



Caring for and Preserving the Environment: Christian Rights and Responsibilities to ‘The Creator’

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ABSTRACT

This research examines environmental ethics in Christian theology, highlighting human responsibility towards God's creation. In the modern era, the ecological damage caused by human activities has become a serious concern related to the moral obligations outlined in the Bible, which states that humans are entrusted to manage and care for creation, even though this practice is often neglected. This article is compiled using qualitative methods through a literature review approach. The aim is to explore how Christian teachings can integrate environmental awareness into the daily lives of believers. The research findings indicate that a deep understanding of creation and human responsibility as stewards can lead to collective action for environmental sustainability. This research is expected to be a source of inspiration for the Christian community to actively contribute to preserving creation for the well-being of future generations. Therefore, environmental ethics is not just a moral issue, but also an integral part of faith that must be manifested in tangible actions.

Keywords: Christian Theology, Christian Rights, Environmental Ethics, Human Responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, environmental issues have become one of the biggest challenges for humanity, affecting lives worldwide. Environmental damage caused by human activities, such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change, raises questions about human responsibility for the earth and all its contents, as well as the long-term impact of such actions on future generations. Awareness of the importance of protecting the environment is increasing among the broader community and religious leaders, who are beginning to realize that current actions will determine the planet's welfare and survival. For example, as El-Mallah et al. (2023) wrote, by channelling CSR funds for environmental protection and monitoring their use to ensure they reach their intended targets, El-Mallah et al. (2023, p. 492) research demonstrates real concern from a community and its leaders. Meanwhile, recent phenomena in Uzbekistan have focused on spirituality, linked to how individuals utilize the environment, maintain ecological balance, and empower communities to understand, and truly care for and protect God's creation. Ruzieva's (2020) research focuses on women's spirituality, which must be nurtured and protected to foster a family spirituality that cares for the environment. Ruzieva's (2020) research demonstrates that spiritual values within families are linked to concrete efforts to demonstrate ethical behavior toward nature, as well as toward others. This shows that environmental ethics is not only a scientific issue but also a moral and spiritual issue, which requires serious attention from every individual and community. With this increasing awareness, it is hoped that more targeted collective actions will emerge to preserve and maintain the balance of the ecosystem. Researchers believe that from there will emerge awareness and inspire positive changes in how they interact with the surrounding environment.

In Christian theology, humanity's responsibility for God's creation is a central theme in understanding faith. The Bible teaches that humans were created to manage and maintain the earth (Genesis 1:28), a task that is not only an obligation, but also a spiritual vocation (Rigler, 2020, p. 198). However, in practice, some Christian communities do not fully understand or apply this teaching in their daily lives. What seems to be that they often ignore the impact of their actions on the environment (Tomusu, 2021). Therefore, it is important to explore how environmental ethics can be integrated into the understanding of Christian theology and how this can influence concrete actions in preserving God's creation. Of course, these actions are manifested in a deeper awareness and commitment among the Christian community to act as responsible managers of the natural resources entrusted to them.

In addition, the Christian community's lack of understanding of the relationship between faith and environmental action is a significant problem. Some assume that ecological issues are the responsibility of the government or certain organizations, so they feel no personal obligation to be involved in conservation efforts. Kreider (2019, p. 514) calls this a way for people to stop taking the world for granted. This view can lead to apathy and a lack of active participation in initiatives that support environmental sustainability. Small actions from individuals can have a big impact if carried out collectively. This lack of understanding is a barrier for the Christian community to take an active role in preserving God's creation, and they often do not realize that

the teachings of faith should encourage them to act as responsible managers. For this purpose, guidance was once provided to a community in Deliserdang in maintaining forest sustainability (read L. Aziz et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to increase education and awareness regarding environmental ethics within the Christian community, so that they understand that protecting and preserving the environment is an integral part of faith. This is believed to be important because humans have a calling to love and care for God's creation for the welfare of humanity and the entire ecosystem. In line with these problems, there are also challenges in interpreting biblical texts related to the environment. Some people interpret Christian teachings narrowly, thus ignoring the aspect of environmental responsibility. For example, a mistaken understanding of human control over the earth can lead to the exploitation of natural resources without considering their impact on the environment. Some separate church stewardship from the ecological system and the balance of living creatures (Simmons, 2020, p. 534). This shows the need for a more holistic approach to understanding religious teachings. Therefore, Christian communities need to engage in constructive dialogue about how their faith values can contribute to environmental preservation (Yuono, 2019, p. 187). In this way, they can develop a more comprehensive understanding of their role as responsible stewards of God's creation.

