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Influence of Green Transformational Leadership, Green Harmonious Environmental Passion, and Self-Determination on Sustainable Tourism Development: Evidence from the Hospitality Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how green-oriented leadership and psychological motivation influence sustainable tourism development in the hospitality sector. Specifically, it examines the effects of Green Transformational Leadership (GTL), Green Harmonious Environmental Passion (GHEP), and Self-Determination (SD) on sustainable tourism practices among hospitality firms in Pakistan. Guided by Self-Determination Theory, a quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted using structured questionnaires among 320 mid- and senior-level employees working in eco-conscious hotels and resorts. The constructs were measured using validated scales and analyzed through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess both measurement and structural models. The findings reveal that GTL significantly enhances employees' commitment to sustainability initiatives, while GHEP acts as a strong emotional driver of eco-friendly behavior. Moreover, SD positively mediates the relationship between green leadership and sustainable outcomes, showing that internally motivated employees are more likely to engage in environmentally responsible tourism practices. The study offers actionable insights for hotel management and policymakers, emphasizing the role of environmentally conscious leadership and intrinsic motivation in promoting sustainable tourism development. Training programs that foster green passion and autonomy-supportive environments can enhance long-term sustainability.

Corresponding Author's Email: leenashah181@yahoo.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61503/cissmp.v4i3.316

Citation: Syed, A., Rahi, S., & Mehta, A. M. (2025). Influence of green transformational leadership, green harmonious environmental passion, and self-determination on sustainable tourism development: Evidence from the hospitality industry. *Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences and Management Practices, 4*(3), 37–49.

1.0 Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world having a significant impact on economic development particularly in the developing world of which Pakistan is a part, and this industry plays a significant role in terms of job creation, foreign exchange earnings and social and cultural integration of the society. However, the industry is also being associated with high levels of environmental degradation such as overexploitation of resources, pollution and loss of biodiversity. As a result, the debate on environmental sustainability has placed sustainable tourism at the centre stage as a strategic priority to policy makers and practitioners (Scott, 2021). The goal of sustainable tourism development is to reduce the adverse environmental impacts and at the same time promote socio-economic values and preserve the natural and cultural heritage. The hospitality industry is one of the major parts of tourism and therefore it plays a central role in promoting this agenda because of its direct contact with tourists and its environmental operational impact. Although there is an increased awareness of the necessity of sustainability, it is applied unevenly, especially in developing economies where the institutional support and environmental regulations are relatively weak. In this case, the internal organizational factors are the key drivers of sustainability initiatives, in particular, leadership and motivation of employees (Sancak, 2023).

The current research interest has been on the influence of organizational leadership and psychological factors on pro-environmental behavior in work places. Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) has been pointed out as a critical construct, which indicates the degree to which leaders inspire, intellectually challenge, and exemplify environmentally responsible behavior of followers.

The recent empirical studies have given more recognition to the level at which sustainable tourism leadership (GTL) has impact on the organizational environmental behaviour and in particular on the climate-related variables like environmental commitment, innovation, and employee engagement. However, most of these studies have been carried out in the western or developed industrial settings where sustainability efforts are already supported by policy and consumer awareness. As a result, empirical studies of these phenomena in developing economies, such as Pakistan, are conspicuously lacking, given that contextual limitations, such as resource shortage, poor environmental literacy, and weak regulatory systems, make internal organisational forces more prominent (Posillico et al., 2023). Further, despite the fact that previous studies have brought out the individual impacts of GTL or intrinsic motivation on green outcomes, little has been done to investigate their interactive and mediating relationships in a holistic theoretical framework. Specifically, there is little research on the degree to which sustainable development (SD) can be used as a mediating variable to explain the relationship between GTL and sustainable tourism practice and the emotional aspects of green hospitality employee psychology (GHEP).

Since the hospitality industry has a huge environmental impact and is central to the economic growth of Pakistan in the future, it is important to explain the internal motivators of sustainability in the hospitality industry. In spite of the significant tourism potential that the country has to offer, including mountainous north and sacred cultural and religious heritage sites, this potential is widely underutilized, and development has frequently been unsustainable, leading

to environmental degradation and displacement of communities. Against this weak socio-ecological background, hospitality businesses need to go beyond the minimum requirement of complying with external policies and instead implement active internal policies that integrate sustainability in organisational culture and employee conduct (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2021). The explicit modelling and reinforcement of environmental values by leadership and the alignment of the workforce in terms of emotional and motivation alignment with these aspirations should be a powerful change catalyst. This study aims at determining how such organisational capacities can be developed to promote sustainable tourism development in the Pakistani context by exploring the interrelated processes of GTL, GHEP and SD.

The research problem explored in this study is due to the lack of knowledge on the combined impact of green leadership and intrinsic psychological aspects on sustainable tourism practices in the hospitality industry especially in the developing economies. Most of the available literature focuses on external forces- regulation or market incentives- and downplay the importance of leadership style and employee motivation in determining pro-environmental behaviour. In addition, despite the spread of self-determination theory (SDT) in educational and clinical contexts, its use in the organisational sustainability fields is relatively new. The study fills that gap through the use of SDT to examine the role of GTL in promoting employee SD, which in turn promotes sustainable tourism behaviors (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2021). It also brings in GHEP as an important emotional antecedent that strengthens the motivational pathways towards achievement of sustainability outcomes. The study answers the demand of more comprehensive models of organisational sustainability behaviour by investigating such relationships in an integrated, theory-based framework (Mickwitz et al., 2021).

