Social Media Stickiness in the Z Generation: A Study Based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate how uses and gratifications motivations increase social media stickiness, with a special focus on media engagement as a key mediator. Data were gathered via a survey questionnaire from Bangladeshi Z Generation social media users, which was quantitative in nature. For the analysis of 258 survey samples, structural equation modeling methodology was used. The results show that social media engagement and social media stickiness are positively impacted by uses and gratifications motivations such as social interaction, information, convenience, and entertainment. The study also found evidence of a relationship between uses and gratification motivations and social media stickiness, which is also mediated by emotional attachment. Understanding the motivations and gratifications sought by Z Generation users on social media platforms can help design strategies to enhance engagement and loyalty, ultimately leading to improved user retention and platform success. By identifying and addressing the specific needs and desires of the Z Generation, social media platforms can tailor their features, content, and user experiences to foster a stronger sense of connection and satisfaction, resulting in increased user engagement and prolonged usage.

Keywords: uses and gratifications motivations, emotional attachment, social presence, social media stickiness

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, without which nothing can be imagined today (Cheung et al., 2022). It has revolutionized the way individuals, particularly the Z Generation, communicate, entertain, share information, and interact with the world. The Z Generation, also known as Generation Z or Gen Z, refers to individuals born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. This generation has grown up in an era dominated by social media, where platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and TikTok have become an integral part of their daily lives (Ortiz et al., 2023). The significance of social media is apparent in numerous facets of personal, professional, and social existence. The majority of these social media platforms provide users with the chance to introduce others and link them to both current and potential social network members (Marjerison et al., 2022). Social media users seek gratifications such as social interaction, entertainment, information, and convenience. Understanding and addressing social media user gratification is essential for designing effective platforms, optimizing user experiences, fostering engagement, and ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of social media platforms (Habes et al., 2022). By fulfilling user needs and motivations through gratifications, platforms can create valuable and meaningful interactions that keep users engaged, satisfied, and loyal. Knowledge about social media users' gratification is crucial for understanding the motivations and behaviors of individuals in their engagement and 'stickiness' with social media platforms (Silveira et al., 2022); so, there is a need to understand the factors that contribute to the continuous usage intention of social media platforms specifically for the Z Generation.

Existing research has explored the uses and gratifications of social media across different age groups (Bucknell Bossen & Kottasz, 2020; Hossain et al., 2019; Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2022), but there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on the Z Generation. Understanding the unique motivations and engagement patterns of this generation can provide valuable insights into their social media behaviors and preferences. Additionally, while studies have investigated social media addiction and excessive use among young individuals (Fauzi et al., 2020), there is a need to understand the underlying gratifications and psychological factors that drive sustained engagement with social media platforms among the Z Generation. By examining the relationship between the uses and gratifications theory and social media stickiness, researchers can

gain a better understanding of the mechanisms behind the Z Generation's continuous use of social media platforms. Understanding this mediating relationship can help platform developers and marketers design strategies to enhance engagement, align gratifications with user motivations, and ultimately promote long-term user stickiness and platform success (Moon et al., 2022).

Several empirical studies demonstrate a considerable positive correlation between uses and gratifications motivations, and social media stickiness (Falgoust et al., 2022; Hossain et al., 2019; Qin, 2020). As far as we know, no studies use social media engagement as a mediator in relation between uses and gratifications motivations, and social media stickiness.

Recognizing the research gap, this study uses social media engagement as a mediator. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how uses and gratifications motivations increase social media stickiness within the Z Generation, with a special focus on media engagement as a key mediator. By investigating the motivations and gratifications sought by the Z Generation on social media platforms, we can gain insights into the factors that contribute to their continued engagement and usage. Social media platforms strive to meet users' needs and desires by offering gratifications that fulfill their motivations. When users derive gratification from social media use, it leads to increased satisfaction, which in turn promotes higher engagement levels. Gratification-oriented experiences keep users invested and interested in using social media platforms, leading to sustained and continuous usage (Mao & Hovick, 2022). Considering these factors, we put forward two research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are the main gratifications obtained from using social media, and how do they encourage Z Generation users to stick with that social media?
RQ2: Whether and to what extent does media engagement mediate the relationship between gratifications and stickiness?

The findings of this study will advance knowledge in multiple ways on how people use social media, with a special emphasis on the Z Generation. First, it will provide insights into the motivational factors that drive their engagement with social media platforms, shedding light on the unique dynamics of this generation's relationship with social media. By concentrating on this particular generation, the research sheds light on a special group that has developed in the digital age and has distinctive views and

expectations about social media. Second, our research will provide a greater understanding of the underpinning incentives and gratifications that underlie the Z Generation's engagement with social media. Third, our study will give accurate insight into the particular motives that drive Generation Z to be active on social media platforms by evaluating the important aspects that affect social media stickiness in this generation. Fourth, these understandings will be valuable for researchers, practitioners, educators, and policymakers seeking to effectively engage with and support the Z Generation in the digital age. Fifth, marketers may modify their strategies to successfully engage and keep younger consumers by knowing the elements that increase social media stickiness. Finally, platform designers can apply these insights to produce user interfaces that cater to Generation Z's desires and requirements, making social media platforms more enticing and interesting.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher used Uses and Gratifications Theory as the conceptual background of this study. In the late 1940s, the uses and gratification approach to media use first appeared. Uses and Gratification Theory is a key sociological theory that explains why and how individuals choose certain media outlets to suit their needs (Marjerison et al., 2022). In Uses and Gratification Theory, Katz sees all audiences as active participants who always have a desire to be satisfied (Habes et al., 2022). The theory suggests that individuals actively seek out and select media based on their needs and motivations, and social media platforms

are no exception. Understanding the uses and gratifications of social media among the Z Generation can provide valuable insights into their motivations and engagement patterns, leading to a better understanding of social media stickiness. According to the theory, individuals freely and intentionally choose the platform they will use to satisfy their needs (Hossain et al., 2019). Uses and gratifications were looked for in order to determine what the audience does with the media rather than what the media does to the audience (Falgoust et al., 2022; Moon et al., 2022). The theory investigates needs and how they are influenced by personal characteristics as well as the environment in which social interactions occur (Silveira et al., 2022).

