


## Interrogating the Durkheimian Theory of Religion and its Implication on African Religion and Environmental Sustainability

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**Abstract**

In the contemporary world, humanity is confronted with a lot of challenges through our actions and inactions. One of these challenges is environmental degradation and its concomitant effect. As a result, diseases have increased, global warming is a threat, Green House emissions and pollution are also increasing. This scenario has drawn the attention of the academia, governments, United Nations, non-governmental organizations and religious bodies across the globe on how best to mitigate this challenge. Questions are asked on who to blame and what should be done. This study, as an aim, seeks to look into these mind-boggling hiccups and proffer solutions to the lingering menace where the thoughts of Emile Durkheim are interrogated to identify how it has contributed to African Religious thoughts on environment and how the theory can help in environmental sustainability. Qualitative research approach is adopted in the work for information gathering. The paper discovered that in spite of accusations and counter accusations on the aspect of environmental degradation and sustainability, there is still hope that African religious environmental management can help tame the tide in respect of ecological crisis. The paper recommended that there is need for action by all and sundry towards achieving the desired qualitative and conducive environment now and for the future.

**Keywords:** Religion, African religion, Environment, Environmental sustainability, Interrogate and Theory.

**Introduction**

The growth and development of every society is best achieved when ideas that culminate into knowledge are put to use. That cannot be different from what Newton Isaac says that we, in developing our ideas depend on great minds that have passed before us. We learn from their thoughts and build on them to develop higher ideals that can stand the test of time and change the society for the better. This does not mean we are superior to them ([www.geiselmed.dartmouth.edu](http://www.geiselmed.dartmouth.edu)). Therefore, this is interpreted as borrowing ideas of great minds to work in our daily lives applicable.

Emile David Durkheim is one of such great minds whose idea of religion has helped shape religion particularly and the society generally. One of the societal concerns of his religious theory is that it can be linked to environmental management for a sustainable ecosystem. This is to show that African religion which is the focal religion in this research has all the attributes of a religious life imbued with what it takes to enhance environmental management. It also posits a situation in which African religion shows some level of cohesion among environmental and social structures that works to achieve this expected sustainability. On another angle is the fact that there are noticeable problems that cause environmental crisis which need vibrant ideas to manage and sustain the environment out of the crisis which African religion can be relied upon. Gbenda (2010) postulates that environmental crisis stems from the realisation of the damaging effect of the environment by such natural and man-made causes that need attention all over the globe. It therefore causes land, water and atmospheric degradation as it poses danger to humanity such as earthquakes, eruptions from the soil and erosions.

With the environmental problems identified, a lot of efforts are employed to tame the tide of environmental crisis and ensure sustainability. This cannot be completely achieved without the involvement of spirituality. Gbenda (2010), is of the opinion that since the identified problem continues to rage on in spite of all the attempts to tame environmental menace without succour, spirituality can be brought in to help.

Citing Fohz (2003:9) to support his claim, he argues that environmental crisis may continue to rage on unless spiritual aspect of controlling the environmental hazards is employed. This is the standpoint here which requires the involvement of the efficacy of religion in all matters in the cosmos and physical and spiritual are two sides of a coin in human and natural affairs of man.

Bearing this in mind, the adoption of Durkheim's theory as a springboard to explaining the involvement of religion in solving the environmental crisis bedeviling the world is not in doubt. It also explains how best the environment can be sustained. Although, many religious leaders and votaries argue that it is not only spiritual aspects but more practical steps need to be taken in the care of the environment which agrees with the theory of Durkheim.

#### **Conceptual clarifications**

There is that need to explain some key words as used in this study. These key words will help for a better understanding of the standpoint of the research.

#### **Environment**

Outside of the etymological origins of the word environment which are Greek's *environ* meaning Circle, surrounding or circle around and French's *environner*, also means to encircle or surround; there are other scholars with their views on environment. Okoronka, Masolan & Zaruwa (2009) picked up two basic themes from the etymology of the word environment which are the conditions of encircling any things within the natural, social and cultural situations the individual or community. Going by this definition, one is not in doubt that environment has physical, social and cultural dimensions which has implication on the lives of the individual or a habitat. But Fatubarin (2009) explains that what make the environment of the organism are all those external factors in the place where it lives which influence its life. The place where an organism lives is known as its habitat. In the words of Gbenda (2010), environment is used here as the sum total of the conditions within which organisms live. In the language of science, the living things are called biotic factors which include: animals, plants, insects, reptiles, birds among others. Abiotic factors include all non-living organisms such as mountains, hills, valleys, rain, soil, etc. The environment forms the basis of African religious worship as can be seen from the Durkheimian theory of religion in subsequent pages. Notice should be taken that it is from the word environment that the word environmental emanates. This research adopts the definition of Gbenda above as a working definition of environment for this study.

