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(REVIEW ARTICLE)

Students unrest in Nigerian universities: Types, causes and administrative strategies to the challenges

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Abstract

This write up is on the influence of students' unrest, prevalent in the administration of public universities in Nigeria. The author used library research to look into the types, causes and influences on university administration and the administrative strategies to curtail the challenges. Students' unrest is described as intentional, destructive, disruptive and conflicting behaviour of students' in universities. It is the rampage made by students in pressing their demand on certain issues with university authorities. Student unrest include; demonstration, boycott of classes/lectures, civil disturbance, protect, crises, and riot among others. The causes have been identified to be poor funding of the universities system, government and public political interference, cultism, insecurity, communication gap, peer influence, management leadership styles, school environment/facilities, and youth unemployment among others. It was discovered that student unrest affects university administration in various forms such as; Malicious destruction and vandalism of infrastructures thereby preventing effective teaching and learning, Some suggestions were offered; University management/administration should diffuse tension and crises pruned problems from university management and administration through good government such as; collective decision making involving students, showing respect to students' demands, being equitable and unbiased in disciplinary issues, being transparent and effective in communication and Government funding of universities appropriately and adequately.

Keywords: Student Unrest; Administration; Insecurity; Demonstration; Tension; Funding.

1 Introduction

Student unrest connotes the activities that is almost totally negative and has no redeeming qualities. The World Health Organization (2002), views student unrest as "an intentional use of physical force or power, which results in or has a high livelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological, harmful development or deprivation". It can also be perceived as; destructive, dysfunctional and the same times as a catalyst for change, creativity and production (Posigha & Oghuvwu, 2009). Students' unrest is the rampage made by students in pressing their demand on certain issues with university authorities, thus, students' unrest is the demonstration made by students leading to destruction of lives and properties as a result of protest over their demands (Odu, 2013). Anho (2006) noted student unrest to stem from inability of school administrators to meet the needed student personnel support services in their campuses.

Adejuwon & Okewale, (2009), believes that students' unrest is the result of interaction among people, an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence. To Adeyemi, Ekundayo & Alonge, (2010), student unrest has become well documented that students' crisis is becoming more rampant in the universities and the resultant consequence has been to the detriment of the teaching – learning process.

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Studies conducted variously by Anho (2006), Adeyemi *et al.*, (2010); Ige and Owolabi, (2010); Ajibade, (2013) and Egboluche, (2013) have shown that violent demonstration and students' unrests affects the smooth running of academic calendar in the public sector of universities in Nigeria. Akpan, (2014), affirmed students' unrest to give birth to violence and instability of academic calendar, high level of indiscipline, loss of lives and destruction of properties as well as bribery and corruption. Anho (2006) asserted that taking prompt, necessary, and proper care of the administration of students' personnel support services in schools would arrest the problems of student unrest.

It is crucial to depict that student unrest within the universities varies from campus to campus and reflect university size, location, student population, mission, specialization, governance, and unionization.

Ngwokabuemai (2015), explained that students have become uncontrolled and highly disrespectful to: themselves, teachers, school administrators, parents and to the society at large.

The concept of tertiary institution as a `village of priests' or as a conglomeration of an intellectual oligarchy or as one hierarchical corporate entity like any other parastatal or organization needs to change among politicians and administrators in developing countries. Universities play major roles in national development especially in the development of high level manpower. The university award degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in conventional or specialized universities.

The universities are saddled with the responsibility of giving birth to fresh insight, vision, and arena where fundamental ideas are pronounced, challenged, clarified, and disputed in the must dignified and collegial manner. Ejeh, Okenjom and Chizi-Woko, (2016), asserted that the higher education/universities system is seen to make a fundamental impact to the intellectual, economic, cultural and social development of any nation. Consequently, universities help in growing knowledge and innovation based economy, and enriches both social and environment wellbeing while promoting tolerance within the societal circle.

In the words of Aluede and Aluede (1999), Anho (2007), students' unrest are caused by various factors such as; welfare problems which arises in the form of lack of electricity and pipe borne water, inadequate facilities for learning, lack of proper motivation on the part of lecturers and facilitators. Davies, Ekwere and Uyanga, (2016) asserted that: "Nigerians have for some time been disturbed by the alarming rate at which students' unrest in universities have led to destruction of lives and property and untimely interruption of the planned academic programmes".

