

Management and Quality Assurance of Undergraduate Theses in Private Universities: Strategies and Implications

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Abstract: Undergraduate theses are critical components of higher education, reflecting students' comprehensive abilities and innovative thinking. However, private universities in China face unique challenges in thesis management and quality assurance. This study analyzes existing issues, proposes systematic strategies, and constructs a quality control framework to enhance thesis outcomes. By integrating process optimization, faculty development, student engagement, and technological tools, this research provides actionable insights for improving academic standards in private higher education institutions.

Keywords: Private Universities; Undergraduate Thesis; Quality Management; Academic Integrity; Process Optimization

Published: Apr 15, 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62177/apemr.v1i2.267>

1.Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Importance

Private undergraduate education has become a vital component of China's higher education system. As a critical practical teaching element in private universities, the undergraduate thesis (design) serves as a key indicator for evaluating educational quality and an essential part of talent development programs. It plays a significant role in enhancing students' practical skills, employability, and the overall quality of applied talent cultivation.

To strengthen the quality of undergraduate theses (designs), the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) has implemented several policies and regulations. In December 2012, the MOE issued the Measures for Handling Academic Misconduct in Degree Theses, which established strict guidelines to address plagiarism and ensure academic integrity. Furthermore, in 2020, the Sampling and Inspection Measures for Undergraduate Theses (Designs) (Trial) mandated annual inspections starting from January 2021. These inspections target theses from the previous academic year, with a minimum sampling rate of 2%, to enhance quality supervision and assessment at the national level.

The promulgation of these policies underscores the MOE's commitment to upholding academic standards and institutionalizing ethical research practices. Such measures not only align with China's broader goals of improving higher education quality but also reinforce the principle of "rooting education in Chinese realities." By imposing rigorous quality controls on undergraduate theses, these policies aim to foster a culture of academic excellence and accountability. Compared to public universities, private institutions face more pressing challenges in thesis management and quality assurance. Disparities in resources, faculty expertise, and institutional oversight necessitate targeted research to develop tailored strategies for private undergraduate education. Addressing these gaps is critical to ensuring equitable educational outcomes and advancing the competitiveness of private universities within China's evolving academic landscape.

Challenges in Thesis Quality at Private Undergraduate Universities

Aspect	Description
Insufficient Resources	Private institutions often face limitations in faculty qualifications and experimental facilities, negatively impacting students' research capabilities and practical skill development.
Ambiguous Research Orientation	Emphasis on applied talent cultivation overshadows research training, resulting in deficiencies in research methodology and subject exploration.
Inconsistent Faculty Expertise	Challenges in attracting high-level scholars coupled with heavy teaching/research workloads diminish thesis supervision quality and research literacy cultivation.
Weak Academic Ecosystem	Lack of academic exchange platforms and research support systems reduces scholarly stimulation, adversely affecting thesis depth and quality.
Student Competency Gap	Lower admission standards correlate with heterogeneous academic preparedness and motivation levels, influencing thesis commitment and output quality.

Consequently, these disparities do not uniformly apply to all private institutions. Significant variations exist due to differences in institutional priorities, resource allocation, and governance models. High-performing private universities often rival public counterparts in academic rigor, underscoring the importance of recognizing institutional heterogeneity in policy formulation and quality assessment frameworks.

1.2 Research Objectives

1.2.1 Proposing Improvement Strategies for Thesis/Dissertation Management and Quality Assurance in Private Undergraduate Universities

Based on analysis of current practices, this study recommends optimized management processes, enhanced quality monitoring mechanisms, improved faculty training and support systems, and strategies to increase student engagement. These evidence-based proposals aim to improve institutional efficiency and academic rigor.

1.2.2 Examining the Impact of Student Engagement on Thesis/Dissertation Quality

This research investigates the correlation between students' proactive participation and the academic quality of final projects. Through empirical analysis, it identifies engagement patterns and proposes targeted interventions to strengthen student motivation and ownership of research outcomes.

1.2.3 Sustainability Analysis of Quality Assurance Systems in Private Higher Education

The study evaluates the adaptability, feasibility, and continuous improvement capabilities of current quality management frameworks. It develops sustainability indicators and recommends institutional mechanisms for maintaining long-term effectiveness amid evolving educational landscapes.

