

<https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2024.29.2.28>

## STUDYING ABROAD AS A MEANS OF PREPARING FUTURE MUSIC TEACHERS IN CHINA

### НАВЧАННЯ ЗА КОРДОНОМ ЯК МЕТОД ПІДГОТОВКИ МАЙБУТНІХ ВИКЛАДАЧІВ МУЗИКИ В КИТАЇ

Received: 29/07/2024

Accepted: 29/08/2024

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#### How to Cite (APA Style):

Wang, Z. (2024). Studying abroad as a means of preparing future music teachers in China. *Educational Challenges*, 29(2), 414–425. <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2024.29.2.28>

#### ABSTRACT

The concept of studying abroad as a means of preparing future music teachers in China has a rich and complex history, reflecting the nation's evolving educational philosophies, political changes, and cultural exchanges.

The **purpose** of this study is to present the genesis of using studying abroad as part of the professional training for future music teachers, detailing the goals and social mandates across various stages of Chinese state development. The article also draws attention to the organic "embeddedness" of such a means of training future music teachers in the Chinese system of professional and higher music-pedagogical education, especially of vocal practices that are not traditional for Chinese culture.

Концепція навчання за кордоном як спосіб підготовки майбутніх викладачів музики в Китаї має багату та складну історію, що відображає еволюцію освітньої філософії країни, політичні зміни та практику культурних обмінів. У цій статті досліджується історичний розвиток і сучасне значення ідеї використання досвіду підготовки китайських музичних педагогів за кордоном.

**Метою** цього дослідження є представлення генезису використання навчання за кордоном як частини професійної підготовки майбутніх викладачів музики, деталізуючи цілі та соціальні запити на різних етапах розвитку китайської держави. У статті також звертається увага на органічну «вбудованість» такого способу підготовки майбутніх викладачів музики в китайську систему професійної та вищої музично-

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**Methodology.** The study employs a historical-analytical approach, examining primary and secondary sources to trace the evolution of studying abroad as a practice for Chinese music educators. This includes an analysis of normative documents and policy papers available on official educational authority and institution websites. Additionally, qualitative data from interviews with contemporary music educators who have studied abroad provide insights into current practices and perceptions.

The **findings** reveal that the practice of studying abroad for music education, primarily for personal music career development and secondarily for teaching, has been prevalent throughout Chinese history, and has undergone significant transformations over the past century. In the modern period, China continues to send a significant number of students abroad, supported by initiatives such as the China Scholarship Council and 'One Belt – One Road' Initiative. These programs facilitate grant support and promote cultural exchange and international cooperation, enriching the professional development of future music teachers in China.

The study **concludes** that international educational experiences have profoundly impacted Chinese music education. Educators trained abroad have introduced diverse musical styles, innovative teaching methodologies, and a global perspective that enhance the learning experience of Chinese students. The integration of international practices has elevated the standards of music education in China, and gained global recognition. However, challenges remain in balancing traditional Chinese music with Western influences, and ensuring equitable access to international education opportunities. The study highlights the need for continuous adaptation and the development of strategies to address these challenges, ensuring that the benefits of studying abroad are fully realised in the Chinese educational context.

**Keywords:** China, music education, studying abroad, educational exchange, professional education, PR China, internationalisation.

педагогічної освіти, особливо для музичних практик (як-то європейський оперний спів), які є нехарактерними для китайської музичної культури.

**Методологія.** Дослідження використовує історико-аналітичний підхід, досліджуючи первинні та вторинні джерела, щоб простежити еволюцію навчання за кордоном як способу підготовки музичних педагогів в Китаї. Воно також включає в себе аналіз нормативних і програмних документів, доступних на офіційних веб-сайтах органів управління освітою та закладів музичної освіти. Крім того, дані з інтерв'ю з сучасними викладачами музики, які навчалися за кордоном, та аналіз власного досвіду автора статті дають змогу зрозуміти наявну практику в цій галузі.