Social media plays a significant role in the digital lives of the younger generations and has developed into much more than a tool for social connections (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2022). Moon and An (2022) explained that Uses and Gratifications Theory motivates users to use the social platform and gratifies their informational and educational needs. Uses and Gratification Theory focuses on finding the reason behind every choice of audience related to a particular media. Social media usage facilitates the overall needs and requirements of the young generation today (Florenthal, 2019). Gen Z uses social media more than Gen Y for education, interaction, entertainment, and convenience (Silveira et al., 2022). There are four uses and gratifications motivations of social media, which include social interaction, information, entertainment, and convenience. People choose which media to consume based on their desire for goal-oriented pleasure to meet their psychological demands. In this approach, several media
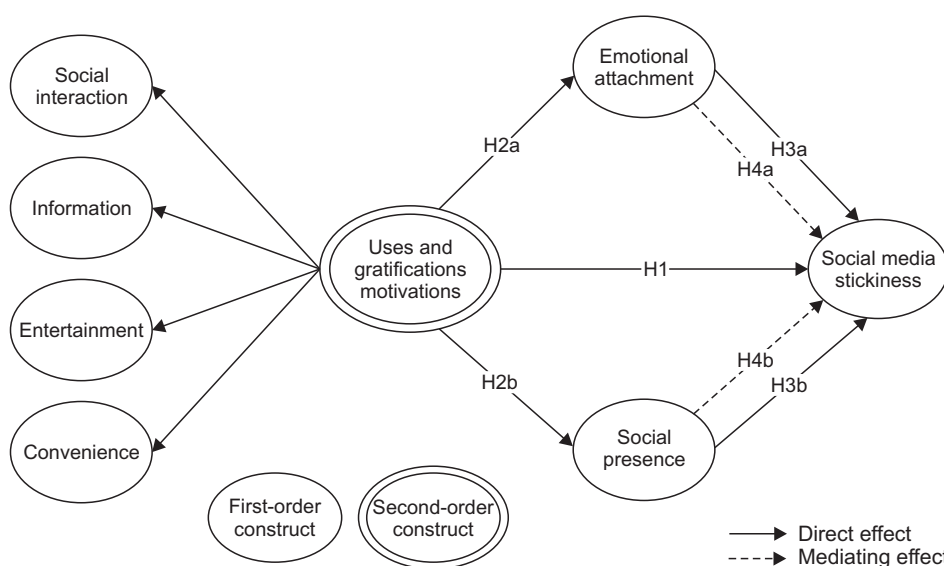

Fig. 1. Conceptual research model. H, hypothesis.

platforms fight for users' attention and to shape their subsequent behavior, and variations in user behavior are linked to the usage of a particular medium (Habes et al., 2022); so, social media use is predicted to have a favorable impact on social media stickiness in the Z Generation, in line with the Uses and Gratification Theory's justification. In light of the foregoing reasoning, we suggested the conceptual research paradigm depicted in Fig. 1.

3. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Uses and Gratifications Motivations and Social Media Stickiness

The younger generation of today has profited significantly from social media in many areas of their life, including social, personal, and other spheres. This is due to the fact that social media's function and position in young people's lives has significantly altered over the last 20 years (Khaola et al., 2022; Silveira et al., 2022). Compared to Gen Y, Gen Z utilizes social media more often (Ortiz et al., 2023). Social media is used both actively to create content and send messages as well as inactively to entertain, interact, and search for people, events, and information (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2022). Moon et al. (2022) stated that people can keep up with what is going on in the world because social media gives them access to a wider range of news and information.

Marjerison et al. (2022) explained that users seek social interactions and connections through social media platforms to satisfy their need for companionship and social validation. Social media is changing and making it easier for people to interact with each other, which is important for building communities, bringing people together, and making connections between people with similar interests and connections (Wukich, 2022). Hansen et al. (2018) affirmed that social media sites have made it easier for people to meet with their friends in their area, across the country, and even around the world. It has also given people a place to meet each other. Habes et al. (2022) argued that the effects of social media are good for young people and change the way people connect and talk to each other. The more users fulfill their social interaction needs on social media, the more likely they are to stay engaged and loyal to the platform.

Moon et al. (2022) stated that the most important reason why people keep using social media is to have fun and be entertained. The level of entertainment determines how interesting and fun a social media site is for users. Habes et al. (2022) argued that the audio and video material on

social media sites let people read, watch, and listen to the shows they want. Every day, more and more people use social media in this way. Cunningham and Craig (2017) stated that users engage with content that is entertaining, humorous, or emotionally captivating. Moon et al. (2022) reveal that users who find social media enjoyable and engaging as a means of escapism are more likely to continue using the platform and seek out new content regularly.

Social media and technology make it easier for people to stay in touch with family and friends all over the world through email, text, FaceTime, etc., and give them quick access to information and essential materials related to study. People know more about what is going on in other parts of the world because of it (Moon & An, 2022). Oeldorf-Hirsch and Srinivasan (2022) stated that social media platforms offer a vast amount of information on various topics, ranging from news and current events to personal interests and hobbies. It is also practical for individuals since it enables them to communicate by sharing their ideas and opinions and keeping up with current events. Silveira et al. (2022) explained that users who are motivated by the desire for information are likely to spend more time on social media, browsing content, following influencers, and participating in discussions. Qin (2020) suggests that users who perceive social media platforms as valuable sources of information are more likely to remain active and use them continuously.

Therefore, the more effectively social media platforms fulfill users' needs for social interaction, information, entertainment, and convenience, the higher the stickiness of the platform, leading to increased user engagement and prolonged usage. Consequently, the following hypothesis is put forwards.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Uses and gratification motivations have significant positive effects on social media stickiness.

