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CAUSES AND STRATEGIES FOR CURBING CHILD BEGGING IN OGBOMOSHO METROPOLIS, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the causes of curbing begging among children in Ogbomosho Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria, and the strategies available for curbing the practice. Anchored on Strain Theory, the paper adopted a descriptive survey design and combined a structured questionnaire with in-depth interviews to gather data from a sample of 385 respondents drawn through a multi-stage sampling technique, out of which 345 questionnaires were retrieved and validated, alongside eight in-depth interview sessions analysed through content analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the quantitative data, while a t-test was used to test the hypothesis that socio-economic background is not a significant factor in children's reasons for begging. The findings identified poverty, deliberate parental encouragement, peer pressure, cultural and religious beliefs, orphanhood, and limited access to free education as the principal causes of child begging in the metropolis, with poverty and peer pressure recording the highest mean scores. In-depth interviews further linked family breakdown, particularly the stigmatisation of divorced parents, to children's vulnerability to begging. On strategies, respondents expressed strong support for stricter law enforcement, free and compulsory education, financial support for struggling parents, penalties for adults who exploit children for begging, and sustained public awareness campaigns. The hypothesis test returned a statistically significant relationship between socio-economic background and children's reasons for begging ($t = 6.770, p = .000$). The paper concluded that child begging in Ogbomosho is sustained by

an interaction of economic deprivation and social strain that pushes families toward begging as a survival strategy, and recommended a combination of stricter enforcement, economic empowerment of parents, and expanded educational access as the most promising means of curbing the practice.

1.0 Introduction

Street begging among school-age children is a social problem with deep roots in household poverty, family breakdown and, in some communities, cultural practice. Although poverty is widely recognised as the principal driver of street begging, it rarely acts alone; it interacts with family instability, limited access to education and the erosion of traditional support systems to push children toward the street (Bukoye, 2019). The situation in Nigeria is aggravated by the scale of the country's population living below the poverty line, with the World Bank (2021) reporting that fifty-four million Nigerians were living in extreme poverty as of 2019, a figure that later rose to almost ninety-seven million (World Bank, 2021).

In Ogbomosho, Oyo State, the growing number of child beggars in commercial areas has drawn attention to the underlying causes that push children toward the street rather than the classroom, and to the strategies that might realistically reverse the trend. Begging, as an indication of deprivation, has long served as a means of survival for the helpless poor, though not every poor family resorts to it and not every beggar is poor (Adewuyi, 2021; Adedibu, 2019). Children found begging in Ogbomosho are frequently found, on closer enquiry, to have experienced a broken home, underscoring the extent to which family circumstance, rather than poverty alone, shapes a child's path into begging (Akinwale, 2021; Yusuf, 2020).

This paper examined the causes of child begging in Ogbomosho metropolis and the strategies considered most promising for curbing the practice, complementing an earlier companion paper that addressed the prevalence and consequences of the phenomenon. Understanding what drives children onto the street, and what residents believe would be effective in bringing them back into school and stable family life, is essential for designing interventions capable of producing lasting change.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the visibility of child begging in Ogbomosho and the general recognition that poverty, family breakdown and cultural practice all contribute to it, comparatively little empirical work has systematically examined the relative weight of these causes or tested the strategies that

residents and stakeholders regard as most promising for addressing the problem. Street begging is often treated as an inevitable consequence of poverty, yet the interviews and survey data gathered for this paper indicate that social factors, including the stigmatisation of divorced or single parents and the weakening of extended family support, play a role that is at least as significant as material deprivation.