#### **African Indigenous Religion**

Idowu (1973) affirms that African Traditional Religion is among the old religious traditions of the World. It is an indigenous religious tradition of the Africans that is profound as far as African religious life experience is concerned and it is generational in nature. Prompted by the thinking of Idowu, Adasu (1985) avers that "African traditional religion is one which resulted from the sustaining faith of the forefathers of the present Africans". It is an inherited religion. Therefore, it cannot remain a heritage from the past but also continues as a living reality even today. It links the past with the present, and having gathered the past into the present, both the past and the present become a link between the now and eternity encompassing all African hopes and fears. Therefore, African Traditional Religion dates back to antiquities as Africans are the owners and practiced by the people on the African soil before the advent of colonialism. It is still being practiced today and exported to other countries by Africans themselves. This is the gamut upon which African religion stands.

#### **Theory**

A theory is associated with critical thinking that can be put to practical use. This has to do with rationality and good reasoning that can be observed and tested through research. In this context, Scheiner and Willig (2011) perceive theories as "being hierarchical frameworks that connect broad general principles to highly specific models". The definitions and principles of the general theory are not just wishful generalizations, but these are meant to cover specific areas of interests; and can help in finding out explanations to more or less related areas.

This brings us to what religious theory means. Theories of religion can be classified into subjective theories and the aim is to focus on the contents of religions and the meaning thereof, insofar as they are valued and easily understood (wiki). In this sense, Clarke and Byrne have argued that it is a significant fact about 'world' religions such as Islam, Christianity and Buddhism that their dogmas generate theories about religious participation of humans. Sometimes in the history of the theory of religion it has appeared that its proponents face serious challenge in accepting account of religion, or diverting from such dogmas to a radically naturalistic, external explanation of religion. What is embedded here is that the choice is not really facing humanity as such, because a case can be made for how religions work within its folds which natural methods can help to expatiate.

#### **Who is Durkheim?**

David Emile Durkheim lived around 1858-1917. He was one of the early sociologists who were evolutionist positivists. These sociologists observed that religious beliefs and practices could be found in all societies. According to them, they were of the opinion that although, religion manifests diversity, it is essentially non-rational and speculative.

Durkheim was himself a French philosopher who joined the sociology school of Auguste Comte. He advocated that sociology should concern itself with a wide range of institutions and social processes. He argued that there would be as many branches of sociology as there were varieties of social facts; such as marriage, family, personality, collectivity, demography, occupational groups, rural community, urban community, aesthetics, law morality, religion, politics, economic, crime, measurement of values and social organization. Later, Durkheim left France for Australia and studied the Aborigines who were the natives that lived in Australia from the earliest times (Dzurgba 2002; Wegh 2012).

#### **His Religious Thoughts**

Durkheim, in the study of the aboriginal culture of Australia, was in a way studying their traditional religion. He discovered from this study that the natural environment of the people provided the objects of worship such as animals, plants and watery creatures. Durkheim called them totems whose worship determined their perception, thought, attitude and action in their respective nature communities which were referred to as clans by the Europeans. To Durkheim, the worship of the totems is the worship of the clans. He concluded that as the natives hold the animals sacred and venerate same, it was the same to the clans. The clans form the societies which are the social, physical and spiritual environments. Therefore, religious

appeasement, expiation, propitiation, adoration and glorification were made to individual clans. These religious rituals increased group consciousness and loyalty. Madu (1977) quotes Durkheim as saying that “society is the object of religious veneration and the basic source of the sacred. The primary function of religion is the preservation of social unity... Before all, rights are means by which the social group reaffirms itself periodically”.