3.2. Uses and Gratifications Motivations and Social Media Engagement

Social media are a group of web-based tools that allow people to make and share their own content. Cao et al. (2021) mentioned that as a social media contextual aspect, uses and gratifications motivations have a beneficial impact on an individual's participation, including their consumption, contribution, and creative behaviors. Individual participants' motivations in social media engagement are often goal-directed. Bucknell Bossen and Kottasz (2020) stated that social media platforms provide people

with a hands-on way to connect with a business and add value. Users who want to connect with other people are more likely to take part in chats, like and comment on posts, and start relationships with others on social media (Caron, 2016; Kujur & Singh, 2020). Suplico-Jeong et al. (2022) stated that social interaction is more likely to develop emotional attachments to social media platforms. Emotional attachment leads to increased engagement as users actively seek out and maintain relationships with others, participate in online communities, and experience a sense of emotional connection with the platform (Kujur & Singh, 2020).

Users who are looking for information are more likely to do things like read articles, follow news accounts, and take part in conversations about things that interest them (Wukich, 2022). Bucknell Bossen and Kottasz (2020) added that emotional attachment arises from the perception that the platform provides valuable and reliable information, leading users to engage deeply with the content, actively seek out information, and share their discoveries with others. Emotional attachment comes from the feeling of personal connection and joining that users get when they interact with material and groups that reflect their interests and identities (Moon et al., 2022). Falgoust et al. (2022) stated that users may develop a sense of emotional dependence on the platform for amusement and use it as a means of emotional relief and relaxation. Users who use social media platforms for these reasons are likely to form a strong emotional attachment with social media, which should lead to more involvement and continued use over time. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 2 (H2a): Uses and gratifications motivations have significant positive effects on emotional attachment.

Hossain (2019) argued that Uses and Gratifications Theory significantly influences social media engagement in terms of social presence, leading to increased user activity and a sense of connectedness on social media platforms. Marjerison et al. (2022) stated that users who are motivated by information seeking are more likely to engage actively on social media, aiming to establish a social presence based on their knowledge and expertise. They engage in discussions, share informative content, and seek opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of relevant topics to enhance their social presence. Silveira et al. (2022) concluded that users who are motivated by entertainment and escapism are more likely to engage

actively on social media, aiming to establish a social presence that reflects their interests and personality. They actively consume and share entertaining content, participate in viral trends, and engage with others through playful interactions to enhance their social presence. Therefore, we assume that those motivational factors may encourage social media users to actively participate in activities that boost their social presence, build relationships, and create a feeling of community. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 2 (H2b): Uses and gratifications motivations have significant positive effects on social presence.

3.3. Social Media Engagement and Social Media Stickiness

Engaging with content on social media provides users with a sense of connection, validation, and social interaction. When users feel engaged and connected, they are more likely to continue using the platform to maintain these social connections (Cheung et al., 2022). The availability of new news distribution channels on today's social media platforms pushes Generation Z to utilize social media constantly, because individuals may now participate more in the production and transmission of news; hence reading and sharing it on social media has become a common activity (Dolan et al., 2016; Wukich, 2022). Emotional attachment and social presence are two important dimensions of social media engagement that can contribute to social media stickiness among Generation Z. Suplico-Jeong et al. (2022) argued that emotional attachment acts as a motivator for users to continue using the platform, as they seek positive experiences. Silveira et al. (2022) stated that higher levels of emotional attachment and social presence will lead to increased social media stickiness. Marjerison et al. (2022) stated that users who are active on social media are better able to decide what is important to them. Additionally, it enhances their academic achievement. Regular engagement with social media content can lead to habit formation. When users develop a habit of using a specific platform, it becomes a routine part of their daily lives, making it harder for them to switch to a different platform. The more users engage with the platform, the more likely they are to continue using it due to the habit they have formed. Cheung et al. (2022) suggests that engaging with content allows social media platforms to gather data about users' preferences and interests. With this information, platforms can personalize the content

users see, making it more relevant and appealing to them. When users consistently find content that matches their interests, they are more likely to stay engaged and stick with the platform.

All the above-mentioned benefits individuals can encompass by engaging with social media. If they are gratified by using social media, they will use social media continuously. Hossain et al. (2019) explained that social presence is not a major issue for users' social media stickiness. Moon and An (2022) concluded that when users feel a strong sense of social presence on a social media platform, they perceive the platform as a place where they can connect with friends, family, and communities. This feeling of being socially connected and engaged encourages users to remain active on the platform, resulting in increased social media stickiness. Therefore, we assume that individuals who are engaged in social media tend to use social media continuously. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 3 (H3a): Social media engagement (emotional attachment) has significant positive effects on social media stickiness.

Hypothesis 3 (H3b): Social media engagement (social presence) has significant positive effects on social media stickiness.

3.4. Uses and Gratifications Motivations, Social Media Engagement, and Social Media Stickiness

Engagement serves as a bridge between the reasons users are motivated to use social media and the outcomes of their continued use (Cheung et al., 2021). Through active engagement, users experience and derive the gratifications they seek, further influencing their attachment and stickiness to the platform. By actively participating and interacting on social media, users have more opportunities to connect with others, express themselves, seek information, find entertainment, and build their online identities (Sangwan et al., 2022). As users consistently engage with social media platforms and experience gratifications, their level of attachment, social presence, and stickiness to the platform increases.

Engagement behaviors are a result of motivational influences, consistent with the theoretical underpinning of Uses and Gratifications Theory (Bucknell Bossen & Kottasz, 2020; Dolan et al., 2016). Gratification on social media tends to stimulate continuous use intention (Marjerison et al., 2022). Silveira et al. (2022) mentioned that

users, especially Generation Z, use social media for information gathering, entertainment, social interaction, and convenience. If they are gratified by using social media, they will use social media frequently, but if they engage with social media, they will use social media on a continuous basis. Emotional attachment and social presence lead to gratification, which stands to affect social media stickiness in users of specific media (Wukich, 2022). Marjerison et al. (2022) argued that individuals who are gratified by using social media and are engaged with social media have stickiness with social media. Therefore, we assume that social media engagement factors such as emotional attachment and social presence have a significant positive influence on uses and gratifications motivations and social media stickiness in users. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypothesis 4 (H4a): Social media engagement (emotional attachment) has a mediating effect on the relationship between uses and gratifications motivations and social media stickiness.