On the other hand, different perspectives exist among different Christian denominations on environmental issues. Some churches may be more proactive in environmental advocacy, organizing various programs and initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of caring for God's creation, while others may not prioritize this issue on their agenda (Ngabalin, 2020). These differences can lead to inconsistencies in actions and attitudes towards the environment among Christians. For example, some researchers believe that this can also create a gap in understanding and commitment to nature conservation. Rozhko (2023) provides an important addition to this research on ecology and religiosity: the possibility of understanding and solving environmental problems within the context of a Christian worldview. In a global context, this also affects how Christian churches in different parts of the world respond to pressing environmental challenges, with some churches developing innovative and sustainable approaches, while others may lag and fail to make significant contributions (Salurante et al., 2021, p. 134). From the studies of the three authors, the researchers suspect the importance of appropriate and focused education on environmental ethics that is connected to theological studies on Christian responsibility.

In previous studies, several researchers have discussed the relationship between Christian theology and environmental issues. For example, Harmannij's (2019, p. 111) research highlights the close relationship between theology and faith, on the one hand, and the environment and sustainability, on the other. This research attempts to demonstrate that issues such as climate change, biodiversity and animal welfare, increasing air pollution, or warming climates are not merely scientific or political issues, but also theological ones that can be linked to the rise or fall of Christian spirituality. However, this research focuses more on historical aspects and lacks practical solutions for real action. This research aims to complement these shortcomings by providing a more applicable and relevant approach in the contemporary

context. Thus, this research not only seeks to understand the relationship between faith and the environment but also seeks to formulate concrete steps that the Christian community can take in facing current environmental challenges. This is expected to encourage more significant and sustainable collective and structured actions to protect God's creation. Because, on the contrary, mistakes in understanding environmental sustainability will become a problem and can be exploited politically for the interests of certain groups (Houston, 2019, p. 32). It is generally understood and accepted in education research that there are three main environments: in School, Family, and Society. Richie's (2020) research emphasized that a person's love for God and humanity will be manifested in their love and care for the environment. Even a person's spiritual character will be manifested simultaneously in loving God, loving others, and loving the environment (Richie, 2020). Even a person's spiritual character will be manifested simultaneously in loving God, loving others, and loving the environment. Therefore, someone who loves God certainly maintains the environment in School, Family, and amid society so that it is harmonious, clean, and provides comfort for living things. This research is important because it can provide new insights into how environmental ethics can be integrated into Christian theology. Meanwhile, Tomusu (2020, pp. 17–18) firmly believes that human existence in the world carries a cultural task to be God's representative in organizing the environment. This task requires serious and continuous efforts because the result of these efforts is for the betterment of human welfare.

Based on the explanation of the issues that have been described previously, the purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the dimensions of environmental ethics from the perspective of Christian theology and human responsibility toward God's creation. Therefore, researchers want to find the relationship and responsibility of humans from the perspective of Christian ethics in preserving nature. The Bible instructs humans to properly care for and sustainably preserve nature. The discussion in this paper focuses on the activities Christians must undertake. This aspect has not been explored in the studies above. This research is expected to provide deeper and more applicable insights into how Christian teachings can be a guideline for real action to protect the environment. Thus, this research not only focuses on the theological aspect, but also on the practical implications that can be taken by Christians in their daily lives. Do Christian values also address environmental preservation and the balance of nature? This raises the question of how Christian ethics in society, in general, and Christians in particular, treat the environment. The researcher's concern stems from the question: What is the responsibility of humans as God's creatures after knowing and acknowledging God? It is hoped that the results of this research can be a source of inspiration for individuals and communities in their efforts to protect and preserve God's creation.