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The frequent occurrence of students' crises in Nigerian universities has been a matter of concern to parents and government educationists, while the fact remains that students' unrest reflects the socio-economic and education problem facing Nigerians as a Nation today; more problems have been created in an attempt to solve this unhealthy phenomenon. The reasons according to Anho (2006) are traceable to the problems of non-availability of student personnel support services which range from students' demands, to lack of facilities or inadequacy or possibly that the channels of communication between the students and the authorities have not been fully explored. Unfortunately, student's unrest has been conceived and portrayed mostly as a negative and disruptive process with myriad implications on the administration and management of education in particular. On the basis of the above background, this study seeks to investigate influence of students' unrest in Nigerian universities' administration in Nigeria by identifying the types, causes and administrative strategies used to curtail the unrest, and suggestions will also be offered.

2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework which guided this study is the System Resource Theory of Organizational Effectiveness, propounded by Yutehman and Seashore (1967) that: "effectiveness is an organizations' ability to secure an advantageous bargaining position in its environment and to capitalize on that position to acquire, judiciously distribute, and monitor utilization of scarce resources". The theory also viewed organizations such as schools as an open system which acquire inputs, engage in transformation process and generate outputs. The theory is relevant to this study because school interaction with its environment is critical for the acquisition of scarce educational resources which when effectively utilized translate to good performances. Government and other donors provide educational resources like textbooks, laboratories and libraries to schools in Nigeria, to make teaching (lecturing) and learning effective which reflects on the standard of management.

Anho (2007), explains that "management in school is used to coordinate resources - human, financial and physical/facilities, to enhance smooth running of institutions and improve students' performance". This is supported by Imevbore (2011), who saw a school as an organization that is alive and need to sustain that life by responding to its internal dynamics which transforms given inputs into required outputs. In this regard, he saw an organization as a system that is set up to convert resources into products and services which is then provided to an external receiving system. Further, Oni (2006), referring to the secondary school, which is applicable to universities and other tertiary institutions like any other organization receives inputs from its environment, converts or processes the inputs and afterwards discharges as outputs.

In summary, the Systems Theory confirms that the future of peace on our campuses in tertiary institutions generally and in universities particularly depends on the degree of the compromise and understanding between the authorities and their students by providing the essential support services as the youths are urged to appreciate the efforts of the authorities, so let the authorities learn to appreciate and accommodate the concerns of the students and provide same hence, there will be dysfunctional activities, strikes, unrest, protest, agitation, and riot among others.

3 Types of Student Unrest

3.1 Violent Behaviour

The incidence of violent demonstration has become a common feature of higher education in both developed and underdeveloped societies but with devastating effects on education in the latter (Gideon, 2011; Hajek, 2013). Violent protests are traceable to the public sector universities while researches on student unrest in the private sector have been hitherto lacking in literature. (Tatalovic, 2014; Wragg, 2014). Violent protest result in disruption of lecturers, school general program destruction of properties, injuries to staff, and students and other innocent citizens. Violent behaviour results to kidnapping of students, staff and university management.

3.2 Boycott of Classes/Lecturers

Boycott of classes/lecturers occur when students refuse to attend scheduled classes/lecturers or school activities to draw attention to their needs, request or grievances.

3.3 Civil Disturbance

Students may not boycott classes, lectures or scheduled school activities, but may resort making noise in the class during lecture down shuttling their feet, refusing to answer questions, seating down on a major lawn, road or park without saying a word to anybody. These actions may disturb movement of traffic or pedestrians.

The incidence of students' unrest has become more intolerable; however, the management styles employed by school organization would then determine whether the conflict is subdued or aggravated. Best (2006), in his own opinion contends that; "the intervention of the police and other law enforcement agents often calls for the use of extra-ordinary measures such as; the use of force to restore law and order, although, this could sometimes lead to death or injury of many students".

3.4 Protest

Protest may be against the school management/administration, the lecturer school programme. Plans and activities on: Issues that unusually trigger off protest include; appointments into various positions and posts. Charge in school fees, postponement of lecture examinations on students' election. Others include; perceived underrepresentation, embezzlement, or misappropriation of funds, perceived biased, disciplinary actions, administrative in-adequacy, provocative student union activities, lack of resources, introduction of new courses, mistrust, amongst others. The purpose of protest has been to draw school management/administration to their needs, as the care and concern shown makes them to be civil, and display less misconduct. Ukporbio (2018).