Hypothesis 4 (H4b): Social media engagement (social presence) has a mediating effect on the relationship between uses and gratifications motivations and social media stickiness.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Sample Characteristics

We created a survey questionnaire by reviewing the literature and using a three-step approach. First, we identified the questionnaire items through a literature review. Then, we improved the comprehensibility and clarity of the questions, limited the number of questions, and eliminated redundant ones. Next, we conducted a pilot study on 20 randomly selected samples to determine the suitability of the measurement questions. We used Google Forms to conduct the survey, which was disseminated via social media to Z Generation social media users who are residents of Bangladesh. We deliberately collected data from Z Generation (e.g., people who were born in the generation between the middle of the 1990s and the middle of the 2010s). We utilized filtering questions to determine whether respondents were born between 1990 and 2000, and we advised them to continue the survey only if those years corresponded to their birth year. If otherwise, participants were advised not to continue answering the survey questions. Additionally, when screening the

data, we looked at the age of the respondents. Only a few of them had ages that did not coincide with the reported birth years; as a result, those responses were excluded from the final study. Our data samples thus represent the Generation Z population, which is the one most likely to use technology advancements.

The survey questions used a seven-point scale. A pilot test with 20 individuals was conducted to confirm that the questionnaire was thorough enough. We collected 280 valid samples and eliminated duplicates, unexpected responses, and errors to obtain 258 good samples for analysis. To improve validity and reliability, we used widely used measurement questions from the literature. Finally, we made minor modifications and changes to improve the readability and clarity of the questions before finalizing the questionnaire.
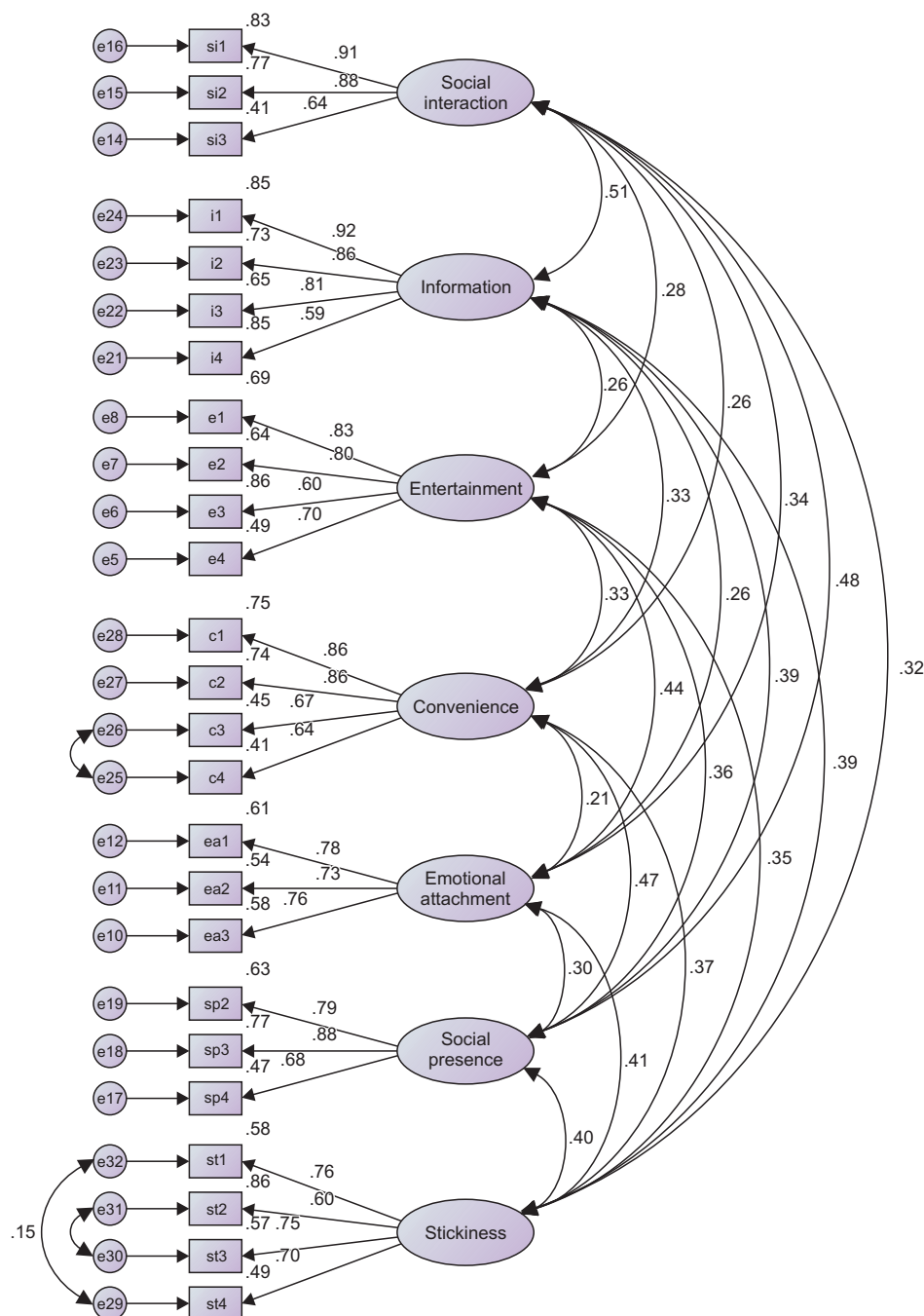

Fig. 2. Measurement model.

4.2. Tools and Analysis

In order to assess reliability and provide theoretical explanations for correlations between constructs inside the structural model, we employed structural equation modeling (SEM) as a method of data analysis. The IBM SPSS Amos 24 (IBM Co., Armonk, NY, USA) program is employed because it provides accurate measurement and structural model estimation in real time. Using the two-stage process, we first examined the measurement model and then assessed the structural model. In contrast to the structural model, which explores the associations between constructs and things, the measurement model zeroes down on the underlying mechanisms through which items and constructs are related to one another. Within the framework of the measurement model, the study constructs' reliability and convergent validity were assessed.