Отримані **результати** показують, що практика навчання за кордоном для отримання музично-педагогічної освіти, перш за все, для розвитку особистої музичної кар'єри, а потім для викладання, була завжди поширеною в історії Китаю та зазнала значних трансформацій протягом останнього століття. У сучасний період Китай продовжує відправляти значну кількість студентів за кордон, що підтримується такими ініціативами, як Рада стипендій Китаю та стратегія «Один пояс – один шлях». Ці програми полегшують отримання грантової підтримки і сприяють культурному обміну та міжнародній співпраці, збагачуючи професійний розвиток майбутніх викладачів музики в Китаї.

Дослідження доходить **висновку**, що практика навчання майбутніх викладачів музики за кордоном глибоко вплинула на китайську музичну освіту. Педагоги, які пройшли навчання за кордоном, запровадили різноманітні музичні стилі, інноваційні методики навчання та світову перспективу, які покращують практику навчання китайських студентів. Однак проблеми залишаються в балансі між традиційною китайською музикою й західним впливом та забезпеченням справедливого доступу до можливостей міжнародної освіти серед майбутніх викладачів музики в Китаї.

**Ключові слова:** Китай, музична освіта, навчання за кордоном, освітній обмін, професійна підготовка, КНР, інтернаціоналізація.

## INTRODUCTION

Studying abroad as a form of preparing future music teachers in China is an important practice that has significant implications for both Chinese and international education. It involves sending Chinese students to foreign institutions to acquire advanced musical knowledge, pedagogical skills, and cultural experiences.

The Chinese government sees it as the important practice for several reasons, among which are cultural exchange (that allows Chinese students to experience different cultures, educational, and musical traditions to broaden their perspectives, and fosters a more inclusive approach to music education); raising educational standards (international educational practices help elevate the standards of music education in China; and levelling it up with world standards to make China more attractive for abroad students as well).

In addition, global recognition and collaboration (allows Chinese music educators to collaborate with their counterparts worldwide, gaining recognition and contributing to the global music education community as well as promoting Chinese achievements), gaining quality educators in the musical fields and specialisations which are not typical for Chinese culture (Italian opera, modern ballet dance, electronic music, etc.), and others.

This study **aims** to trace the origins and development of studying abroad as an integral component of professional training for future music teachers in China. The article also highlights how this method of training has become organically embedded within the Chinese system of professional and higher music-pedagogical education, particularly for vocal practices not traditionally part of Chinese culture, such as European opera singing. Additionally, the study provides a general analysis of the impact of this educational method on the future development of Chinese musical pedagogy.

**Methodology.** To research the problematic chosen, **methods** typical for scientific works in the field of general and comparative pedagogy were used, in particular:

- *The Historical-Analytical Approach* was used to trace the origins and development of the practice of studying abroad for music education in China. It involved examining historical documents, biographies of key figures, and educational policies from different periods of Chinese education history;
- *The Document Analysis Method* (analysis of normative documents and policy papers related to international education and music pedagogy) was conducted to describe the current status of the issues under consideration, and to predict their development in the nearest future. This included reviewing official publications from the Chinese Ministry of Education, the China Scholarship Council, and educational cooperation agreements under the Belt and Road Initiative (official documents from the Chinese government, including the National Medium- and Long-Term Educational Reform and Development Plans (published 2010-2022), and guidelines from the Ministry of Education etc.;
- *The Literature Review Method* was utilised to review the existing literature on the subject. This included academic articles, books, and research papers that provided insights into the evolution of music education in China, and the role of international education in shaping it;

- *The Comparative Analysis Method* was used to examine the differences and similarities between Chinese music education practices at different times in history. This method helped identify goals and dominant ideas of using internationalisation in the form of studying abroad as one of the methods of professional education for future music teachers in China. The websites of the China Scholarship Council, Chinese educational institutions, and international partner universities were consulted for up-to-date information on scholarship programs, international cooperation agreements, and current internationalisation initiatives;
- *The Author's Personal Experience* helped to understand the practice of studying abroad for Chinese students nowadays as a part of their professional education and development, and to underline the issues which young Chinese professionals consider important during such educational activities.

By combining these research methods and materials, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the practice of studying abroad for music education in China as a part of the professional education and development process.