3.5 Crises

Crises in school may be intra or inter personnel. It is intra personal when the crises is within the individual which may be as a reaction to dissatisfaction with that individual. University students are most times faced with problem of social identity such as increase in intellectual awareness ability, emotional compatibility and expanded social interest which forms crises within such student – Unachukwu and Nwankwu (2001).

Crises may be as the result of the students' experience, from home, the society or within the school environment. Some students have reflexive response to pains from punishment or violent behaviour of parents, guardians, teachers or neighbours which make them learn how to cultivate violence and crises free responses to situations. Ulman and Strans, (2007).

3.6 Student riots

Riots in universities in Nigeria have been an issue of concern since the beginning of higher education, with the creation of Yaba College of Technology Lagos and the University of Ibadan (Alimba, 2008). Prevalence of student unrest in the form of riots is also evident in other Universities (Odu, 2013). More often than not, these destructive activities are associated with seemingly malicious school policies, poor state-of-the-art-facilities on Campus, increase in school fees (Omisade, 2014), poor funding of education, poor remunerations and conditions of service for staff and a host of other factors.

Some of them have resulted in violence leading to destruction of public properties, arrest, large scale injuries, expulsions, proscription of Union activities, prosecution and imprisonment, rustication and loss of life. Little or no attention is given to the issues causing these disputes (Aluede, 2001). Students often come back after a protest to leave in the same conditions that spark off the protest without addressing their demands.

3.7 Causes of Students' Unrest in Universities

Students, government and authorities of our universities all share various degrees of blames in brewing and giving rise to unrest in our institutions of learning in Nigeria. According to Jega (2003), the Nigerian Education sector in general has been experiencing devastating crisis from late 1970, he stated that the crisis have been characterized by a combination of chronic underfunding, rapidly increasing students' enrolment, inadequacy of facilities, deterioration of physical infrastructures and suppression in managing the institutions, demoralization of staff and students, incessant students riots and periodic staff strikes (Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2006).

Anho (2019) specifically identified some major causes of conflicts/crises in Nigerian universities to include: problems with administrative structure, leadership style, non-available of fund/resources, communication process and style, condition of staff services, and government policies/interference. The following are perceived causes of students' unrest in universities;

3.7.1 Interference and Political Appointments

Politics within the school (internal politics) especially on campus relating to appointment of key officers such as Vice Chancellor, Deans, Head of departments and Student Union Government (SUG) officials also result into conflicts and various forms of student unrest. Interference in the appointment to these school administrative positions incubates conflicts which often leads to disruptions of academic activities and university calendars Anho, (2007). In addition to conflict which arises from situations that are intrinsic to the university, some form of student unrest arises due to political (external politics) outside the university. For instance, political control of education in terms of managerial and administrative policies brings about conflicts between the university and the government.

3.7.2 Funding

When the government is not fair or considerate in providing adequate funds to schools and payment of salaries to staff whereas politicians and senior officials enjoy higher salaries and fringe benefits, the issue often results in students unrest. As such, loans, grants and allowances students get often instigates them to protests against the school authorities. Omari and Mihyo (1991), by citing examples of Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya and Zimbabwe Universities, said that students complained about the grants which were either too little or delayed. Similarly, Anho (2017) discovered a relationship between fiscal and physical resources as administrative variables and principles' competence and advocated for proper funding of schools to avoid crises and unrest.

3.7.3 Crisis of Quality and Standards

The crisis of quality in universities is to be carefully analyzed to be able to provide a scientific explanations as to why admissions of poorest and less qualified students, shrinking financial support accompanied by drain is still giving first classes and several upper and lower class honours degrees. To what extent does the conflict of interest contribute to this state of affairs. Apparently universities are continually failing to realize their primary objective: advancement of knowledge and pursuit of truth. Whereas applied research has direct utility, over insistence on applied research at the expense of pure basic research has several dangers (Mosha, 1994).