Additionally, SEM is the most appropriate method for our study because our research model suggested complicated interactions between the independent and dependent variables. Our model first considered multidimensional variables to validate the uses and gratifications motivations. The current study empirically validates these multidimensional factors (e.g., social interactions, infor-

mation, entertainment, and convenience) using a second-order construct development, in which SEM is incredibly useful. Thereafter, we tested measurement reliability, validity, and structural relationships among the considered variables showing in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3. Both models show model fitness, which is essential to reach decisions on fit testing. Finally, the current study proposed a few mediation effects in the model, which is credibly analyzed in SEM. Consequently, the use of SEM is ideal in the context of this research.

5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

5.1. Demographic Information

The sample consisted of 258 Z Generation social media users. Most participants were students, followed by government employed, private employed, businesspeople, and a small proportion of other individuals. In terms of sex, many participants were male (215). Participants' ages showed that most participants were between 23 and 25 (Table 1). Most participants had been using social media daily for 30-50 minutes, with some having less than 30 minutes, some having 50-80 minutes, and others having
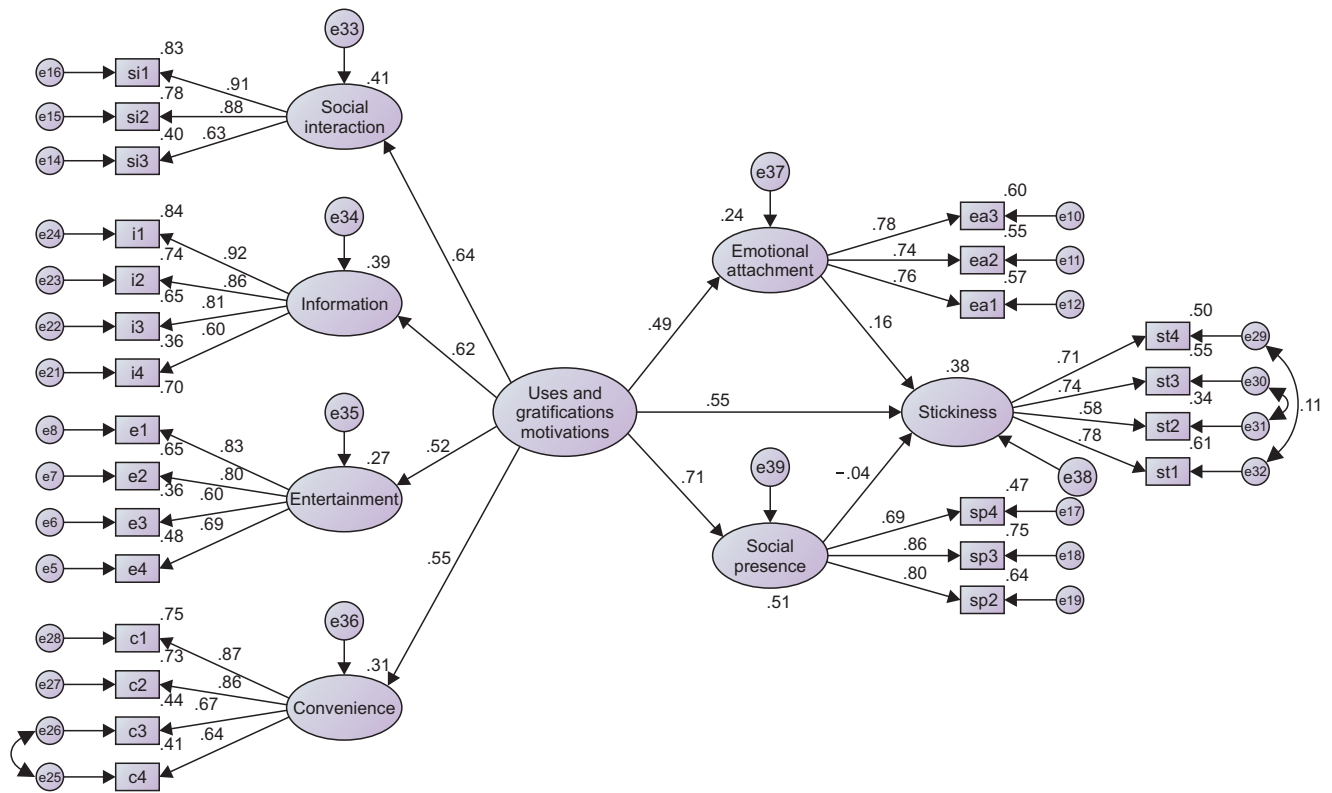

Fig. 3. Structural model.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics (n=258)

Factor	Frequency
Sex	
Male	215
Female	43
Participants' age (yr)	
18-22	45
23-25	105
26-28	44
29-31	64
Participants' profession	
Student	123
Government employed	49
Private employed	38
Business	36
Others	12
Social media usage per day (min)	
<30	32
30-50	96
50-80	55
>80	75

Source: Survey data.

more than 80 minutes daily. The sample represented Z Generation social media users with a mix of ages and profession, and varying levels of daily social media uses. Table 1 presents a detailed view of respondent demographics including participants' sex, age, profession, and social media uses per day.

5.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis and Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the independent variable uses and gratifications motivations and the constructs social interaction, information, entertainment, and convenience that influence social media stickiness and social media engagement in social media use intention. The mean scores for all constructs were above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that users consider these factors to be gratified in their social media uses. The skewness values for all constructs were negative, suggesting that most responses were towards the higher end of the scale, and the kurtosis values were mostly positive, indicating that the data had heavy tails and were more peaked

than in a normal distribution. Overall, these descriptive statistics provide an initial understanding of the motivations that influence social media stickiness in social media use.

5.3. Measurement Model Analysis

To assess the quality of the measurement instrument, we employed indicators of construct reliability, validity, and model fit (Fig. 2). Examining the t-values, p-values, squared multiple correlations, and factor loadings for each question in Table 2 ensures the study is valid and reliable.