Children as young as two years have been observed begging in Nigerian cities, opening their hands to passers-by simply to earn a living, a situation compounded in Ogbomosho by weak enforcement of existing child protection provisions and by the absence, in many households, of realistic alternatives to begging. Many scholars have examined various dimensions of street begging and poverty among school-age children, but there remains a paucity of empirical evidence on the specific causes driving the practice in Ogbomosho and on the strategies most likely to curb it, a gap this paper seeks to close.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this paper was to examine the causes of child begging and the strategies for curbing it in Ogbomosho metropolis. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Identify the causes of begging among children in Ogbomosho metropolis; and
- ii. Examine the strategies for curbing child begging in Ogbomosho metropolis.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What are the causes of begging among children in Ogbomosho metropolis?
- ii. What strategies can be used to curb child begging in Ogbomosho metropolis?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

HO: Socio-economic background is not a significant factor among children and their reasons for begging in Ogbomosho metropolis, Nigeria.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This paper is significant because it offers government, non-governmental organisations, religious and community leaders, and parents an evidence-based account of what drives children into begging in Ogbomosho and of which interventions residents themselves regard as most likely to succeed. By separating the causes of begging from its consequences, the paper allows policy attention to be directed upstream, toward prevention, rather than solely toward the remediation of harm already done. It also provides a foundation for further comparative research on the causes and remedies of child begging in other Nigerian cities.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The paper is limited to the causes of child begging and to the strategies for curbing it among children in Ogbomosho metropolis, Oyo State. Matters relating to the prevalence of begging, the level of awareness of social protection policies, and the direct consequences of begging for children are addressed in a companion paper.

2.0 Conceptual Review

2.1 Begging and Child Begging

Begging has been described as a broad and complex range of activities in which an individual asks a stranger for money or material support because of poverty or need, with the practice varying across time, place and culture but present in nearly every society (International Labour Organization, 2019; Lucas, 2019). Sociologically, it is regarded as a form of social deviance and a product of urban poverty, involving the pursuit of material benefit from other persons without the intention of reimbursement or reciprocal service (Healy & Rogoz, 2012). Child begging, more specifically, has been defined as a form of exploitation used to obtain financial or material benefit, often involving children from impoverished backgrounds who are coerced or left with no viable alternative (International Labour Organization, 2019). In Nigeria, the practice has been linked to economic hardship, broken family structures, limited access to education and particular cultural expectations (Adewuyi, 2021; United Nations Children's Fund, 2022).

2.2 Causes of Child Begging

The rise of child begging in Ogbomosho Metropolis is shaped by several interconnected factors, including poverty, family instability, cultural norms, limited access to education and organised exploitation. Poverty and economic hardship remain foremost among these: many households in Ogbomosho lack stable income, making it difficult to meet basic needs, and children are consequently pushed toward the street as a means of financial survival (World Bank, 2021). Family breakdown and parental neglect constitute a second major factor; children from broken homes, single-parent households or orphaned backgrounds often lack the financial support and supervision that would otherwise keep them off the street (United Nations Children's Fund, 2021).

Cultural and religious influence also plays a part. Certain traditions, notably the Almajiri system found in parts of Nigeria, encourage a form of child begging under the guise of religious education, and where such practices are socially accepted, they become correspondingly difficult to challenge (Adewuyi, 2021). Limited access to education compounds the problem, since the

absence of free and genuinely compulsory schooling in some areas leaves children with few alternatives to street survival (Adeyemi, 2018). Finally, organised criminal exploitation drives a portion of child begging in Ogbomosho, with some children forced into the practice by syndicates that use threats and physical abuse to secure compliance and that confiscate the proceeds of the children's labour (Usoro, Adekunle, & Adewuyi, 2020).

2.3 Strategies for Curbing Child Begging

Addressing child begging in Ogbomosho Metropolis calls for a coordinated approach that combines government intervention, community participation and economic reform. A central strategy is the strengthening of law enforcement: legal frameworks must explicitly criminalise the exploitation of children for begging, and offenders must be prosecuted and appropriately sanctioned, since stronger enforcement of child protection and anti-trafficking laws acts as a deterrent to those who profit from exploiting vulnerable children (United Nations Children's Fund, 2021).

A second strategy is the expansion of social welfare provision for low-income families, through increased funding for poverty alleviation, financial assistance, food programmes and healthcare access, all of which reduce the financial pressure that pushes children toward the street (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Educational reform represents a third strategy: enforcing free and compulsory basic education removes a key financial barrier to school attendance, and complementary measures, such as scholarship schemes and school feeding programmes, further support enrolment and retention among vulnerable children (United Nations Children's Fund, 2022; Federal Ministry of Education, 2020).