3.7.4 Cultism

Cultism is another menace to our higher education system and it is reflection of what is happening in the larger society. Cultists lure innocent students into cultism, claiming to be protecting their interest while others joined out of share youthful inquisitiveness. Unknowingly, several students entered cult without understanding what is really means and where is involves. Cultism as one of the causes of students' crisis is described by Umeh, (2001) and Igodo (2002) as an assemblage of people who share unconventional ideas, and beliefs and involve themselves in eccentric conduct and manifestation mostly shrouded in secrecy; carry out secret cult activities and membership, organization, rules and mode of operation are supposed to be unknown and unknowable to non-member cult.

Impulsive desires for supremacy are among the reasons behind cult clashes, murder, maiming, rape, acts of sickening and barbarism in our institutions of higher learning (Umeh, 2001). Some of the special features of campus secret cults in Nigerian universities are nocturnal meetings held at odd places like cemeteries, hilltops or forests, abandoned building among others charactises by knife and dagger pulling, gun drawing at non-members or members of opposed secret cults; torture, distinctive marks on the body; drinking of human blood and others (Igodo, 2002).

Consequences of these nefarious acts often leads to indefinite closure of the institutions. The university authority cite insecurity of lives and properties as reasons for the indefinite closure. Cult menaces in our institutions of higher learning are gaining momentum daily taking more dangerous dimensions and in fact, sometimes running a parallel government with the university authorities. Measures targeted at stemming the menace of cultism in university and institutions of higher learning appear not yielding positive fruits.

Duma (2010), noted that Nigerian universities are festering grounds for discontent and sometimes misguided anger which gradually have turned them into schools for murder and ideals grounds for rape. Lecturers are intimidated by some students' cultists to award undeserved marks to them. The fact that the periods of cult attacks on the tertiary institutions in Nigerian, leads to the death of some potential extra-ordinarily gifted Nigerians, this noted to be addressed and checkmated to avoid irrespirable lesson potential human capital.

3.7.5 Communication Gap

Another fact that aggravates students' crisis in Nigeria universities is communication gap. Effective communication diffuses tension among students and authorities in the institution. Despite this fact, some authorities of Nigerian universities shut their administrative doors to students' complaints and grievances which may likely result to students registering some unacceptable social behaviour such as the violent demonstration of 1981. Ezike (1993:6), stated that;

"some psychological consequences of shutting administrative doors on students' complaints and requests make them feel being processed by a system to which they strongly object but are powerless to challenge or change." When students are denied the opportunity of being part of policy making decision in related matters of their welfare they feel subjected and dehumanized."

Anho (2013), asserted that good communication and quality human relations will transform bureaucratic leadership to democratic leadership which is beneficial to the administration.

3.7.6 Peer Influence

Peer influence and activities culminate into emotional instability and unrest, in schools which affect students' concentration, in studies and loss of interest in school. Peer group influence results in youthful exuberance among students especially the negative characteristics which are serious issues that spark off students' crisis in our universities and institutions of higher learning, social irrelevance of youth behaviour, confrontation, victims of intellectual arrogance, emotional instability are characteristics of adolescents which when overstretched results to disastrous consequences such as riots and demonstration, closure, suspension disruption in academic calendar. Authorities cannot predict how long a semester or academic year could last (five or six years) depending on frequency of students' crisis. The situation is a serious challenge (Omede, 2011). Peer group influence results in youthful exuberance which should be curtailed by school administrators.

3.7.7 Management Leadership Style

The works of Anho (2009), and Anho, (2011) indicated that administrative heads of schools (vice chancellors, deans, heads of departments), leadership style directly and indirectly affects everyone and everything while some display leadership qualities which are inconsistent with cordial and amicable administrative climate others are identified with introduction of irrelevant laws, misappropriation of funds, misplaced priorities, use of frequent treats of suspension,

and expulsion of student which always spark off negative reactions from students. Some leaders and lecturers are also involve in incessant absenteeism, lateness to class, dishonesty, in-accessibility, biased and dictatorial leadership.