## RESULTS

The internationalisation of music-pedagogical education in China, involving training and professional development abroad as part of a future music teacher's education, is not a product of the globalisation era, but is a deeply rooted and historically widespread practice. Even in antiquity, there are written records indicating that the state sponsored musicians to study in other Asian countries.

This was done to learn musical practices and local traditions, particularly in vassal states of China and in India, which was a significant cultural exchange partner due to its influence on Buddhist culture in China. The purpose of these musical explorations was primarily to enhance the musicians' own skills in order to increase their performance competitiveness at the Chinese emperor's court. Gaining popularity as a performer also ensured that a musician could attract private students, thereby expanding the educational component of their activities.

Among the most notable Chinese musicians from ancient and medieval periods who obtained or developed their musical education abroad were Zhang Qian (second century BC) who was an envoy of the Han Dynasty sent to Central Asia. His primary mission was diplomatic, but he also gathered knowledge about regional culture, including its music. Zhang Qian introduced new musical instruments and styles to China, contributing to the development of Chinese music by incorporating Central Asian influences (Chen, 2017). During the Tang Dynasty, Wang Xuance (about the seventh century) was sent to India as a diplomatic envoy.

While Wang Xuance's mission was primarily political, he also brought back knowledge of Indian music and musical instruments. This helped to integrate Indian musical elements into Chinese music, enriching its diversity and techniques. Ennin (ninth century) was a Japanese monk who traveled to China, his studies in Chinese music exemplify the bilateral nature of cultural exchanges during this period.

Ennin's experiences in China influenced Japanese music education and underscored the flow of musical knowledge between the two countries. These early instances illustrate

that the practice of sending musicians abroad for educational purposes has long been a part of China's strategy to enhance its musical traditions (Xu, 2012). The knowledge and skills acquired from other cultures not only improved individual musicians' capabilities, but also contributed to the broader development of Chinese music education.

The period from 1300 to 1800 in Chinese history was marked by significant cultural and intellectual exchanges with neighbouring countries. During this time, the practice of sending future music teachers abroad for education. The primary purpose of sending future music teachers abroad was to acquire advanced musical techniques, understand different pedagogical methods, and bring back innovative ideas that could be integrated into the Chinese music education system.

By learning from the rich musical traditions of neighbouring countries, Chinese musicians could improve their own performance skills and teaching methodologies. This cross-cultural exchange aimed to foster a more comprehensive and sophisticated approach to music education in China (Xu, 2012). Chen Cheng (14th century) was a diplomat and explorer during the Ming Dynasty who traveled extensively throughout Central Asia and Persia. While his primary mission was diplomatic, he also took the opportunity to study the musical traditions of these regions.

He brought back knowledge of Persian musical instruments and techniques, which influenced Chinese music, especially in court performances. Xu Xiake (17th century) was a famous Chinese geographer and explorer during the late Ming Dynasty. His travels through Southeast Asia allowed him to study local musical traditions. Although his primary focus was geography, his detailed travel diaries include descriptions of musical practices and instruments.

This information provided valuable insights into Southeast Asian music which inspired Chinese musicians and educators (Zhang, 2022). Zheng He (15th century) was a renowned Chinese admiral and explorer during the Ming Dynasty. His voyages to India, Persia, and Africa were primarily for trade and diplomacy. However, his fleet also included musicians who studied the local music of these regions.

The knowledge gained from these interactions enriched Chinese music, particularly in the areas of rhythm and instrumentation. The experiences of these Chinese musicians and explorers had a profound impact on music education in China. By integrating foreign musical elements, they contributed to a more diverse musical culture, thus enriching it. The introduction of new instruments, scales, and performance techniques helped to broaden the scope of Chinese music education (Chen, 2017). This period also saw the beginning of a more systematic approach to music pedagogy, influenced by the educational practices observed abroad.

The period from the 1800s to 1911 in Chinese history was characterised by significant political, social, and cultural transformations. The Qing Dynasty faced internal and external pressures that prompted a series of reforms, including in the field of education. During this time, the practice of sending future music teachers abroad became more systematic and intentional.

The main goal of this process was to modernise Chinese music education by incorporating advanced Western musical techniques and pedagogical methods. The purpose was to elevate the standards of music education in China, and to equip Chinese

musicians with the skills traditional for the abroad, and to fulfil the demand of Europeans for the exotic.