The above statement points to the fact that religion upholds the unity and stability of human society. It coheres the society as it brings different races together (Agule 2006). Also, as the people respect their sacred symbols, it was brought to bear on social obligations and duties in a collective worship at a shrine, the adherents showed their reverence and expressed their faith in common values and norms. The group articulates, communicates and comprehends their moral bonds. All these enable the group to establish and maintain order, solidarity, integration, cohesion, unity, consensus, control and cooperation. With this and from the foregoing, religion, according to Durkheim is a “social thing”.

On the social functions of religion in society, Durkheim advocated for a functional perspective of religion and ignored the issues of origins and evolution of religion which was the main focus of anthropologists and ethnologists. To him, religion is a social fact, a thing – a social institution as studied today. That religion is a true social factor, indicating that “religion must be in some sense true in order to have such social effectiveness” (qtd in Dzurgba, 2006). The social effectiveness is based on the functions religion could and did work in individual lives and the social groups in the society. His argument is that religion pervades, continues and exerts universal power over human societies irrespective of whatever society one fines his or herself.

Durkheim also established that religion reinforces a given social structure, refrain deviance or deviant behaviour and related change by its sacred authority and absolute control of human and material resources within religious institutions. Religion sets values and makes rules. Religion strengthens social harmony and solidarity. It promotes obedience and loyalty. It retards change as well as encourage change; especially through its prophetic condemnation and judgment against irreligiosity, immoral behavior and corruption within religious institutions and in the wider society.

Durkheim spoke of religious truth, but in the sense of the social functions it performs in the society. Religion promotes trust, confidence, commitment and conformity among members of a particular social group. He wondered how societies could manage their affairs without religion. His analytical focus was and is on the general significance of religions and how beliefs and practices are held to the satisfaction of the people’s social living. Thus, Durkheim called his social theory of religion functionalism. Durkheim succinctly avers that since people hold these beliefs tightly to their hearts and tries to inculcate them to its members with absolute respect, it shows that it the society that speaks through the votaries. It is like we wear the society as a whole on ourselves through the voice of those who accord them such recognition. This is through the social actions taken which may be hidden and round about humanity. But

the physical environment within these societies is used to explain phenomena, they are too absurd to be understood by an ordinary observer when it appears. All these was and is taken care of by the unknown powers which man fear and threatens his life. Thus, it confirms the sociality of religion as carrying with them social duties (Madu 1977).

### **Criticism of Durkheim’s Religious Thought**

Whatever endeavour humans undertake, there is a symbiotic relationship. This theory is not excepted. This theory of religion is criticized in a number of ways;

- i. The study of aboriginal Australia was only a small group that could have led him to generalize his conclusion as this cannot be said to represent all native and primitive tribes and as such does not represent the real situation of their beliefs as envisaged by Durkheim.
- ii. Many religionists and sociologists disagree with this theory for making people believe that religion worships of the society. This to them is overstating his case even as they agreed that religion promotes social solidarity and reinforces social values.
- iii. Durkheim is criticized on and on that his idea of collective conscience permeates and shapes behaviour of individuals is also an overstatement. Rather, it is rather those religious beliefs held by individuals and their convictions about religious events in the society that can exercise a much greater influence upon the individual than society does.

### **His Religious Ideas and their Influence on African Religion**

Looking at the postulations of Durkheim as put forward above, a number of African religious bases are identified. There is the origin of African religion in this theory as regards origin of religion. Here, in his study of aborigines in Australia, he is able to show that their religious practices emanated from the natural environment of the people as objects of worship such as animals, plants and watery creatures. This then is summed up as totemism.

In African religious culture, the worship of these environment resources is high. Gbenda (2010) posits that “ in certain parts of Ghana and Igbo areas of Nigeria for example, forests are also venerated because they house a variety of wild animals considered sacred or totems”(Dzurgba, 2002; Nabofa 1994; Shishima, 2012). To him, a totem is an animal, reptile, a plant vegetable, a non-living thing like stone, river or celestial body that has a special relationship.” “Totem is, therefore, a system or belief in which humans are believed to have a kinship relationship or mystical relationship with a group of people or race” (Dzurgba 2002; Nabofa 1994; Shishima 2012).