METHOD

This study applies a qualitative method with a literature review approach to analyze environmental ethics in Christian theology and human responsibility for God's creation (Aspers & Corte, 2021, p. 603). This approach was chosen to deepen the theological and ethical

understanding contained in various written sources, as well as to explore how religious teachings, especially in the Christian tradition, view the relationship between humans and nature, and human moral responsibility for God's creation. The literature studies used include: the Bible, articles, journals, and theological books that review the relationship between Christian teachings and environmental ethics (Hamzah, 2019, p. 61). Then, the researcher will present an interpretation of the Bible text. After the literature sources are collected, the data will be analyzed, so that the results and discussions in this study can be academically accounted for. The data collected is in the form of questions needed to answer the focus of the study, namely, the relationship between Christian ethics in preserving the environment. So it appears that Christian theology provides adequate teaching for human work in preserving God's creation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics can be defined as a field of ethics that analyzes moral values and principles that govern the interaction between humans and their environment. According to DeWeese (2023), this particular group underscores humanity's moral obligation to the universe, encompassing all living creatures. Beyond simply enjoying the natural world, humans are guided to behave in a way that maintains the balance of the ecosystem. In his research, DeWeese (2023) emphasizes the importance of Christians engaging in promoting righteous behavior in preserving nature as a form of application of their biblically based faith. Thus, environmental ethics aims to determine the moral standards that should be followed in managing and protecting natural resources, and in reducing the negative impacts of human activities on the environment. Research by Aziz et al. (2021) on students and employees has confirmed this hypothesis, stating that an understanding of environmental ethics significantly influences attitudes and behavioral control, leading to a more orderly life. This is becoming increasingly relevant as the environmental challenges we face today increase.

More specifically, environmental ethics examines questions about human moral responsibility towards the earth and biodiversity. In it, of course, there are implications of human actions in utilizing nature. Environmental ethics here includes various philosophical approaches that question whether humans have the right to exploit nature for their benefit. Or, does ethics have a greater moral value that must respect the rights of other living things, ecosystems, and even the planet itself? Kosche (2021, p. 216) also questions a similar issue in his research: the need to integrate human ecology, both in its individual and social dimensions, into broader ecological conversion. This view often contradicts the traditional view that views nature as merely an object that can be exploited for the benefit of humans alone.

There are several main schools of thought in environmental ethics, including anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism. Anthropocentrism focuses on humans as the center of all moral values, viewing the universe as a resource to meet human needs and interests. According to Marcos and Valera (2022), in ethical education in the field of biocentrism, all

forms of life, both human and non-human, are considered to have equal moral value. Humans must protect the rights of other living beings as a form of love and compassion for others through environmental preservation. For Marcos and Valera (2022, p. 796), the basis of anthropological metaphysical knowledge of nature lies in treating nature as one treats oneself, which is related to respect for the Creator. Meanwhile, Leese (2019) emphasized that the ecosystem as a whole has moral value that must be respected and protected, so the focus should not be solely on individuals or specific species, but on the balance and sustainability of the entire ecosystem. For Leese (2019, p. 9), reading and understanding the Bible today must be linked to how one should treat the environment to ensure its preservation.

In the modern era, environmental ethics is closely related to the principle of sustainability, which emphasizes the importance of managing natural resources wisely, so as not to threaten the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This concept of sustainability ethics demands that every human action considers the long-term consequences for the planet and the life on it. Thus, environmental ethics focuses not only on the interests and welfare of the current generation but also on the future sustainability of the earth and humanity as a whole. This emphasizes that our responsibility to the environment is not only temporary but must be seen in a broader context, namely how our actions today will affect life in the future. Therefore, it is important to integrate these ethical values into every aspect of decision-making related to the environment.

Environmental ethics is often related to practical issues such as climate change, deforestation, land degradation, and biodiversity decline. In this context, ecological ethics serves as a moral guideline to address these problems at the individual, community, and state levels (Sullivan-Dunbar, 2017, p. 81). Therefore, this discipline requires policies based on strong moral principles as well as concrete actions to reduce the negative impacts on the environment that have occurred.