By studying in Europe and the United States, Chinese musicians could acquire new techniques, understand Western music theory, and bring back innovative teaching methods (Zhu, 2023). This international education aimed to bridge the gap between Chinese and Western music education systems, fostering a more global perspective in Chinese music pedagogy. It should also be noted that most of these study trips (especially to Japan and France) were initiated by foreigners (mainly British and French) who, after 1856 (the Opium Wars), set out to “civilise China on the model of Japan, Indochina (modern Vietnam) and India”. (Ching-chih, & Mason, 2010).

Among the Chinese music educators of that period who obtained their professional education abroad, and can be seen as typical representatives of the movement mentioned there are Xiao Youmei (1884-1940) and Li Shutong (1880-1942). Xiao Youmei was one of the most prominent figures in the modernisation of Chinese music education. He studied in Japan, and later in Germany at the Leipzig Conservatory where he was exposed to Western classical music and advanced pedagogical methods. Upon his return to China, Xiao Youmei established the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1927, integrating Western music education principles with traditional Chinese music.

Li Shutong, a versatile artist and educator, studied in Japan, where he was influenced by Western music and art. He introduced Western music education practices to China, and became a key figure in promoting music education reform. Li Shutong’s experience abroad helped him advocate for a more comprehensive music curriculum that included both Chinese and Western music traditions (Chen, 2017).

The period from the 1800s to 1911 was a transformative era for Chinese music education. During this time, the practice of sending future music teachers abroad allowed China to assimilate advanced Western musical traditions, and improve its own educational standards. This approach also established the purposeful use of foreign educational systems to address gaps in China's own system, particularly in higher and postgraduate education.

This model has been repeatedly employed by China throughout the 20th century, and continues to be regarded as a valuable strategy for developing highly qualified specialists, especially in the fields of social sciences and education (Zhang, 2022).

The period from 1911 to 1949 was one of significant turmoil and transformation for China. Following the fall of the Qing Dynasty, and the establishment of the Republic of China, the country experienced a turbulent era characterised by the Civil War, the Second World War, and the humiliation inflicted by Japanese occupation.

Despite these challenges, this period also saw the beginning of a strategic friendship with the Soviet Union. Amidst these complexities, was the practice of obtaining higher and professional education abroad (for the future music teachers as well). Mainly this practice was seen as the only way to get an education by young Chinese people who took advantage of different opportunities (foreign educational programs, grants, shelter programs for the Chinese, etc.) to go abroad.

The primary aim of sending future music teachers abroad during this period was to acquire new musical techniques, understand Western music theory, and bring back

innovative teaching methods (Chen, 2017). This initiative sought to form the system of professional training for music educators in the specific field of teaching, shape the standards of Chinese music pedagogies, and form a corps of high-level specialists particularly in the field of teaching music.

Wang Luobin (1913-1996), also known as the “Father of Chinese Folk Music”, studied in the Soviet Union during the early 20th century. His exposure to Soviet music and educational methods influenced his work in preserving and promoting Chinese folk music. Wang Luobin's studies abroad helped him develop techniques for documenting and teaching folk music, which he applied upon returning to China. Qian Renkang (1903-1985) was a composer and music educator who studied in France, where he absorbed Western music theory and composition techniques.

His studies in France influenced his later work in China, where he played a significant role in modernising Chinese music education by introducing Western pedagogical methods, and fostering international collaborations. Xian Xinghai (1905-1945) studied at the Paris Conservatory in France. He later spent time in the Soviet Union, where he was influenced by Soviet music and pedagogy. His compositions, such as the "Yellow River Cantata," reflected both Western and Soviet influences and played a significant role in inspiring Chinese patriotism during the Japanese occupation, and the Civil War (Su, 2021).

The late 1940s saw the beginning of a strategic friendship between China and the Soviet Union, which influenced various aspects of Chinese society, including education. Soviet musical education and pedagogy began to have a notable impact on Chinese music teachers and students. During 1949 and into the 1970s, China sought to modernise its education system, including music education, by adopting Soviet models.