This research produced a measurement model for the evaluations of convergent and discriminant validity that were performed to verify the validity and reliability of the measurement model. Finally, the results of the measurement model are reviewed in order of fitness, validity, and reliability. It is shown in Table 3 that all measures are credible since the standardized factor loadings for all variables are adequate and meet the threshold for statistical significance (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All Cronbach's alphas are above the 0.7 level, which may be considered statistically significant (Hair et al., 2010). Composite reliability values in the range of 0.90 to 0.96 are higher than the bare minimum of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). Each variable has an average variance extracted (AVE) that is more than 0.50, varying from 0.51 to 0.66. The least square root of the AVE values is less than the correlation coefficients of all possible combinations of sub-dimensional components (Table 4). As a result, the conditions for convergent validity and discriminant validity are met. X^2/df=1.938, goodness-of-fit indices (GFI)=0.867, incremental fit indices (IFI)=0.929, average goodness-of-fit Indices (AGFI)=0.828, comparative fit indices (CFI)=0.923, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)=0.913, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.060 are all well within their tolerance limits, indicating that the measurement model is generally well-fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Hence, the data's model fits are sufficient (Table 5) (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Doll et al., 1994; Hair et al., 2010).

5.4. Structural Model Analysis

The results of the model fit scores show that our structure model fits pretty well (Table 6). Fig. 3 indicates the structural paths among constructs in our conceptual model.

5.5. Hypothesis Results

Table 6 displays the findings of several hypotheses concerning the connection between distinct variables. This

Table 2. Rotated component matrix

Item	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i1	0.840						
i2	0.825						
i3	0.852						
i4	0.703						
c1		0.796					
c2		0.818					
c3		0.786					
c4		0.793					
e1			0.797				
e2			0.844				
e3			0.708				
e4			0.723				
st1				0.796			
st2				0.741			
st3				0.812			
st4				0.709			
si1					0.877		
si2					0.873		
si3					0.651		
ea1						0.783	
ea2						0.821	
ea3						0.807	
sp2							0.825
sp3							0.844
sp4							0.659

Extraction method: Principal component analysis.
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.
Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

table compares four motivations about the causes of social media uses and gratifications and the decision of stickiness with social media. Emotional attachment and social presence as social media engagement factors were considered by the theories. In particular, since we presented uses and gratifications motivations as multidimensional, accordingly our second order model demonstrates that all proposed dimensions (e.g., social interaction [coefficient (β)=0.64, coefficient of determination (r^2)=0.40], information [β=0.63, r^2=0.38], entertainment [β=0.52, r^2=0.28], and convenience [β=0.55, r^2=0.30]) are highly loaded to

uses and gratifications motivations. All of the offered hypotheses were found to be significantly accepted by our findings, with the exception of the association between social presence and social media stickiness. Thereby H1 (β=0.55), H2a (β=0.49), H2b (β=0.71), and H3a (β=0.19) are accepted, and only H3b (β=-0.04) is rejected. Table 7 provides estimates and p-value for each hypothesis.

The r^2 assesses predictability in the study's constructs. The adjusted r^2 is updated to account for sample size and new independent variables. The r^2 represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by

Table 3. Measurement model validity statistics

Item	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p	Alpha value
si3 ← Social interaction	0.637				0.84
si2 ← Social interaction	0.878	0.119	11.175	***	
si1 ← Social interaction	0.911	0.121	11.250	***	
i4 ← Information	0.591				0.87
i3 ← Information	0.806	0.125	9.846	***	
i2 ← Information	0.857	0.127	10.207	***	
i1 ← Information	0.924	0.135	10.554	***	
e4 ← Entertainment	0.703				0.81
e3 ← Entertainment	0.603	0.094	8.682	***	
e2 ← Entertainment	0.801	0.089	11.109	***	
e1 ← Entertainment	0.829	0.097	11.329	***	
c4 ← Convenience	0.639				0.85
c3 ← Convenience	0.668	0.087	11.076	***	
c2 ← Convenience	0.859	0.119	10.670	***	
c1 ← Convenience	0.865	0.117	10.690	***	
ea3 ← Emotional attachment	0.759				0.80
ea2 ← Emotional attachment	0.735	0.094	10.322	***	
ea1 ← Emotional attachment	0.781	0.091	10.641	***	
sp4 ← Social presence	0.683				0.82
sp3 ← Social presence	0.875	0.126	11.280	***	
sp2 ← Social presence	0.794	0.103	10.884	***	
st4 ← Stickiness	0.700				0.82
st3 ← Stickiness	0.752	0.156	7.284	***	
st2 ← Stickiness	0.598	0.146	6.391	***	
st1 ← Stickiness	0.761	0.103	10.517	***	

Source: SEM output.
S.E., standard error; C.R., critical ratio.
***$p < 0.001$.

the independent variable. Table 6 also shows that social presence explains 51% of the variance, emotional attachment explains 25%, and stickiness explains 38% of the variance in Generation Z's stickiness with social media.

5.6. Mediation Analysis

Table 7 shows results of a mediation model exploring the link between uses and gratifications motivations and social media stickiness via emotional attachment and social presence. Estimates and bootstrapping results are presented, including the indirect effect of uses and gratifications motivations on social media stickiness through emotional attachment and social presence. The estimated indirect effect of emotional attachment is $\beta = 0.011$, with a 95% confidence interval of 0.006 to 0.085 and a p-value <0.001, indicating significant mediation. The estimated indirect effect of social presence is $\beta = 0.081$ with a 95% confidence interval of -0.21 to 0.410, indicating insignificant mediation, representing accepting H4a and rejecting H4b. Table 7 provides criteria for interpreting significance.

6. DISCUSSION

The current study investigates the complex link be-

Table 4. Validity statistics

Variable	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Entertainment	0.83	0.56	0.75[a]						
2. Emotional attachment	0.80	0.58	0.440	0.76[a]					
3. Social interaction	0.85	0.66	0.283	0.338	0.81[a]				
4. Social presence	0.82	0.62	0.358	0.303	0.476	0.78[a]			
5. Information	0.88	0.65	0.258	0.262	0.509	0.387	0.80[a]		
6. Convenience	0.85	0.58	0.327	0.206	0.256	0.468	0.333	0.76[a]	
7. Stickiness	0.80	0.51	0.347	0.414	0.321	0.400	0.395	0.372	0.70[a]

CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted.
[a]Values are the square root of AVEs.