Understanding Creation in the Bible

The understanding of creation in the Bible is essential in Christian theology, as it provides the basis for understanding man's relationship with God, nature, and all creation. Some of the main concepts related to creation in the holy book include the following: first, creation as God's work. In the Bible, creation is seen as God's perfect and good work. The book of Genesis 1 describes how God created the universe, including the heavens, earth, plants, animals, and humans, in six days. Each stage of creation ends with a judgment that creation is "good" (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25), and after the creation of man, He declares that His creation is "very good" (Genesis 1:31). This shows that creation is part of God's good and perfect will and plan. According to Lim (2018, p. 187) the narrative of creation powerfully communicates God's love for humans, and the form of that love is expressed in the command to protect and preserve His creation for the prosperity of future generations. Protecting and preserving nature is a matter of great trust from God to humans. Aftab et al. (2023) research highlights the importance of eco-friendly innovation, environmental strategies, and pro-environmental behaviors for

achieving superior environmental performance through operational efficiency, appropriate environmental strategies, and human willingness to engage in environmental activities. For Aftab et al. (2023, p. 1784), humans, as God's creations and bearers of the cultural mandate, must preserve, protect, and utilize nature for good and righteous purposes. As befits humans as kings, we not only enjoy creation, but provide a reciprocal impact for society, namely, human welfare. Therefore, Christians, who have been bequeathed feelings, creativity, and reason, informed by the Bible, should be grateful and participate in caring for all of God's creation. With this power of creativity and thought, humans (Christians) can take concrete steps to preserve God's "very good" creation.

Second, man is the image and likeness of God: Man, in the view of the Bible, was specially created in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). This shows that man has a very special position in creation, as a being who has a personal relationship with God and is given the responsibility to manage His creation. As an illustration of God, Pasaribu (2022, p. 2) believes that humans can think, create, and act by God's will in protecting and caring for nature. This concept provides the basis for human responsibility to be a wise and loving steward of the earth and all its contents. This responsibility includes not only the management of natural resources, but also the protection of existing life and ecosystems so that humans can contribute positively to maintaining the balance of nature for future generations.

Third, humans have been given the mandate to manage and rule the earth: In Genesis 1:28, God gave humans the command to "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, over every living creature that moves upon the earth." This mandate does not only mean dominion over nature, but also includes the responsibility to care for and manage the earth wisely. Humans are called to be good stewards, maintain the balance of nature, and preserve His creation (Petrescu-Mag et al., 2020). Thus, this mandate invites humans not only to have dominion but also to act as protectors of the earth. Fourth, creation glorifies God. The Bible teaches that all creation glorifies Him. In Psalm 19:1 it says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse shows His handiwork." All creation, be it the universe, flora, fauna, or humans, shows His greatness and majesty. Thus, creation is not only a tool for humans to utilize, but also a means to glorify Him and acknowledge His greatness. This understanding leads Christians to treat creation with respect and responsibility. Thus, we are reminded of the importance of a harmonious relationship between humans and creation, which in turn brings us closer to God and strengthens our faith.

Fifth, there should be harmony between humans and nature. The Bible describes that before the fall into sin, there was a balanced and harmonious interaction between humans and the natural environment. Humans lived in harmony with nature, and the relationship between humans and creation was mutually beneficial and balanced (Pasaribu et al., 2022, p. 3). However, after the fall into sin, this relationship was broken, and humans began to exploit nature for personal gain, resulting in environmental damage. In the Book of Genesis, exploration of nature is taught for the benefit and well-being of humanity. However, the Genesis

narrative later demonstrates that humanity's fall into sin has damaged its perspective and paradigm regarding nature and its sustainability (Cloete, 2023, p. 9). In the Christian view, the restoration of the right relationship between humans and nature is part of the larger process of salvation brought by Christ.

Sixth, there is importance in respecting creation. In the Bible, many verses emphasize the importance of respecting God's creation. For example, in Proverbs 12:10 it says, "The righteous care for the life of his animals." This verse reminds Christians not only to care for human needs but also to protect and respect the lives of other living creatures. In addition, the Sabbath principle also teaches the importance of giving rest to the earth and other living creatures, as written in the Law (Exodus 23:10-11), which encourages people to give time for the land and animals to rest. A manifestation of this point, for example, is giving land, water, seas, or lakes the opportunity to restore their essence as creation by returning them to their function and dignity as God has given them. In agriculture, for example, this involves giving the land a break so that it is not immediately suitable for planting after the harvest. Meanwhile, in the sea or lakes, fishermen should not force themselves to explore the riches of the water in a short time. Both fish and coral reefs must be preserved and protected.