Similarly, Nabofa adds that the constituents of natural environment such as stones, mountains, plants, animals, some of whom quite often become totems to some groups of people, cultic functionaries, valleys, rivers, celestial bodies, wind, fire and road junctions are some of the commonly acknowledged natural symbols in traditional Africa. Such natural symbols are generally identified with a people who share identical beliefs, because they (that is, the symbols) are related to common experiences of the believers. In most cases, as a form of worship in African religion, a group of people, in a particular community, must have a past, projected life and consciousness into

any one or some of these natural objects and they are thus imbued with potent spiritual and symbols qualities.

As a result of the above, these natural symbols or objects thus become defined and gradually elaborate cultic activities would be organized and perfected around them. It is plausible that most of the African divinities associated with mountains, hills, valleys, lakes, rivers, oceans, sacred groves, forests, trees and animals, especially which have become totems must have come into being through this kind of dedication and mystical impregnation. In essence, the totemic idea espoused by Durkheim has continued to shape the totemic worship in African religion in most societies. In Tiv society of Nigeria's Middle Belt, for example, a child born at a road junction is believed to have undergone all manner of cleansing, purification and initiation into all manner *akombo* (rituals or mystical forces) such that he can freely participate in them without any fear of abomination. Such then is the symbolic and totemic nature of, and importance of a road junction in Tiv religio-cultural life.

On the cohesive nature of religion, Durkheim emphasized the unity derived in religious practice by the adherents as a group. They see themselves as one people in worship, ritual, family ties and community. Ray (1976) is of the view that in the cohesive nature of religion as its function, "there are archetypal symbols and mystical symbols and ritual acts which are decidedly instrumental to this cohesiveness and unity of people in a group in African religious culture". Archetypal symbols are sacred things designated only for reverence; whether they are gods, ancestors, sacred actions or things, which make up the traditional universe. These sacred objects and things are revered by every adherent such that the images are enshrined in their hearts and communicated in myth and ritual to provide a network of symbolic forms in social, ecological and conceptual elements in unity with locally bounded cultural systems.

These mythical symbols that make up religious worship objects are very important in traditional religion just like other religions. They are realistic and shape the religious, social, political and the physical world for humanity. In this respect, religion, and African religion in particular, is at the centre point of African societies: An archetypal symbol is a reservoir of a community's past and they structure collective rites for corporate benefit.

With this hindsight, religion cannot, as can be seen in African Traditional Religion, be a purely personal affair. Every act of worship is commonly owned. As a result, priests, ritual specialists, prophets, diviners and kings are the servants of the community mediating between the sacred and the people. The religious functionaries serve the society as a live bounding act with the society as a whole. African ritual at this point is self-functional in character as recognized by the adherents of the religion.

This character shows that every sacrifice is a re-creation of the group's solidarity; and every rite of passage reform corporate life of a people. This is the gamut and core of individual living within his community and the community partnering with the individual. It then ensures unity, cohesion, solidarity and altruism. All these attest to the fact that Durkheim's idea of religious life of the Australians has bearings on the traditional religions of Africans.

In this era of animal rights and regulations to save the endangered species of the world, Durkheim's theory bordering on totemism, when strictly observed in African religion can help save the animals from total extinction. In traditional Africa, the whole bulk of the ecosystem serves religious purposes. These are watery areas, groves, forests, rivers, streams and lakes, and so on harbours living creatures like animals and reptiles. These animals and trees can be protected if religious activities of traditional origin are carried out here. In doing this, Gbenda (2010) feels that land that is designated as forbidden for farming would retain its original fauna and flora. Also, groves, rivers and streams, where African religious activities are undertaken, people fear to exploit such places for fear of attacks by spirits or other unknown circumstances. Totemic practices also help in the preservation of the fauna and flora as well as the protection of same. If this attitude is adopted as taught in African religion, the environmental crisis could be averted and wild life would be protected and sustained.

### **The Implication of Durkheimian Theory of Religion on Environmental Sustainability**

Any effort made to engender the sustenance and management of the environment for a pure and conducive human habitation is welcome. The thoughts of Durkheim on religion culminate in environmental protection, management and sustainability. These are, as explained elsewhere happens to work. The Durkheimian theory has worked in many areas which it is hoped can help in managing the environment if it can be properly applied.