Table 5. Model fit results

Index	Recommended value	Obtained value measurement model	Obtained value structural model	References
CMIN/df	<3	1.938	1.975	Hair et al. (2010)
CFI	≥0.90	0.923	0.921	Hair et al. (2010)
GFI	≥0.80	0.867	0.857	Doll et al. (1994)
AGFI	≥0.80	0.828	0.823	Doll et al. (1994)
IFI	≥0.90	0.929	0.922	Hair et al. (2010)
TLI	≥0.90	0.913	0.910	Hair et al. (2010)
RMSEA	≤0.08	0.060	0.062	Browne & Cudeck (1993)

Source: Data analysis results.
CMIN/df, chi-square to degrees of freedom; CFI, comparative fit indices; GFI, goodness-of-fit indices; AGFI, average goodness-of-fit indices; IFI, incremental fit indices; TLI, Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

Table 6. Hypothesis results

Hypothetical path	Estimate	p	Decision
Social interaction (r^2=0.40) → Uses and gratifications motivations	0.639	<0.001	Highly loaded
Information (r^2=0.38) → Uses and gratifications motivations	0.623	<0.001	Highly loaded
Entertainment (r^2=0.28) → Uses and gratifications motivations	0.521	<0.001	Highly loaded
Convenience (r^2=0.30) → Uses and gratifications motivations	0.554	<0.001	Highly loaded
Uses and gratifications motivations → Stickiness	0.549	<0.001	H1: accept
Uses and gratifications motivations → Emotional attachment	0.494	<0.001	H2a: accept
Uses and gratifications motivations → Social presence	0.712	<0.001	H2b: accept
Emotional attachment → Stickiness	0.197	<0.05	H3a: accept
Social presence → Stickiness	-0.040	Not significant	H3b: reject
Squared multiple correlation			
Social presence (r^2=0.51)			
Emotional attachment (r^2=0.25)			
Stickiness (r^2=0.38)			

r^2, coefficient of determination; H, hypothesis.

Table 7. Mediation results

Mediating path	Indirect effect	Error	Bootstrapping results[a]			
			Lower bound	Upper bound	*p*-value	Decision
Uses and gratifications motivations → Emotional attachment → Stickiness	0.011	0.017	0.006	0.085	<0.001	H4a: accept
Uses and gratifications motivations → Social presence → Stickiness	0.081	0.093	-0.21	0.410	Not significant	H4b: reject

Source: Data analysis results.
H, hypothesis.
[a]Bias-corrected model with 95% confidence interval.

tween uses and gratifications motivations, social media engagement, and social media stickiness. The goal of this study is to find out how uses and gratifications drive people to use social media, which make people more likely to keep using social media. We also want to find out what part social media engagement plays between uses and gratifications motivations and how long people stay on social media. The results show that four types of motivations, including social interaction, information, entertainment, and convenience, have a significant impact on social media stickiness within Z Generation. Social interaction exerts the largest positive impact on social media stickiness, followed by information, convenience, and entertainment. These results are in line with what other studies have found (Habes et al., 2022; Hossain et al., 2019; Moon & An, 2022). These results reveal that social media users use social media for social interaction. They feel gratified when finding useful and valuable information through social media, which encourages continuous use of social media. Also, people who use social media think it is nice, interesting, and fun to do so.

Eventually, this study indicates that uses and gratifications motivations have a direct effect on social media stickiness. It is now possible to say that the main gratifications obtained from using social media are social interaction, information, entertainment, and convenience. This conclusion is partially supported by previous findings (Moon et al., 2022; Silveira et al., 2022). This result is also consistent with Hossain et al. (2019)'s findings, indicating that the most important reasons people use social media are to have fun, to get knowledge, to connect with other people, and to conform to their own ideas of what is right and wrong. In Table 7 the results of the present investigation demonstrate that uses and gratifications motivations have a substantial favorable effect on social media stickiness. Consequently, H1 was confirmed.

According to what we thought would happen and what

other studies have shown (Busalim et al., 2021; Cheung et al., 2022), we find a high association between uses and gratifications motivations and social media engagement in Z Generation users of social media. This study finds that uses and gratifications motivations have a positive impact on emotional attachment and this emotional attachment had the strongest impact on social media stickiness in social media users, which shows that the compliance process appeared to be important in the uses and gratifications motivations context. The findings support H2a and H3a. Hence, it can be inferred that there is a favorable correlation between uses and gratifications motivations and emotional attachment and social media stickiness within Generation Z. Interestingly, we find a too-high association between uses and gratifications motivations and social presence in Z Generation users of social media. The findings support H2b.

Contrary to our expectations, social presence was not found to have significant impacts on social media stickiness in Z Generation social media users. The findings reject H3b. A possible reason could be that social media stickiness encompasses various dimensions while social presence may not be the sole determinant of social media stickiness. In other words, Generation Z is known for its ability to navigate between different social platforms and communicate through a variety of mediums beyond traditional social media. They may engage in real-time messaging apps, video-sharing platforms, or niche online communities. This generation values instant and authentic communication, seeking platforms that provide immediate gratification and a sense of belonging. Thus, social presence alone may not be the primary driver of stickiness, as Generation Z seeks a broader range of social interactions and experiences. The users may depend entirely on enjoyment, information seeking, convenience, or real-world social interactions about these dimensions of gratification. Additionally, the Uses and Gratifications Theory

suggests that individuals choose media platforms based on their needs and motivations. For Generation Z, social media serves multiple purposes beyond social interaction, such as self-expression, information sharing, entertainment, and identity construction. While social presence can contribute to certain gratifications, it may not be the central factor driving stickiness for this generation. Therefore, social presence is not among the major issue shown to affect social media stickiness in this study.

Social media engagement acts as a mediating variable that connects users' motivations and gratifications with their level of social media stickiness. The positive experiences derived from engagement reinforce users' connections to the platform, contributing to their continued usage, loyalty, and resistance to switching to alternative platforms. This also partially corroborates the findings of Habes et al. (2022), who concluded that social media engagement mediates the relationship between uses and gratifications motivations and social media stickiness. But Table 7 exhibits that not all dimensions of social media engagement influence the relationship between uses and gratifications motivations and social media engagement. Table 7 reveals that H4a is accepted (β=0.011, p<0.001), hence there is a mediation effect, revealing that social media engagement has stimulating power to strengthen the relationship between uses and gratifications motivations and stickiness. In other words, when social media users receive uses and gratifications motivations, and have become engaged with the media and other users, they intend to stay connected/experience stickiness for a longer period of time.