The Relationship between Environmental Ethics and Theology

Environmental ethics and theology have a close and complex relationship, where they complement each other in discussing human moral responsibility towards the world and His creation. In this context, environmental ethics can be understood as the study of moral principles that govern human relationships with nature. Meanwhile, theology provides the foundation of moral and spiritual teachings that direct man in the management of God's creation. Thus, understanding this relationship is very important to create awareness and shared responsibility for preserving the environment.

From a theological perspective, nature and all its contents are understood as God's work with a specific purpose. Every component in the ecosystem, from plants and animals to natural resources, is considered to have a crucial role in maintaining the balance of life. For example, forests not only function as oxygen providers, but also as a place of residence for various species and as a regulator of the water cycle. In this context, theological teachings emphasize that humans must protect and care for His creation. This responsibility is not only intended for personal interests but also for the survival of future generations. Thus, it is important for us to understand that every action towards nature has a much broader impact, and we are required to act wisely for the sake of environmental sustainability and the welfare of other living things on this earth. On the other hand, environmental ethics focuses on human actions in caring for and preserving the earth. This includes principles such as sustainability, social justice, and intergenerational responsibility. For example, in sustainable agricultural practices, farmers consider not only current harvests but also the long-term impacts on soil, water, and biodiversity. By applying the principles of environmental ethics, farmers contribute to environmental sustainability and the welfare of society as a whole. This shows that

environmental concerns are not only important for the sustainability of the ecosystem, but also affect the quality of human life. Therefore, the application of environmental ethics is crucial in every aspect of activities related to the use of natural resources.

The relationship between environmental ethics and theology can be seen in various religious traditions around the world. As an illustration, in Islamic teachings, there is the concept of "Khalifah" which emphasizes that humans are the guardians of the earth (Astuti, 2020, pp. 34–36). This means that every human action towards the environment must be based on the principles of justice and responsibility. In this context, acts of damaging the environment are considered a violation of the mandate given by God. Likewise, in the Christian tradition, there is a teaching about "responsibility for creation" which emphasizes the importance of protecting and caring for the earth as a form of respect for the Creator.

In a more detailed analysis, we can see that environmental ethics is not only related to individual actions but also involves broader social and economic structures. For example, government policies regarding the management of natural resources can affect how society interacts with the environment. If these policies do not consider aspects of sustainability, there will be negative impacts on the environment and society. Therefore, it is important for leaders and policymakers to understand the relationship between environmental ethics and theology in formulating sustainable strategies.

In line with this, education also plays a key role in building awareness of the importance of environmental ethics and theology. Through education, individuals can understand the moral values that underlie their actions towards the environment. For example, environmental education programs in schools can teach students about the importance of preserving nature and how their actions can affect the ecosystem. Thus, education can be an effective tool in forming a generation that is more aware and responsible for the environment. Based on the explanation above, by understanding and applying the principles of environmental ethics within a theological framework, humans can build a better and more sustainable world. This responsibility does not only lie with individuals, but also includes society and government in designing policies that support sustainability. Therefore, everyone has an important role in maintaining and caring for the earth as a shared residence for future generations. We can create a healthier and more harmonious environment. This joint effort is very important to ensure that natural resources can be utilized wisely and sustainably so that they not only meet current needs but also protect the rights of future generations to enjoy a good environment. Thus, collective awareness and action are key to maintaining the sustainability of the earth.

Human Responsibility as a Manager

Humans, as responsible managers of God's creation in Christian theology, includes several moral and spiritual dimensions. Based on the teachings of the Bible, humans are given a mandate by God to manage the earth and all its contents wisely and responsibly. This responsibility is not only limited to the use of natural resources, but also includes respect for the intrinsic value of creation, the preservation of biodiversity, and remedial actions for damage

that has occurred. Here are some of the key aspects of human responsibility as custodians of creation.