1.2.4 Internationalization Strategies for Thesis Supervision and Quality Management

Through comparative analysis of global best practices, this work identifies internationalization pathways for private universities. It proposes adaptive frameworks that integrate transnational quality standards while addressing localized institutional contexts, with particular attention to emerging trends in cross-border education.

1.2.5 Innovative Approaches to Enhance Practical Value in Academic Research

This exploration focuses on paradigm-shifting strategies including digital management platforms, industry-academia collaboration models, and technology-enhanced supervision. The proposed methodology emphasizes bridging theoretical research with real-world applications through systemic innovation.

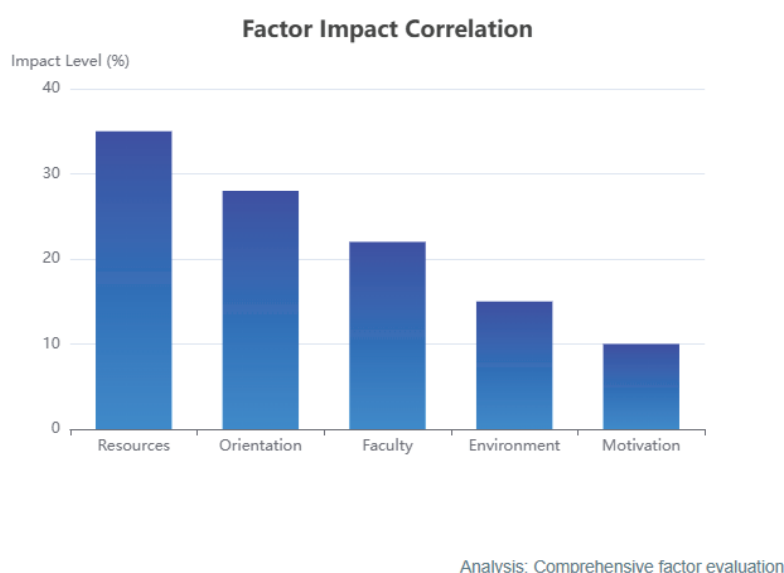
2. Current Challenges in Thesis Management and Quality Assurance

2.1 Management Issues

In the topic selection phase, some private undergraduate institutions face challenges such as students' significant randomness and blindness in choosing research topics, coupled with low alignment between selected topics and their academic disciplines. When selecting topics, a portion of students fail to adequately consider their academic strengths and personal interests, leading to excessively broad or professionally irrelevant topics. This mismatch negatively impacts both the quality of subsequent thesis writing and student motivation. These issues highlight the need for improved guidance mechanisms to enhance topic relevance and foster scholarly engagement.

Guidance Phase: A prevalent issue in private undergraduate institutions is the insufficient number of faculty supervisors, leading to an imbalanced student-to-faculty ratio. This imbalance often forces supervisors to provide only broad oversight rather than in-depth and detailed guidance for individual students. Consequently, specific challenges encountered during thesis writing may go unnoticed and unresolved. Furthermore, some supervisors exhibit limited mentoring capabilities and a lack of professional commitment, resulting in inadequate patience and expertise during student consultations. These shortcomings negatively affect both the quality of student theses and their academic engagement.

Evaluation and Defense Phase: The absence of standardized and scientifically rigorous evaluation criteria creates inconsistencies in assessment practices across reviewers, undermining the fairness and objectivity of evaluation outcomes. During thesis defenses, lax quality control measures and overly formalistic adherence to procedural requirements are common. Some examiners focus excessively on superficial aspects rather than critically evaluating the substantive content of theses or students' research competencies. As a result, the defense process often fails to fulfill its intended role as a critical quality control mechanism. These systemic gaps highlight the urgent need to refine evaluation protocols and strengthen accountability in academic oversight processes.



2.2 Quality Assurance Deficiencies

2.2.1 Faculty Challenges

The teaching faculty in private undergraduate institutions exhibits significant heterogeneity in professional quality. A proportion of instructors demonstrate limited teaching experience and academic proficiency, thereby compromising their capacity to provide effective guidance for high-quality undergraduate theses (designs). Furthermore, frequent faculty turnover and insufficient workforce stability introduce unpredictability into the supervision process, adversely affecting both the consistency of student mentorship and the academic continuity essential for rigorous research outcomes.