The main reason for sending future Chinese music teachers to study in the Soviet Union was to acquire advanced musical techniques, pedagogical methods, and educational frameworks that were prevalent in Soviet conservatories (Xiang, 2018).

Among the music educators with a Soviet university background who were most famous in China were Lü Ji (1923-1983: Chinese composer and conductor), Li Delun (1917-2001: notable conductor, who is considered to have established symphony orchestra practice in China), Zhao Feng (1928-2012: composer, the only professor at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in 1950-1970, Leningrad Conservatory), and others (Wang, 2020).

The Sino-Soviet educational exchange was not one-sided. The Soviet Union sent numerous music specialists to China to work as visiting professors. Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978), famous composer and conductor, visited China several times, conducting workshops and masterclasses for Chinese musicians. His influence extended to the composition techniques and orchestration methods adopted by Chinese composers.

Vissarion Shebalin (1902-1963), Soviet composer and music educator, was involved in the establishment of Chinese music institutions and curriculum development. His expertise helped shape the structure of Chinese music education (including the system of music schools, music classes attached to different youth organisations, boarding schools for musically gifted children, etc.) as a complex system that is still used in the country nowadays.

Several Chinese music universities and institutes were established during this period, modelled on Soviet examples in terms of structure, curriculum, and pedagogy: the Central Conservatory of Music (established in Beijing, 1950), the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (1956), the Xi'an Conservatory of Music (1949), the Shenyang Conservatory of Music (established in 1938; reorganised in the 1950s), and others. The educational institutions listed above are considered to be the key ones today (Su, 2021; Yuexin, 2021).

It should be mentioned that teachers of music from the Soviet Union appeared not only in Chinese universities and conservatories, but in music and ordinary schools as well, and made the Soviet influence more complex and qualitative. This could be explained by the fact that Soviet specialists, sent by the government to work in Chinese plants and factories (as well as officers and army technical specialists) had the right to take their wives with them. Thus, there appeared in China a lot of women with an education in the humanities (teachers, philologists, musicians) who started to work with Chinese children at different levels (Li, 2010).

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was a tumultuous period in Chinese history marked by political upheaval, social chaos, and severe disruptions in education and cultural activities. During this time, the emphasis was on ideological purity, and many traditional and Western cultural practices were condemned. Educators who received education or professional training abroad, and even in Chinese educational institutions, but under the leadership of foreign (mostly Soviet) specialists, lost their positions, and the right to teach. As a result, the opportunity for future Chinese music teachers to study abroad was significantly curtailed, and mostly stopped (Su, 2021).

With the end of the Cultural Revolution (1976), and the beginning of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, China began to actively pursue modernisation in various sectors, including music education. The government recognised the importance of sending students abroad to learn advanced techniques and methods to rebuild and modernise the country's educational system. Institutions like the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music were revitalised with new curricula that included Western music and education achievements.

Educators who had studied abroad before the Cultural Revolution were invited to teach, and played key roles in this revival (Haddon, 2019). China re-established connections with international music institutions, enabling Chinese students to study abroad once again. Countries like the Soviet Union, France, and the United States became important destinations for Chinese music students again (Yuexin, 2021).

Both educators, who obtained their music pedagogical education before the Cultural Revolution (like Wang Jianzhong (1933-2016) and Wu Zuqiang (1927–2022), who received musical and pedagogical education from the Soviet Union in the 1950s), and the representatives of the “new music pedagogies pedagogics plead” (the ones who were educated abroad from 1976–1980s) brought back contemporary Western music techniques, and integrated them into the Chinese music education system.

This helped to modernise Chinese music education and pedagogy, making it more diverse and comprehensive. Among the representatives of the “new music plead” is Lü Shaoxian (who graduated from the Hochschule für Musik und Theater, Germany, and after returning to China, became a professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music).

Among those who studied in the United States and France are the famous musicians and educators who graduated from Columbia University, USA: Chen Yi, Tan Dun, and Zhou Long; outstanding pianists and educators who studied at the Eastman School of Music, USA: Ye Xiaogang and Guo Wenjing (all of them worked at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing); representatives of French music schools both of whom, after returning to China, worked at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music: Xu Shuya (Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris), and Qin Yi (Conservatoire de Paris), and others (Yang, 2014).