Public awareness campaigns constitute a fourth strategy, educating the community about the dangers of child begging and the importance of children's rights, and encouraging a more proactive collective response (United Nations Children's Fund, 2021). Finally, economic empowerment of parents and caregivers, through job creation, vocational training and small-scale business support, addresses the root financial pressure that drives families toward relying on children's earnings, thereby improving the likelihood that children remain in school rather than on the street (International Labour Organization, 2019; World Bank, 2021).

2.4 Empirical Review

Adewuyi (2021) examined the role of religious and cultural practice in child begging, focusing on the Almajiri system in northern Nigeria, in which children sent to study under Islamic scholars end up begging for food and money as part of their daily routine, and found that religion

and culture can either perpetuate or help resolve the problem, depending on how traditional systems are integrated with modern child protection policy. The study, however, did not examine the specific causes or remedies applicable to Ogbomosho, a gap this paper addressed.

Namwata et al. (2019), studying child begging in Tanzania, found that rural-to-urban migration was a major driver, as families relocated to cities in search of opportunity but ended up unemployed and homeless, forcing children into street begging to support the household; the study identified weak law enforcement and limited social welfare provision as major obstacles to progress and recommended stronger policies on rural development, employment generation and social protection.

Adeyemi (2019) examined the impact of education policy on child begging in Nigeria and found that states with strict enforcement of school attendance laws recorded significantly lower rates of child begging than states where such policies were weakly implemented, underscoring the importance of free and compulsory education as a long-term strategy for curbing the practice. These studies, while informative, focus on other locations or on single dimensions of the problem, leaving the causes and strategies relevant to Ogbomosho comparatively under-examined.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This paper was anchored on Strain Theory, developed by Robert K. Merton in 1938 as an extension of Émile Durkheim's concept of anomie, or normlessness, to explain how societal pressure to achieve success, combined with limited legitimate opportunity, can produce deviant behaviour. The theory holds that individuals in society are encouraged to strive for success, particularly financial success, but that when they are unable to achieve this through legitimate means, such as education and employment, they experience strain that may push them toward alternative, often deviant, means of survival. In the case of child begging, families facing extreme poverty may regard begging as the only available means of survival, while children themselves may turn to the street because of limited access to education or economic opportunity.

The theory's principal strength lies in the clear link it establishes between socio-economic pressure and deviant behaviour, explaining why children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to resort to begging or other informal means of survival, and in the guidance it offers for policies aimed at reducing economic inequality and expanding opportunity for at-risk children. Its main limitation is the assumption that all individuals experiencing strain

will resort to deviant behaviour, when in reality many find lawful means of coping; the theory also gives limited attention to cultural and personal values that may influence whether a family turns to begging. Notwithstanding this limitation, Strain Theory is well suited to the present paper, since it accounts directly for the way in which economic hardship and limited legitimate opportunity in Ogbomosho combine to produce child begging, while also pointing toward the kind of economic and educational interventions, examined under objective two of this paper, that could relieve that strain.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The paper adopted a descriptive survey design, considered appropriate for investigating the causes of child begging and the strategies considered effective for curbing it in Ogbomosho metropolis. A descriptive survey, according to Nworgu (2016), is a design in which the researcher studies a representative sample of a population by collecting and analysing data drawn from it.

3.2 Study Area

The paper was conducted in Ogbomosho metropolis, Oyo State, a city of over one million residents that serves as a commercial and transit hub between Ilorin and Ibadan. Over forty per cent of the population is below the age of eighteen, producing a high dependency ratio that places pressure on household resources and, for some families, contributes to reliance on child labour, including begging, as a coping strategy.

3.3 Population and Sample Size

The study population was estimated at 200,000 persons, with an estimated 43,000 children aged three to seventeen years actively engaged in begging within the metropolis. Using the Krejcie formula for sample size determination, at a 95 per cent confidence level and a 5 per cent margin of error with a population proportion of 0.50, a sample size of 383 was derived.