First, managing nature wisely. In the Book of Genesis (Genesis 1:28), God gave humans the mandate to "dominate" and "rule" the earth. However, this dominion is not dominion that is exploitative or destructive, but rather management that aims to ensure the well-being of all creation. As stewards of creation, humans are expected to use natural resources wisely, considering the long-term impacts of their actions on the ecosystem, and ensuring that the use of nature does not disrupt the natural balance or deplete resources that can be used by future generations. Camacho and Valdés (2020, pp. 254–256) have been making this a teaching point in their master's degree classes in South America for over 12 years.

Second, preserving biodiversity. Human responsibility also includes maintaining and preserving biodiversity. Every living creature, from plants to animals, has a role in maintaining the balance of nature. Humans as stewards of creation are called to protect other living creatures and their habitats from damage or extinction caused by human actions. In this case, humans must protect and care for nature so that biodiversity is maintained, which in turn supports the sustainability of ecosystems and life on Earth.

Third, reducing negative impacts on the environment. Humans' responsibility, as stewards of creation, also involves efforts to reduce negative impacts on the environment, such as pollution, climate change, and environmental damage. Humans are given the ability to think and act to protect the earth from further damage. In this context, environmental ethics requires individuals and communities to be proactive, reducing the use of fossil fuels, waste, and switching to more environmentally friendly practices (Brennan et al., 2021, p. 1258), such as renewable energy and more sustainable resource management.

Fourth, restoration and reconciliation. Because humans have also failed to fulfill this responsibility in a just and wise manner, often causing major environmental damage, human responsibility as stewards of creation also involves efforts to repair the damage that has occurred. Christian theology teaches that salvation applies not only to human souls, but also to the earth itself (Romans 8:19-22). In this case, acts of restoration are part of humanity's spiritual mission to repair the damage that has occurred to creation, for example through reforestation, ecosystem rehabilitation, or efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Fifth, developing policies that support sustainability. Human responsibility as stewards of creation also includes implementing policies that support environmental sustainability. These policies can be in the form of regulations that regulate nature protection, sustainable management of natural resources, and regulations that reduce pollution and ecosystem damage. Such policies aim to create a better environment for current and future generations and ensure that the earth can continue to support life in the long term. Every Christian in government who has the opportunity to issue environmental policies should view that opportunity as a calling from God. Therefore, policies issued and approved by the government must be oriented toward the glorification of nature, its preservation, and its full protection.

CONCLUSION

This research emphasizes the need to integrate the principles of environmental ethics in Christian theology as a basis for understanding human responsibility towards God's creation. By raising awareness and education about environmental issues, Christian communities can actively contribute to environmental conservation efforts. These responsibilities include wise management of natural resources, protection of biodiversity, reduction of negative impacts on the environment, and measures to restore damage that has occurred. By carrying out sustainable collective action, it is hoped that Christians can make a positive contribution to the well-being of the planet and future generations. This effort is not only important to preserve the environment, but also to educate and build awareness among the wider community about the importance of protecting and caring for the earth for a better future. Therefore, this researcher has emphasized how Christians should act in environmental conservation. Of course, utilizing waste and disposing of waste in its place must be part of Christian culture everywhere. There is no longer any reason for the Church to forget to put trash bins on church premises. Even this small action can have a broad impact on the lives of future generations. By implementing sustainable collective action, it is hoped that Christians can make a positive contribution to the well-being of the planet and future generations. These efforts are not only crucial for preserving the environment but also for educating and raising awareness among the wider public about the importance of protecting and caring for the earth for a better future.

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest during the concept development, manuscript writing, and completion process.

Author contributions

H.H. designed and developed the study, collected data, performed data analysis, and drafted the initial manuscript. P.K.H. collected data, drafted the manuscript, and checked the spelling until finalization. H.H. and P.K.H. participated in the final analysis and writing of the article. All authors approved the final manuscript.

Ethical considerations

This research was compiled in accordance with recommended writing ethics. All sources cited have adhered to proper citation standards and established appropriateness. This research did not involve animals or plants in any of the data collection processes or in the preparation of the manuscript. Completely Statement From Institution number 46i/WKIV/SETIA/II/2026

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Data availability

The authors declare that all data support this research article and that the findings are available in the article and its references.

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