3.7.8 Insecurity

Security challenges particularly in schools have impacted negatively on school administration, teachers, and students (Oluwaseun, 2012). The incessant bombing by Boko Haram insurgents no doubt impact negatively on lives, property and educational development in Nigeria. Though, there is the dearth of quantitative evaluation of the catastrophic attacks, available statistics has it that between July 25 and February 2011, Human Rights Watch (2012), reported a total death toll of 935 persons in 164 attacks. It was also reported that an estimate of 550 people was killed through bombing and other means; 550 persons were killed in 135 attacks in 2011 alone. While in 2011, at least 500 people were killed in Boko Haram attacks (Amnesty International, 2012) between 2012 and 2018 of the respondent the Apart from the loss of lives, there is also the wanton destruction of property worth several billions of naira through bombing (Oluwaseun, 2012). Even if the unrest in these regions is not caused by students, it has great impact on education and school attendance and administration in particular.

3.7.9 School Environment

Ojukwu and Nwanma (2015), explained that insecure school environment, including the dilapidated conditions and teachers' negative attitude to condone and accept the emotional needs of students, leads to undue influences. Others identifiable environmental problems include; not solving the psychological needs of the students, segregations in the school community along religious, tribal and sectarian lines.

Some school environment also encourage bullying some are overcrowded and poorly ventilated. (Ghazi, Shahzada, Tariq & Khan, 2013). The above painted school environment may most likely affect students'. The levels at which the aforementioned variables can positively or negatively interact with each other in the school environment will usually help to make or mar teaching and learning which may affect students' performance,

Odumbo, et al., (2017), indicated that; "colossal rate of youth unemployment, abject poverty, corruption, moral decadence, indiscipline, inflation, poor standard of living, high cost of living, inadequately of security personnel, poor motivation of law enforcement agency, loss of societal value and get rich quick syndrome among others are the major reasons why people go into kidnapping even in schools", hence, our school environment contributes to school unrest, overly or covently.

3.7.10 Student's Unrest and University Administration

No matter how germane the reasons for unrest are parents, school authorities, government and students' themselves suffer dare consequences. Crisis in universities in Nigeria have led to breakdown of law and order, over the years, disturbance of public peace, loss of lives and properties. Aluede; Jimoh; Agwinede & Omoregie, (2005), identified the effects of students' crises as closure of affected schools;

Malicious destruction and vandalism of infrastructures thereby preventing effective teaching and learning, Parents and sponsors of wards, students incur extra cost keeping their children indefinitely in school, Irregular academic calendar arising from the students' demonstration. Academic programmes are elongated to carter for the period the institutions were shut down, Graduation of half - baked students due to unstable academic calendar resulting from consistent disruptions through riots, demonstrations, students' unrest, Huge financial loss to government, the institutions, parents and students, It promotes cultism and other vices due to the vacuum created by the closure of the institution, and There could be legal issues arising from parents whose children are victims of violent protest especially when it involves death. The authorities may also prosecute union leaders and other category of students after carrying out investigations. Suspension, expulsion, levying and rustication may arise at the end of investigations based on recommendations.

4 Administrative Strategies to curtail Students' Unrest in Universities

4.1 Many Nigerian schools

higher or lower levels of school have been experiencing organizational conflicts and insecurity that in most cases hinder them from achieving the purpose for which they were established. The various administrative strategies for curbing students' unrest in universities could be preventive or punitive. Good-governance/administrative style: Good governance is the process of crisis prevention through proactive measure of running the affairs of the institution in positive and progressive manner beneficial to students, listening to students' complaints, being transparent, democratic as opposed to autocratic.

Good-governance diffuses tensions and removes problems they evolve (Gaya, 2006). Kipyego (2013), suggested taking right decisions, management investing its resources in effective decision-making, solve problems by applying the appropriate problem solving techniques speedily, equitably, and cautiously, take disciplinary measures consistently and timely, motivating students by maintaining an organizational climate conducive, showing respect and being economic in time management. Furthermore, Kipyego (2013), suggested interaction with parents and the community understanding the political, social, legal, economic and cultural state. The principal must never neglect rumours but verify and act promptly to prevent impending doom and should be aware that dictatorial and estranged leadership stance has never yielded profitable dividend in administration. Hence, Anho (2009), Okotoni & Okotoni (2003), and Holloway (2000), researches/studies in Nigeria, Missouri and North Carolina, advised that head teachers may minimize conflicts and unrest, by using human related and conscious administrative style involving students, and delegation of some responsibilities to them.