Worthy of note is the global concern on environmental sustainability by the governments, United Nations, Civil Society organisations, the academia, religious bodies and the rest. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has placed so many premiums on environmental sustainability as one of its cardinal points in sustainable development to be achieved in the year 2030 which about 169 countries have appended their commitment to it. The effort is to contain the misuse and depletion of the environment and help in ecosystem balance. On its 15<sup>th</sup> goal on "Life on land", the SDGs has as its goal to "protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss". This is premised on the fact that "terrestrial ecosystems are vital for sustaining human life, contributing to over half of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and encompassing diverse cultural, Spiritual and economic values" ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)).

Many other conferences are organised on a yearly basis by the United Nations such as the COP 28 which was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 30<sup>th</sup> November to 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The COP28 stands for the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change (UNFCCC) ([unfccc.int](http://unfccc.int)). With all these efforts being made by various bodies, Gbenda (2010) explains that the understanding of African Indigenous Religion is that there is constant interaction between living and non-living parameters; seen and unseen forces. In the field of religious studies, the living things and non-living are the creation of the supernatural or God. They are means of divine revelation and communication. That explains why the living and non-living things

may be considered sacred as the super sensible or agents do take possession of them. This also goes to agree with the postulations of Durkheim that religion is the function of the society as religion depends on the society and the society depends on religion. The society could be nature, environment, world, cosmos, and universe among others.

In this connection, the paper makes a summary of the implication of the Durkheim theory of Religion and how it rhymes with environmental sustainability. These are:-

**a. Environmental Protection and Sustainability**

In his study of Australian Aborigines, and their environment he discovered they worshiped the natural environment as can be seen from the previous sections. These are forests, watery bodies, mountains, stones and so on. These objects, he called totems. The worship of the totems made them sacred and was preserved for worship. All these are found also in the cultural milieu of the people and aid environmental protection and sustainability. These areas can be turned into heritage sites. Olaniran (2003), thinks that heritage sites provide the best opportunity for biological diversity, ecological interactions and protection of endangered species. These attributes make creation of heritage sites as representative ecosystems highly desirable. Sanctuary forests therefore manifest culture in the form of environmental protection and preservation due to regulatory cultural norms and etiquettes placed in the community for those purposes. Consequently, he continues that firstly, culture manifests itself in environment management through preservation of ecosystem due to religious considerations. The Yoruba of South Western Nigeria have sanctuary or heritage sites which the exploitation of biotic resources is considered a taboo. These efforts can help in environment protection and sustainability.

**b. Protection of Endangered Species of flora and fauna from total Extinction.**

The postulations of Durkheim can help in the protection of endangered species of fauna and flora from total extinction when flora and fauna are considered sacred and no more profane. If these are sacred, then they are preserved for worship. And anything that is worshiped is revered, held in high esteem and valued. In this regard, Gbenda (2010) illuminates more light that in Tiv environment, large areas with abundance of wild life and other natural resources were set aside for conservation. There was repressive legislation on over harnessing of species. In pre-colonial times, women were prevented from eating eggs for fear of extinction of birds. Hunting expedition was used as a process that guide against indiscriminate harvesting of wild life. *Wa Suwa* – a process whereby secluded fish ponds in the river were forbidden until after a long period, to allow abundance productions. After that there is *Kohol Suwa*- fishing of the bigger ones leaving smaller ones for continued production. These protect the fauna and as well

the flora. That is why in this era of animal right, these protective approaches have helped in protecting the existence of animals and has helped in indiscriminate killing and destruction of animals and forests. For the Tiv, groves and shrines of *akombo* (mystical forces) located in the forest and rivers were forbidden from harnessing. They constitute natural reserves whose vegetation has not been disturbed by human interference. From ecological point of view, restricted land and areas of natural world retain its original flora and fauna.

**c. Effective and Efficient Rituals in worship and Environmental Sustainability**

Rituals are very important in religious worship. This cut across all religions. The Durkheimian theory recognizes this as the worship of the society. Mbiti (1976) recognizes that a rite or ritual is an ordered set form of carrying out a religious worship or other such actions or ceremonies. This is through which communicating something of religious signification, through word, symbol and action is carried out. Therefore, a ritual embodies a belief. The ritual word is powerful since it is spoken in seriousness and solemnity, and it is repeated every time that ritual is done. As can be seen above, ritual observances can help in environmental management.