3.4 Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique, combining cluster and purposive sampling, was used to obtain a balanced and representative sample. Ogbomosho metropolis was divided into three existing political districts, further divided into seven wards, from which wards were selected on the basis of their socio-economic profile and levels of child begging prevalence.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Data were obtained from primary sources through a structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide. The quantitative instrument used closed-ended items and Likert-type scales aligned with the study's objectives, while the qualitative instrument used open-ended questions to elicit detailed accounts of participants' understanding of the causes of begging and their views on effective remedies, analysed through content analysis. The instrument was validated by the researcher's supervisor and other experts in the Department of Sociology, and its reliability was confirmed through a test-retest procedure involving a pilot administration of twenty copies.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, in the form of frequencies, percentages and means, were used to summarise the survey data, while an independent samples t-test was used to test the hypothesis relating socio-economic background to children's reasons for begging. Data from the in-depth interviews were analysed using content analysis, involving the systematic and objective examination of textual data to identify recurring patterns and themes.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before their inclusion. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout, and the study excluded any individual who was unwilling to participate, unable to give informed consent, or whose involvement might have exposed them to risk.

4.0 Results and Discussion

A total of 383 copies of the questionnaire were administered, of which 345 were retrieved and found valid for analysis. Eight in-depth interview sessions were conducted, out of ten originally planned, owing to field constraints. Consistent with the companion paper, respondents were predominantly children and adolescents aged between 6 and 16 years, with 64.5 per cent belonging to households of five members or more and 62.9 per cent classified as migrants to Ogbomosho, a profile that provides useful context for the causes discussed below.

4.1 Causes of Begging Among Children in Ogbomosho

Table 1 presents data addressing the first objective of the paper, on the causes of child begging in Ogbomosho.

S/N	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1	Poverty is the major cause of child begging in Ogbomosho.	235	73	75	-	-	4.4

2	Lack of parental care and broken homes contribute to child begging.	73	173	48	33	56	3.4
3	Some parents deliberately send their children to beg as a source of income.	197	104	26	56	-	4.1
4	Cultural and religious beliefs encourage child begging.	180	185	1	17	-	4.3
5	Many child beggars are orphans or abandoned children.	206	115	29	32	1	4.2
6	Lack of access to free education contributes to child begging.	123	175	84	1	-	4.1
7	Peer pressure influences children to engage in begging.	196	159	27	1	-	4.4
8	Unemployment among parents leads children to beg.	188	96	54	1	44	3.9
9	Some children beg because of physical disabilities or health challenges.	144	164	28	47	-	4.1
10	The government has not done enough to address the root causes of child begging.	132	116	30	47	-	3.4

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (N = 385); Overall mean = 4.1

Table 1 shows that poverty (mean = 4.4) and peer pressure (mean = 4.4) are the most strongly endorsed causes of child begging in Ogbomosho, followed closely by cultural and religious beliefs (mean = 4.3), deliberate parental encouragement (mean = 4.1) and orphanhood (mean = 4.2). Limited access to free education (mean = 4.1) and disability or health challenges (mean = 4.1) were also rated as significant contributors, while unemployment among parents (mean = 3.9) and lack of parental care or broken homes (mean = 3.4) recorded comparatively lower, though still notable, mean scores. Respondents were similarly critical of the adequacy of government action in addressing the root causes of begging (mean = 3.4). The overall mean of 4.1 confirms that respondents regard the causes of child begging as interconnected rather than attributable to any single factor.