However, unexpectedly, H4b appears non-significant since it shows a zero value existing between the lower bound and upper bound in the bias-corrected model, with a 95% confidence interval. Since the lower bound shows a negative sign and the higher bound a positive one, there is zero between the two, indicating that the indirect effect of social presence is insignificant. These results reveal that, in the context of this study, users of social media may not be overly concerned with their social presence. This may have occurred as a result of the study sample we evaluated being in a broader social condition; the majority of the respondents are predominantly from diverse educational institutions, which already allowed them the opportunity to represent themselves. Another reason might be that, in the context of a collectivist society, participants are more likely to interact in person with their neighbors, friends, and other people in public places. As a result, it can be said that while the uses and gratifications motivations

have made social media desirable to users, they are not yet sufficient to strengthen the relationship between uses and gratifications motivations and social media stickiness.

7. CONCLUSION

The Z Generation engages with social media platforms primarily to satisfy their psychological and social needs. They seek gratification in the form of entertainment, social interaction, information acquisition, and convenience. Social media platforms play a significant role in facilitating social interaction and connection for the Z Generation. The Z Generation utilizes social media as a source of entertainment and escapism. They consume various forms of content, such as videos, memes, and stories, to alleviate boredom and stress. They rely on platforms to stay updated on current events, trends, and topics of interest. However, there is a need for critical evaluation of information due to the prevalence of misinformation and fake news. The Z Generation experiences fear of missing out when disconnected from social media. They fear missing out on social events, trends, and important updates shared within their networks. This fear drives them to constantly engage with social media platforms to stay connected. The addictive nature of these platforms, combined with the fear of missing out, leads to a continuous cycle of checking and responding to notifications. Overall, the present study highlights the significant role of social media in the lives of Z Generation. They actively engage with these platforms to fulfill various needs, including social interaction, entertainment, convenience, and information seeking. The addictive nature of social media contributes to its stickiness among this generation. Thereby, we perceive that our proposed "RQ1: What are the main gratifications obtained from using social media, and how do they encourage Z Generation users to stick with that social media?" and "RQ2: Whether and to what extent does media engagement mediate the relationship between gratifications and stickiness?" have been satisfactorily taken into consideration. In conclusion, this study on social media stickiness in the Z Generation, based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, holds theoretical and managerial implications across various domains.

7.1. Implications for Theory
The study on social media stickiness in the Z Generation, based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, carries several theoretical and managerial implications into how users seek specific content or interactions on social media

to satisfy their individual needs and desires. First, understanding the factors that contribute to engagement and stickiness with social media platforms among this generation can offer various strategies and decisions to researchers and practitioners. Second, by stressing the relevance of user motives in shaping the stickiness or sustained involvement of individuals with social media platforms, these observations can enhance ideas linked to user-centric engagement. Awareness of the motivations, gratifications, and potential consequences of social media engagement can guide the development of responsible social media practices, promoting digital wellbeing, privacy, and ethical use. Third, the theoretical implications may imply that platforms might improve the distribution of information and interface designs, hence boosting stickiness, by identifying and accommodating the varied gratifications needed by users. This could aid in the creation of theoretical frameworks for the improvement of user interfaces and customized content recommendations. Four, the implications of this study extend to the realm of education. By promoting critical thinking, media literacy, and online safety, educational initiatives can empower young individuals to make informed decisions and leverage social media for positive purposes. Fifth, researchers may speculate about the long-term impact of these motivations on user loyalty if specific satisfaction motivations are proven to strongly influence stickiness. In order to do this, it may be necessary to investigate how particular pleasures, such as social contact, information searching, or entertainment, affect long-term involvement and the emergence of more solid user-platform bonds. Taking note of all of these factors, the current study sees a contribution of fresh knowledge to the body of literature.

7.2. Implications for Practice

The following are some implications for practitioners and managers. First, the current study can provide insights into the types of content that resonate with the Z Generation on social media. This understanding can help content creators and marketers tailor their strategies to meet the specific needs and gratifications of Generation Z. For instance, this may entail creating customized content that meets various demands for fulfillment, such as posts that provide education for people interested in learning, entertainment for those seeking leisure, or interactive elements for those seeking social connections. Second, this study can guide social media platform designers and developers in creating user satisfactions that align with the motivations and gratifications sought by the Z Generation. It can

inform interface design, feature development, and overall platform architecture to enhance user engagement, satisfaction, and stickiness. For instance, platforms might give priority to features that enable meaningful connections, conversations, or group activities if the research emphasizes the importance of social interaction as an incentive for stickiness. Third, the findings of this study can be used to optimize advertising and promotional strategies on social media targeted at the Z Generation. For instance, if a platform's users are mostly driven by the desire for social connections, advertisers may choose to create ads that emphasize community development or feature user reviews that highlight the platform's capacity for fostering connections. Understanding their motivations and gratifications can help advertisers deliver more personalized and relevant messages, increasing the effectiveness of their campaigns. Fourth, educational institutions, organizations, and policymakers can benefit from this study's findings when formulating social media policies and guidelines for the Z Generation. Educators and institutions can leverage the findings to develop digital literacy programs and curricula that equip the Z Generation with the necessary skills to navigate social media effectively and responsibly.

7.3. Limitations

Even though this work makes important advances, it has a few limitations. First, the Z Generation group is not taken from all over the world, so it is risky to say that the results are true for all countries. Therefore, it is advised to exercise caution when extrapolating the findings to other contexts. In these regards, future studies are highly appreciated to conduct research in a cross-national context. Second, most of the people in the group were young because the study was about Generation Z. This could make the study even less useful for all ages, thus future researchers are suggested to look at all respective age groups. Third, our study was constrained with uses and gratifications motivations and their influence on social media stickiness along with mediators; some other important issues may be left, and thus in order to get more reliable results, future studies should use a longitudinal study method and look at other important factors in a more continuous way.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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