In Tiv, for example, there is *tsea toho* and *tsea ikyô*-reserved bush and reserved forest. This is done through ritual words and actions. The custodian of a particular *akombo* (mystical forces) may be mandated by the elders to protect the areas from destruction. Through *akombo* rituals, the reserved bush and forest, forbids everybody from harnessing the reserved areas for maturity and future use. Also, it protects the animals too as any accidental killing there attracts repercussions unless high-cost cleansing is incurred. Another area where ritual contributes to environmental protection and sustainability is the belief that nature and human spirits occupy reserved areas. Only people with such powers can carry out rituals to appeal to such spirits to vacate the areas for harnessing when the need arises. This helps sustain the environment.

**d. Coheres the Society and Environment.**

Durkheim talks about religion as a communal affair of a community. It is not just religion but the environment. The Tiv of North Central Nigeria has a strong sense of community- *Ka se* (we are Tiv). The *we* here is a strong cohesive factor that makes all see themselves as one another's keeper. It is important as an aspect of the way Tiv conceptualise and sustain the environment. The fortunes of an individual are reflected in the lives of the whole fabric of the community. It is the duty of the community to manage, maintain, and protect its environment from destruction (Gbenda, 2010). Also, totemic worship makes Africans have special relationship with totems. Totem might have done something beneficial for the group e.g. Tiv and green snake. Besides, the community or

clan might have descended from the totem, might have featured in myths of location, or it has qualities to be emulated (Gbenda, 58-59). By so doing, the community sees itself as one and behaves as such in worship and sacrifice. This is done communally. In another dimension, the environment has to interact between the physical and the spiritual. What cohesion of the environment entails is interaction of natural and spiritual beings in the environment. Life force exists in all things and makes everything inseparably connected so that human identity cannot be explained without a consideration of the living world. Elements of natural things like the rains, seasons etc. punctuate life and have sameness and are linked to the individual, or community (Gbenda, 63). This is why “African beliefs, therefore, foster greater harmony among the people living in the environment to develop its own laws and customs to meet survival needs”. Physical events in the environment have impact on human beings Vis-à-vis the environment.

### Recommendations

Much as the work of Durkheim shows, the fact remains that the theory depicts the functional nature of religion, and African religion is a beneficiary. More so are the inroads it has made in showing that environment sustainability can be achieved from these thoughts. Since totems are spiritual in consideration, they should be used in maintaining and sustaining our environment. It should also be used to protect the environment. The theory can also help in protecting flora and fauna from total extinction. African religious and cultural matrices should be adopted to protect these species for use now and in the future. This will help in no small measure as the era of animal rights seeks this idea as a challenge to curtailing indiscriminate killing of fauna and destruction of flora.

It is the contention of the research that since this society is far and above the individual, regulating the behaviour of our communities through ritual and government legislation to protect our environment for use now and in the future cannot be overemphasized. This is the right step in the right direction. These legislations should be backed up with stiff penalties. For African religious practice, the here and now penalties should be employed to sustain the environment. The society is now fragmented on the grounds of the poor, rich, educated, uneducated, superpower etc., but Durkheim sees the society as balanced and united even in worship. We, as a people, in Nigeria and elsewhere be united even if there are differences as identified above. As we become cohesive in pursuing humans set goals, our environment will also benefit immeasurably.

### Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, Durkheimian theory of religion has created great impact on African religion and the environment has their roots in culture where religion is part of it. This is because of the practice of totemism in the religious culture of Africans which also sustain the environment. Noticeable is also the fact that the theory places the society higher and above individuals. By this, our environment is higher than individuals even as man takes care of it. There is also the idea of cohesion in the theory where the community interacts with

nature for a harmonious relationship and co-existence. This is because; the environment needs man and vice-versa. Finally, religion starts from the human person and extends to the larger society where the society overbears the affairs of the group. Durkheim’s thought, by this, can be applied in our daily lives for a better world in spite of its few shortcomings. Also, all hands must be on deck by all and sundry to ensure a qualitative and conducive environment now and for the future.

### Conflict interest(s)

The author declares that he/she has no personal, professional or financial interest that may have inappropriately influenced the outcome of this research.

### Ethical considerations

The author declares that this article was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and principles for research.

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