The in-depth interviews provide a richer account of how family breakdown, and specifically the stigmatisation experienced by divorced or single parents, contributes to children's vulnerability to begging. One participant described the process in detail:

Social factors like education, social status, religion and peer group influences contribute to family breakdown which leads children to the streets for begging. We have seen a situation whereby a divorced woman is stigmatised publicly in the church by the pastor, divorced women are also stigmatised negatively by their peers and community members. This can lead to low self-esteem among divorced parents...When families break down this way, children often suffer the most – they may be abandoned, neglected, or forced to fend for themselves on the streets through begging. (IDI 1/Female/51yrs/Civil Servant/Ogbomoso/September 2025)

A second participant reinforced this account, tying the stigma faced by divorced parents directly to the loss of family and community support that might otherwise have shielded children from begging:

If divorce is not common or accepted in the community, people who get divorced may face social stigma, and their children suffer the consequences. When parents face rejection from their religious or cultural community, they may lose the support systems needed to care for their children properly...their children who may be forced to beg for survival when family income and support disappear. (IDI 2/Female/Civil Servant/38yrs/Single/Ogbomosho/October 2025)

These accounts indicate that the causes of child begging in Ogbomosho cannot be reduced to poverty alone; they involve a social dimension, in which cultural attitudes toward divorce and family breakdown remove the very support systems that would otherwise protect children from being pushed onto the street. This finding aligns closely with Strain Theory, which holds that when legitimate means of coping with hardship, in this case, intact family and community support, are unavailable, individuals and households turn to alternative, often deviant, survival strategies such as begging.

4.2 Strategies to Curb Child Begging

Table 2 presents data addressing the second objective of the paper, on the strategies considered effective for curbing child begging in Ogbomosho.

S/N	Item	Yes (%)	No (%)	Mean
1	Should government enforce stricter laws against child begging?	86	14	1.8
2	Would free and compulsory education reduce child begging?	92.7	7.3	1.9

3	Should parents of child beggars receive financial aid or employment support?	80	20	1.6
4	Should NGOs play a more active role in reducing child begging?	55.3	44.7	1.5
5	Should government provide rehabilitation centres for child beggars?	80.3	19.7	1.6
6	Should penalties be imposed on parents who force children to beg?	92.7	7.3	1.9
7	Should religious and community leaders work together to end child begging?	77.9	22.1	1.6
8	Should vocational training be provided for child beggars?	64.4	35.6	1.6
9	Should awareness campaigns be launched to educate the public?	91.7	8.3	1.9
10	Should government intervention be increased to end child begging?	87.8	12.2	1.8

Source: Field Survey, 2025 (N = 383); Cluster mean = 1.8

Table 2 shows strong support across nearly every proposed strategy. Free and compulsory education (mean = 1.9) and penalties for parents who force children to beg (mean = 1.9) received the highest endorsement, alongside public awareness campaigns (mean = 1.9), indicating that respondents see prevention and deterrence as complementary approaches. Financial aid or employment support for parents (mean = 1.6), rehabilitation centres (mean = 1.6) and collaboration between religious and community leaders (mean = 1.6) also received strong backing, while support for a more active role by non-governmental organisations was comparatively more modest (mean = 1.5), the lowest recorded in the table. The cluster mean of 1.8 confirms broad consensus that a combination of enforcement, education, welfare support and community mobilisation offers the most realistic path to curbing child begging in the metropolis. Although the in-depth interviews did not probe strategies as a distinct theme, participants repeatedly linked the persistence of begging to the poor communication and delivery of existing support programmes, implicitly endorsing the survey finding that awareness campaigns and improved programme delivery are central to any effective strategy. As one interviewee put it when discussing what would change families' reliance on begging:

If there is awareness, families will do whatever it takes to access social protection instead of sending their children to beg on the streets. (IDI 1/Female/51yrs/Married/Civil Servant/Ogbomoso/September 2025)

This observation reinforces the quantitative finding that public sensitisation, education and welfare access, rather than any single measure in isolation, are what respondents regard as most likely to reduce child begging in Ogbomosho.

4.3 Test of Hypothesis

HO: Socio-economic background is not a significant factor among children and their reasons for begging in Ogbomosho metropolis, Nigeria.

The hypothesis was tested using an independent samples t-test, the results of which are presented in Table 3.

