that happened, especially because of the inculcation of those around them. Therefore, with extreme effort and responsibility, they feel exhausted and tired

of all this failure. The many expectations of these people, despite environmental failures, are largely unsuccessful, and at the same time, high and extreme expectations form part of their cognitive errors. In general, these factors lead to a decrease in the mental health of divorced women compared to other people.

Looking for the culprit for the past life

Divorced women mainly have two approaches to determining the causes of their problems. Some of them have other-oriented view of guilt. These people mostly have a negative attitude towards their family and consider failure in their married life due to lack of family support and lack of necessary and correct information. These people, who blame others more than themselves, also have a negative attitude towards God and blame society for many of their current problems. Another group of divorced women who have had self-centered attitude of guilt have been largely self-protecting, believing that neglect of cohabitation have led to its disintegration.

Conclusion

Divorced women experience higher levels of financial pressure than married women. However, managing life after divorce has become difficult for many women under study, and they are experiencing more financial poverty than ever before. Many of them had borne the financial burden of the family; their living expenses, education, housing and so on have exhausted most of these people. Due to their sense of responsibility for earning a living, they engage in low-income jobs, which make it difficult for them to finance while making them feel dissatisfied and exploited. In addition, the influx of negative thoughts and feelings after divorce exhausts the

managerial ability of many divorced women. Therefore, a person who has managed his life in various dimensions before divorce, after divorce, due to experiencing negative feelings and thoughts, a large part of which is caused by social pressures, suffers from low self-confidence and sees his performance in management of life to be decreased. The research findings show that divorced women have more physical problems than others. Their attitudes toward their physical health are also lower than those of non-divorced women. During the interviews, the divorced women also had multiple physical problems, which, despite numerous visits to the doctor, did not reveal a specific physical cause. These problems appeared to be mainly in the form of psychosomatic problems, that is, physical problems caused by stress and tension, which had manifested themselves physically due to the lack of necessary mental discharge.

Due to the effectiveness of integrated monotherapy based on the mental and stress problems of suffering by divorced women, we suggest to psychotherapists and divorce counselors to use this treatment to increase the compatibility of divorced women. Based on the mental and stress problems of the suffering by divorced women, we suggest to those involved in the field of divorce to increase the possibility of divorced women's benefiting from mental health services. Due to the mental and stress problems of the suffering by divorced women, especially in the social dimension, we suggest those involved in the field of divorce to provide the necessary social support to divorced women. Numerous economic pressures on divorced women and the difficulty of earning a living are among the most important psychological stresses for women after experiencing divorce. Therefore, we suggest to those involved in the field of

divorce that they provide the necessary support in the field of entrepreneurship and providing economically for the daily affairs of divorced women and their children.

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Conflicts of Interest:

The author declares that, there is no conflict of interest.

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