2.2.2 Student-Related Issues

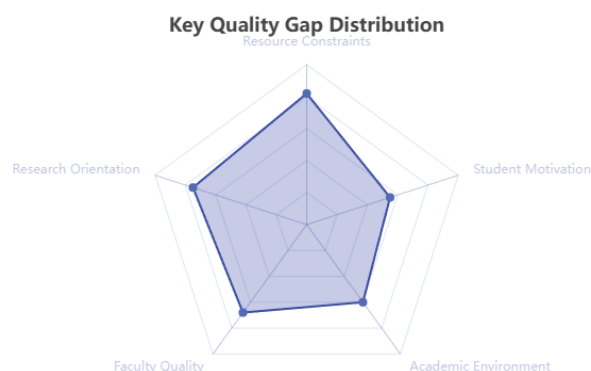
Substantial disparities exist in students' academic attitudes and research competencies. A notable subset of students displays inadequate commitment to thesis (design) requirements, manifesting deficiencies in fundamental academic literacy and research skills. This deficiency often leads to problematic practices such as plagiarism and fragmented content synthesis, substantially undermining the overall quality of scholarly output. Moreover, many students exhibit limited capacity for self-

directed learning and innovative thinking during the writing process, approaching the task as a perfunctory requirement rather than an intellectual exploration. Consequently, their work frequently lacks analytical depth and originality.

2.2.3 Institutional Limitations

While most private institutions have established regulatory frameworks for thesis (design) management, significant implementation gaps persist. Inadequate supervision mechanisms and lax enforcement of quality control protocols result in insufficient monitoring of student progress and output standards. This institutional leniency enables chronic procrastination and superficial engagement among some students. Furthermore, the absence of systematic punitive measures for academic misconduct and substandard work quality diminishes the deterrent effect of existing policies, allowing recurrent quality issues to remain unaddressed.

This tripartite analysis of faculty capabilities, student engagement, and institutional governance reveals systemic barriers to academic excellence in private undergraduate education. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires comprehensive reforms in faculty development, student research training, and quality assurance mechanisms.



Data: Synthetic metrics based on institutional reports

3. Proposed Strategies and Framework

3.1 Process Monitoring and Supervision

3.1.1 Strengthening Mid-Term Evaluation Mechanisms

The mid-term evaluation constitutes a pivotal phase in ensuring the quality of undergraduate theses (designs). Private undergraduate institutions must prioritize this stage by establishing well-defined evaluation criteria and procedural requirements to prevent superficial implementation. A structured feedback mechanism should be implemented to promptly communicate identified deficiencies to both students and supervisors, mandating corrective actions within specified timelines. This dual approach—rigorous assessment coupled with actionable feedback—ensures continuous quality improvement while fostering accountability among stakeholders. To optimize efficacy, institutions may integrate digital tracking systems to monitor compliance with revision requirements and standardize documentation of the evaluation process.

3.1.2 Implementation of Pre-Defense Review Protocols

To address lax quality control in thesis defense procedures, a pre-defense review system should be formally instituted. This protocol involves forming evaluation panels composed of disciplinary experts or academic committee members to conduct preliminary assessments of theses prior to formal defenses. Only those meeting established scholarly and methodological standards would advance to the oral defense stage, while substandard submissions would be required to undertake substantive revisions. This tiered evaluation framework enhances academic rigor by filtering deficient works at the pre-defense phase, thereby optimizing defense session efficiency and ensuring baseline quality across all presented research.

3.1.3 Development of a Thesis Management Information System

Leveraging digital platforms, institutions should deploy a comprehensive thesis management information system to streamline workflow oversight. This system would integrate modular functionalities for online topic approval, proposal submission, mid-term progress tracking, and final manuscript archiving. Advanced features such as algorithmic monitoring

of writing patterns, plagiarism detection interfaces, and predictive analytics for at-risk submissions could further enhance proactive quality assurance. By centralizing data flows and automating administrative tasks, the system reduces bureaucratic redundancies while enabling real-time identification of procedural bottlenecks or academic integrity violations. Such technological integration not only standardizes supervision processes but also generates actionable metrics for continuous improvement of institutional research governance.