Model	Unstandardised B	Std. Error	Standardised Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-.138	.243		-0.568	0.570
Socio-economic background and reason for begging	1.368	.202	.327	6.770	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The results show a statistically significant relationship between socio-economic background and children's reasons for begging in Ogbomosho metropolis, $t(383) = 6.770$, $p = .000$, at the .05 level of significance. The standardised beta coefficient of .327 indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. On this basis, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that socio-economic background is a significant factor in shaping children's reasons for begging in Ogbomosho metropolis. This finding lends statistical weight to the survey and interview evidence in Table 1, which identified poverty, unemployment and family circumstance among the leading causes of child begging, and it reinforces the case, drawn from Strain Theory, that limited legitimate access to income and opportunity pushes households toward begging as an alternative survival strategy.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The paper identified poverty as the leading cause of child begging in Ogbomosho, closely followed by peer pressure, cultural and religious beliefs, and deliberate parental encouragement, with a significant number of respondents believing that some parents send their children to beg specifically because of financial hardship. The in-depth interviews extended this picture by

highlighting the role of family breakdown, and in particular the stigmatisation of divorced and single parents, as a social pathway into begging that operates independently of, and sometimes in combination with, material poverty. This is broadly consistent with earlier work linking child begging to a complex interplay of economic deprivation, cultural norms and weak family support systems (Adewuyi, 2021; United Nations Children's Fund, 2021).

On strategies, the paper found strong support for a multi-pronged response, combining stricter law enforcement, free and compulsory education, financial support for struggling parents, penalties for adults who exploit children for begging, and sustained public awareness campaigns. The comparatively lower endorsement recorded for an expanded role for non-governmental organisations suggests that respondents place greater trust in government-led enforcement and welfare provision than in third-party intervention, a consideration that should inform how any future programme is structured and communicated.

The significant relationship found between socio-economic background and children's reasons for begging confirms that economic circumstance remains central to understanding the problem, even as the qualitative evidence shows that social and cultural factors, particularly family breakdown, operate alongside it. Read together, these findings support the application of Strain Theory to child begging in Ogbomosho: when legitimate means of achieving economic security and family stability are unavailable, families and children turn to begging as an alternative, and the strategies most likely to succeed are those that restore legitimate opportunity, through education, employment and enforceable child protection, rather than those that address the symptom of begging in isolation.

5.0 Conclusion

This paper has examined the causes of begging among children in Ogbomosho Metropolis and the strategies considered most likely to curb the practice. The evidence shows that poverty, peer pressure, cultural and religious beliefs, deliberate parental encouragement and orphanhood are the principal causes identified by respondents, and that these operate alongside a significant social pathway rooted in family breakdown and the stigmatisation of divorced or single parents. The hypothesis test confirms that socio-economic background bears a statistically significant relationship to children's reasons for begging, lending empirical weight to the paper's theoretical grounding in Strain Theory. On strategies, respondents expressed strong and broadly consistent support for stricter law enforcement, free and compulsory education, financial support for

struggling families, penalties for parents who exploit their children, and sustained public awareness campaigns.

6.0 Recommendations

On the strength of these findings, the paper recommends the following measures:

- i. Enforcing strict laws that criminalise the exploitation of children for begging, with child protection agencies empowered to remove children from exploitative environments and to prosecute offenders. Ensuring the full implementation of free and compulsory basic education, including the provision of school materials, uniforms and feeding programmes, to remove the financial barriers that push children toward the street;
- ii. Expanding social welfare and economic empowerment programmes for parents and guardians, including conditional cash transfers, vocational training and small business support, to relieve the economic pressure that drives families toward reliance on children's earnings. Engaging religious and traditional leaders directly in public awareness campaigns, given the cultural dimension of both the causes of begging and the stigmatisation of family breakdown documented in this paper; and

Imposing clear and consistently enforced penalties on parents or guardians found to be deliberately sending children to beg, alongside support services designed to address the underlying hardship that leads to such decisions.

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Data availability

The dataset generated and/or analysed during this study is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to appropriate ethical and confidentiality considerations.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Ethical approval was duly sought and obtained from the appropriate institutional authority before the commencement of the study. All relevant ethical requirements and procedures governing the participation, confidentiality, informed consent, and protection of respondents were appropriately observed throughout the study.

Consent for publication

The author(s) gave full consent for this publication

Competing interests

The author(s) declare that they have no competing interests.

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