4.2 Effective Communication

Communication is essential for administration because all attributes of administrative process depends on interwoven with, and exist through communication. Montana and Charmov (2008). Poor communication usage by school (university) administration, prevent understanding of the school programmes and activities by students, and derived their cooperation in executing such. Lack of effective communication according to Obi (2017), and Okezue (2011), accounts for problems in schools. School activities, programmes and plans are often criticized by students because of lack of good communication. Such situation generates gossip, rumour mongering, hatred and quarrel which often results to crises. Anho (2011) advocates good communication as human relations' skills for effective and efficient university administration and advised that school administrators and staff should be using feedback mechanism in communication.

Similarly, Otite (1990), advocates the use of appropriate communication skills and channels which are crucial in crisis management. On the same note, Anho (2011) advised university administrators to learn to use the various communication skills of creativity, collective bargaining, coercive and transactional creativity skills in provocative situations and in crisis management.

Collective bargaining communication skills involve bringing together all stakeholders to proffer collective ways of solving problems, while coercive communication skills involve making students to comply to decision made through good use of praises, coercing, flattering or use of force or treat of punishment and transactional communication skills involve directives, instructions, authority, and sanctions to achieve compliance, the above communication skills competence of school heads

4.3 Negotiation

Proper negotiation is a structured process of dialogue between conflicting parties, attempts to reach an agreement through joint negotiated decision in tertiary institutions. Students should not see this managerial skill, as "loopholes" therefore, should not be confrontational in their demands. Students should as much as possible compromise, that is make concessions in order to resolve crisis. Vice chancellors and university and administration should also use collective bargaining negotiating skill to make students feel involved, considered, consulted and listened to.

4.4 School management's level

Ineffective and inefficient leadership are the bane of proper development in many underdeveloped societies which constitute issues of contention. (Magaula, 2007). Therefore most of these studies suggests focus on students' participation in decision making of student unrest; expansion of opportunities and resources for students, changing the behaviour of peoples involved in conflict through conscious appeal; behaviour modification strategies etc.

4.5 Student's management level

University students are found of making comparism - they compare their institution with another with the hope of copying prevailing issues, without any consideration for factors that gave birth to situations in such institutions involved, without also considering the effect of such issues on their institutions and personal lives.

Recommendations

To address the challenges and problems of students' unrest on universities administration, the following recommendations are offered,

- Students should avoid comparing themselves with their counterparts. Instead, they should develop a mentality based on having conducive learning environment that is void of cultism and other challenges affecting quality education, they should carry themselves with dignity to show that they are groomed from a different settings prominently noted for a stable academic calendar, new academic curriculum.
- University management/administrations should diffuse tension and crises pruned problems through good government such as good collective decision making involvement students, showing respect to students demand, being equitable and unbiased in disciplinary issues, being transparent and effective in communication.
- Appropriate and adequately funding of education
- Government and external bodies should abstain from interfering in university internal, government such as; admission, staff employment and appointment, promotion and discipline.
- Seminars, workshops and counselling sections/classes should be mounted on peer influences and youth exuberances, to create awareness, discourage emotional instability, intellectual arrogance, confrontational attitude, bullying among others associated with youths/students.
- Efforts should be made by university administrators to improve university environment.
- Government should try to reduce or eradicate, corruption in public offices, societal moral decadence, indisciplinary, inadequate security of lives and properties and display of wealth and affluence.

5 Conclusion

Student unrest in Nigeria universities has taken various forms characterized with intentional, destructive, disruptive, dysfunctional, activities, and conflict behaviour in the attainment of universities goals and objectives of research, teaching, and learning which has been observed to usually stem from the inability of universities authorities (management and administration) to provide the needed student personnel support services such as; meeting students demand, provision of facilities, improved communication, and non-involvement of students in decision making concerning them.

The society will benefit if universities are properly funded, and students involved in decision making.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest between and among any of the authors their individuals' personal and professional interests, family, friends, financial or social factors which could compromise their judgements, decision, or actions relating to this work.

Statement of ethical standard

All ethical standards were considered in this work. as the research does not directly involve human beings or human participants, however the authors considered the principles that promotes trust, good behaviour, fairness, integrity, respect, compassion, and environmental issues governing the conduct of persons.

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