3.2 Faculty Development and Incentivization

3.2.1 Strengthening Supervisor Selection and Training

Private undergraduate institutions should implement rigorous supervisor selection mechanisms to appoint faculty with substantial teaching experience and research expertise as thesis advisors. Concurrently, institutions must prioritize supervisor training and professional development to enhance pedagogical competencies and accountability. Regular participation in academic seminars, mentorship workshops, and collaborative forums should be institutionalized to foster knowledge exchange and interdisciplinary cooperation among supervisors.

3.2.2 Establishing Incentive Structures for Supervisors

To motivate supervisors and cultivate innovation in mentorship, private institutions should develop comprehensive incentive systems. Exemplary measures include instituting “Outstanding Supervisor Awards” to confer public recognition and material rewards for supervisors demonstrating exceptional performance in thesis guidance. Additionally, integrating thesis supervision outcomes into performance evaluations and professional promotion assessments will create a merit-based incentive framework. Such strategies align institutional goals with individual career advancement, thereby enhancing sustained engagement in mentorship quality.

3.2.3 Clarifying Supervisory Responsibilities and Rights

A clear delineation of supervisors’ responsibilities and entitlements is imperative for effective thesis guidance. Supervisors are obligated to provide systematic support in topic selection, research design, and manuscript development, while bearing primary accountability for the academic rigor of student outputs. Correspondingly, supervisors should retain formal rights, including evaluation authority over student theses and recommendation privileges for defense eligibility. This dual emphasis on accountability and authority ensures supervisors’ professional autonomy while reinforcing their commitment to ethical and scholarly mentorship standards.

3.3 Process Monitoring and Evaluation

3.3.1 Implementation of Refined Process Management

To enhance oversight of thesis development, private undergraduate institutions should adopt a refined process management system. This involves creating detailed timelines for students, with clearly defined tasks and objectives for each research phase. For instance, students should adhere to structured milestones—from topic selection to literature review, data collection, analysis, and draft completion—to ensure systematic progress. Such granular management not only aids students in organizing their workflow but also enables supervisors to monitor advancements effectively, thereby facilitating targeted guidance.

A dynamic monitoring mechanism should be institutionalized, incorporating regular progress reviews, mid-term evaluations, and random inspections. These measures allow institutions to promptly identify and address challenges during the research process, ensuring timely completion of high-quality theses. Digital tracking tools could further enhance transparency by providing real-time updates on student progress and supervisor interventions.

3.3.2 Development of a Diversified Assessment Framework

Complementing process monitoring, a diversified assessment framework is critical for elevating thesis quality. Traditional evaluation models, which disproportionately emphasize final outputs, often overlook students’ incremental efforts and developmental progress. Private institutions should instead adopt a hybrid evaluation system integrating process-oriented assessment (e.g., research diligence, collaboration skills, innovation) and outcome-based metrics (e.g., academic rigor, structural coherence).

4. Anticipated Outcomes and Impact Assessment

4.1 Expected Outcomes and Evaluation of Target Attainment

Following the implementation of quality assurance measures, a series of positive transformations and outcomes are anticipated. First, through institutional refinement and standardization, private undergraduate institutions will establish a more scientific and rational thesis management system, ensuring that the entire process—from topic selection to final evaluation—adheres to standardized and transparent protocols. This institutional optimization will significantly enhance administrative efficiency, reduce resource redundancies, and provide students with clearer, more targeted guidance.

Second, strengthened process monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will enable students to receive timely and actionable feedback during thesis development. Regular progress reviews and milestone assessments will allow institutions to promptly identify and address challenges in students' research workflows, ensuring incremental improvements in thesis quality. The introduction of third-party evaluation bodies will further enhance the objectivity and impartiality of quality assessments, offering authoritative and professional insights to both institutions and students.

Third, enhancements to faculty development—including rigorous supervisor training and optimized resource allocation—are expected to elevate the overall competence of mentorship teams. Supervisors will gain updated knowledge of academic frontiers and advanced research methodologies, enabling them to deliver higher-quality, discipline-specific guidance. Optimized faculty-student ratios will ensure equitable access to personalized supervision, thereby improving both the academic rigor of theses and students' scholarly capabilities.