Since the 1990s, the practice of sending Chinese future music teachers to study abroad has become increasingly prevalent and well-structured in China. This period marks a significant shift towards internationalisation in Chinese music education (Meng & Goopy, 2023). The main trends and ideas driving this movement include:

- Global Mobility and Access to Excellence: With China's economic growth and opening-up policies, there has been a substantial increase in the number of Chinese students pursuing music education abroad. The primary goal is to expose these students to the highest standards of musical training and pedagogy available globally;
- Cross-Cultural Exchange: By studying abroad, Chinese music teachers not only gain technical skills, but also learn to appreciate and integrate diverse musical traditions and cultures, promote cross-cultural understanding, and collaboration;
- Modernisation of Music Education: Applying the knowledge and experiences gained abroad is supposed to modernise and elevate the standards of music education in China. This involves updating curricula, adopting innovative teaching methods, and enhancing the overall quality of music education within China;
- Building a Global Network: Establishing and nurturing relationships with international music institutions have become crucial for China both for adopting the latest education trends in the sphere of music education and pedagogical science, as well as promoting its own achievements globally. These networks facilitate ongoing exchanges of ideas, research, and pedagogical advancements (Rauduvaite, 2018; Cheng, & Koh, 2022).

Among the countries that most attract future music teachers for study (mainly for MA and PhD programs) are the United States (the Juilliard School, Berklee College of Music, the Eastman School of Music, the Curtis Institute of Music, and others); the United Kingdom (the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal College of Music, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and others); Germany (Hochschule für Musik und Theater Leipzig, Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin, Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln, and others); France (Conservatoire de Paris, École Normale de Musique de Paris, and others); and Ukraine (the National Music Academy of Ukraine, the Lviv National Music Academy, the Kharkiv Academy of culture, the H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, and others).

All -these countries offer Chinese students rich musical and pedagogical traditions, high educational standards, rigorous training in performance and composition, as well as contribute to their development in teaching music-related disciplines.

## **DISCUSSION**

While the Chinese education system has long incorporated the professional development of future music teachers abroad as part of its own framework, (particularly for disciplines not traditionally strong in China, or to address gaps within the domestic educational system), the Chinese government recognises the challenges that such practices entail. Future music teachers who have been educated abroad often face several challenges upon their return to China.

These challenges can be both professional and personal, impacting their integration into the local education system, and their overall career development (Kostikova, Haozhe, 2023). The challenges include adapting to cultural and educational differences, gaining professional recognition, integrating into the local education system, dealing with resource constraints, balancing traditional and modern approaches, and overcoming personal and social reintegration issues (Cheng, 2021).

Despite these challenges, the Chinese government and society view the prospects of using teaching abroad as a method of professional training and development for future music teachers in China very positively (Jiang, 2022). They believe that this approach offers numerous benefits, including global exposure, enhanced teaching skills, professional growth, and the integration of global best practices (Kostikova, Liu, 2023).

By fostering innovation and supporting national educational goals, teaching abroad can play a crucial role in the ongoing modernisation and internationalisation of Chinese music education. As China continues to embrace global collaboration and cultural exchange, the practice of teaching abroad will undoubtedly remain an integral part of its strategy to develop highly qualified, globally competent music educators.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The experience of studying abroad has had a profound impact on Chinese music education throughout history, and was intentionally used as a method for the professional education and development of future music teachers. The integration of international practices led to significant improvements in teaching standards, curriculum design, and the performance quality of Chinese music education practice and theory during the pedagogical history of the country.

Chinese music educators who have studied abroad brought, and continue to bring back innovative ideas and techniques, fostering a more dynamic and diverse educational environment. Looking forward, the trend of internationalisation and educating future music teachers abroad is expected to continue, with even greater emphasis on cross-cultural collaboration and the adoption of new technologies. China aims to become a global leader in music education, so the experiences and knowledge gained by the educators through studying abroad and practically involved in teaching in Chinese music educational institutions will play a crucial role in achieving this goal.

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## **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

## **FUNDING**

The authors declare that this study received no specific financial support.

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