To comprehensively evaluate implementation efficacy and target attainment, a multidimensional assessment framework will be established. This system will encompass qualitative and quantitative metrics across critical dimensions:

Thesis quality (e.g., originality, methodological soundness, compliance with academic norms)

Administrative efficiency (e.g., timeline adherence, resource utilization rates)

Student satisfaction (e.g., perceived support quality, skill development outcomes)

Faculty performance (e.g., mentorship effectiveness, professional development engagement)

Periodic evaluations using this framework will identify implementation gaps and inform iterative refinements to strategies, ensuring alignment with institutional goals.

Projected Impact

The systematic execution of these quality assurance measures is expected to yield transformative outcomes in thesis management at private undergraduate institutions. Standardized processes, enhanced supervision, and robust evaluation mechanisms will collectively elevate thesis quality while fostering students' academic competencies and critical thinking skills. These advancements will serve as a cornerstone for the connotative development of private institutions, strengthening their academic reputation and societal relevance. Long-term benefits include improved graduate employability, increased research output visibility, and alignment with national standards for higher education excellence. By anchoring reforms in evidence-based monitoring and adaptive evaluation, private institutions can transition from compliance-driven practices to a culture of sustained academic improvement. This strategic approach not only addresses existing challenges but also positions these institutions as competitive contributors to the global academic landscape.

4.2 Anticipated Outcomes and Objectives

4.2.1 Elevating Overall Thesis Quality

The implementation of the proposed quality assurance measures is anticipated to significantly enhance the overall quality of undergraduate theses at private institutions. This improvement will encompass not only theoretical depth and empirical rigor but also originality, practical relevance, and adherence to academic standards. Through these measures, students are expected to select research topics with greater foresight and societal applicability, employ more systematic and rigorous methodologies, and demonstrate marked progress in academic writing and communication skills.

Post-implementation outcomes may include:

Advanced Research Competence: Students will adeptly integrate disciplinary knowledge with practical inquiry, producing innovative and insightful scholarly work.

Structural Coherence: Theses will exhibit logically organized frameworks, robust argumentation, and precise language,

elevating their academic and practical value.

Methodological Sophistication: Increased adoption of data-driven approaches and interdisciplinary perspectives in addressing real-world challenges.

4.2.2 Strengthening Institutional Reputation

Elevating thesis quality serves dual purposes: advancing students' academic and professional trajectories while amplifying the institutional brand. High-caliber theses function as tangible evidence of educational excellence, showcasing an institution's capacity to nurture talent and produce impactful research. Improved thesis quality will bolster public trust and attract high-potential students and distinguished faculty, creating a virtuous cycle of academic excellence. A strengthened reputation will position institutions favorably in accreditation assessments and rankings, facilitating sustainable development and connotative growth. Employers and graduate schools will recognize the enhanced rigor of thesis training, improving alumni employability and postgraduate admission rates.

4.2.3 Fostering Holistic Student Development

The thesis process is designed to cultivate multidimensional competencies beyond academic achievement. By engaging in rigorous research, students will:

- Integrate Knowledge and Practice:** Synthesize classroom learning with real-world problem-solving, bridging theory and application.
- Develop Critical Capacities:** Strengthen independent thinking, analytical reasoning, and innovative problem-solving through iterative research cycles.
- Build Professional Readiness:** Acquire transferable skills in project management, ethical decision-making, and scholarly communication, preparing for dynamic career landscapes.

These interrelated objectives—quality enhancement, institutional branding, and student empowerment—collectively redefine the role of thesis education in private undergraduate institutions. By aligning academic rigor with societal needs, the proposed measures aim to transform thesis supervision into a strategic asset for institutional differentiation and student career readiness in an increasingly competitive global environment.

4.3 Evaluation Methods and Criteria

4.3.1 Establishment of Evaluation Metrics

To ensure objective assessment of the implemented strategies, a scientifically grounded set of evaluation metrics must be established. These metrics should holistically reflect thesis quality while incorporating critical dimensions such as student satisfaction and supervisory effectiveness. Specifically, evaluation indicators will be structured as follows:

1. Thesis Quality Metrics:

Originality: Novelty of research questions and contributions.

Practical Relevance: Applicability of findings to real-world challenges.

Academic Rigor: Comprehensiveness of literature reviews, methodological validity, and accuracy of data analysis.

Structural Integrity: Logical organization, coherence of arguments, and adherence to academic writing standards.

2. Student Satisfaction Metrics:

Perceived adequacy of supervisory support, resource accessibility, and procedural transparency, measured via Likert-scale surveys. Qualitative feedback on challenges encountered during topic selection, data collection, and revision processes.

3. Supervisory Quality Metrics:

Frequency and Diversity of Guidance: Regularity of supervisor-student interactions and adaptability of mentoring approaches.

Professional Competence: Alignment of supervisory expertise with student research topics, assessed through peer reviews and student evaluations.

Accountability: Timeliness and constructiveness of feedback, tracked via institutional oversight mechanisms.

4.3.2 Application of Multimodal Evaluation Methods

A triangulated evaluation approach will be adopted to capture multifaceted insights into strategy efficacy:

1. Quantitative Surveys: Standardized questionnaires distributed to students and supervisors to quantify satisfaction levels, perceived barriers, and resource utilization efficiency. Statistical analysis of thesis quality indicators (e.g., plagiarism detection rates, defense pass rates) pre- and post-implementation.

2. Qualitative Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled stakeholders (students, supervisors,

administrators) to explore nuanced experiences, including: Challenges in interdisciplinary research design. Effectiveness of digital management platforms. Perceptions of institutional support systems.

3. Expert Peer Review: Double-blind evaluations by external academic experts to assess theses against national accreditation benchmarks. Rubric-based scoring of originality, methodological soundness, and contribution to disciplinary knowledge.

4. Longitudinal Tracking: Monitoring of alumni career trajectories and postgraduate research performance to evaluate the sustained impact of thesis training.

By integrating these metrics and methods, institutions can generate actionable insights to refine thesis supervision frameworks. This evidence-based approach ensures alignment with global standards for undergraduate research while addressing the unique challenges faced by private institutions. Future iterations should leverage machine learning tools to automate metric analysis, enabling real-time quality interventions and dynamic policy adaptations.

5. Conclusion

The standardization and regulation of thesis management processes in private undergraduate institutions are imperative for academic excellence. By establishing unified administrative protocols and robust quality control mechanisms, institutions can ensure effective supervision and monitoring across all stages of thesis development. This systematic approach not only enhances students' academic writing proficiency and scholarly competencies but also institutionalizes pedagogical governance, thereby elevating overall educational quality.

Process monitoring and evaluation play a pivotal role in safeguarding thesis integrity. Rigorous oversight enables the timely identification and correction of deviations in students' research trajectories, ensuring adherence to academic timelines and methodological standards. Furthermore, the introduction of third-party evaluation bodies for impartial assessments provides institutions and students with professional, evidence-based feedback, driving continuous improvement in thesis outcomes.

The strategies proposed in this study hold significant practical significance and scalability for private undergraduate institutions. Implementation is projected to yield measurable enhancements in thesis quality, which in turn will strengthen institutional credibility and competitiveness. Such advancements align with national objectives to cultivate high-caliber professionals equipped with critical research skills. Additionally, these findings may serve as a valuable reference for other higher education institutions seeking to optimize thesis management frameworks and quality assurance systems. Future research should explore technological integrations (e.g., AI-driven plagiarism detection, blockchain-based credentialing) to further modernize academic supervision in alignment with global educational trends.

While this study proposes targeted quality assurance strategies for thesis management in private undergraduate institutions, the implementation efficacy of these measures remains empirically unverified. In subsequent phases, we will prioritize longitudinal tracking of their operational impact within institutional contexts. Through systematic collection of stakeholder feedback (students, supervisors, administrators) and outcome metrics (thesis quality benchmarks, defense success rates), a robust empirical evaluation framework will be applied to assess strategy effectiveness.

This evidence-driven approach will enable iterative refinement of the proposed measures, ensuring their alignment with the operational realities and resource constraints characteristic of private institutions. Furthermore, comparative analyses across disciplines and institutional tiers will be conducted to identify context-specific adaptations. Future research should also explore the integration of predictive analytics and machine learning models to anticipate implementation challenges and optimize resource allocation dynamically. Such methodological advancements will strengthen the generalizability of quality assurance frameworks while addressing the evolving demands of undergraduate research education.

Funding

no

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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