The paper has a number of contributions. First, it contributes to the theoretical knowledge by combining GTL, GHEP, and SD in an SDT framework to account sustainable tourism behaviour. Second, it expands the body of green HRM and leadership literature by placing those constructs in the context of the hospitality sector of a developing nation, thus correcting the imbalance in the sustainability literature in favor of the non-Western contexts. Third, it provides actionable recommendations to managers and policymakers by showing internal levers that are available, which can be exploited strategically to encourage sustainability, including leadership style and employee motivation (Hull et al., 2020). Such insights are particularly useful to organisations in situations where formal environmental laws are not strong or are poorly enforced, and the role of agency and organisational culture in effecting change is critical. Lastly, the fact that the study targets mid- and senior-level employees in eco-friendly hotels and resorts is the result of a conscious choice to study people who have decision-making power and operational authority to carry out sustainability programs. The results of this choice are strategically relevant and operationally based.

2.0 Literature Review

This question is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) that provides a sound explanatory model of motivation within an organizational context. In essence, SDT draws a distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation: autonomous motivation is consistent

with intrinsic interest and volition, and controlled motivation is based on extrinsic rewards or coercion. The theory assumes that people have more sustainable and value-congruent behaviors when their psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. In organizations, leadership styles which foster such needs have a great impact on the motivation and behavior of employees. Specifically, when leaders foster independence, recognize the voices of employees and promote self-drive, employees will be more likely to internalize organizational objectives including the ones concerning environmental sustainability (Srivastava & Gupta, 2022). Internalization of this nature is very important in the hospitality industry where sustainable tourism development is dependent on the voluntary involvement of employees in environmental friendly activities. In its turn, SDT provides a relevant and meaningful perspective through which we can analyze the relationships between leadership, emotional commitment to the environment, and intrinsic motivation in relation to the outcomes of sustainable tourism (Vinh et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence on Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) reveals its ability to trigger pro-environmental behavior in organizations. GTL takes the main ideas of transformational leadership further by integrating the values of the environment into the behavioral components of transformational leadership, which are the idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Leaders who exemplify GTL present a powerful green vision, lead by example with regard to environmental responsibilities, and assist workers to develop creative solutions to environmental problems (Doan & Wu, 2024). Research findings on organizational behavior have always shown that these kinds of leadership styles increase the level of environmental commitment among employees and they become creative in their approach to sustainability activities. Positive green outcomes are linked to GTL and they include green organizational citizenship behavior, environmental innovation and green job satisfaction (Elshaer et al., 2024). GTL can be a determining factor in establishing a sustainability culture in the hospitality industry where the delivery of services is human-oriented, and employee attitudes have a direct impact on customer satisfaction. Through their embodiment and communication of pro-environmental values, green transformational leaders shape the cognitive and affective orientations of the employees, which allows sustainable tourism practices to be embraced by a large number of employees (Hooi et al., 2022).

Even though leadership determines the priorities of the organization, psychological variables at the individual level also play a critical role in defining the readiness of employees to embrace and internalize sustainability practices. Green Harmonious Environmental Passion (GHEP) is one of these constructs, being an emotional attachment to environmental causes that is deeply felt in a balanced and autonomous way. GHEP contrasts with obsessive passion because it does not cause a conflict with other spheres of life and, on the contrary, becomes a part of an individual and their self-perception and values (Xiang, 2025). High GHEP employees behave in an environmentally responsible way not because it is required by outside authorities but because this action is consistent with who they are and because it gives them a sense of intrinsic satisfaction. This type of emotional involvement promotes perseverance in pro-environmental action in the case of organizational obstacles or scanty extrinsic incentives. GHEP serves as an internal force in

hospitality organizations where sustainability initiatives may require greater initiative than is formally required in the job description. Moreover, it can enhance the impact of GTL, since the workers who undergo GHEP will be more open to leaders sharing a vision of the environment that aligns with their personal interests and values (Yến-Khanh et al., 2022).

Self-Determination (SD) is another important psychological mechanism that measures how much people behave because of a true interest or personal approval. SDT assumes that when the environment is high in autonomy support (as in GTL), then the internalization of organizational goals is encouraged. This internalization converts externally-imposed sustainability goals into personally-wanted goals, and thus increases long term behavioral commitment. In terms of hospitality, the employees are often faced with discretionary jobs that are meant to promote sustainable tourism practices like energy-saving, waste reduction, or teaching guests about environmental standards (Al-Romeedy & Alharethi, 2025). Self-determined employees have better chances of performing these tasks without supervision or rewards. SD therefore, serves as an important mediating variable that can clarify the way green leadership is reflected in pro-environmental behavior and it offers a psychological explanation to the difference in the employee response to similar leadership styles- those who have more self-determination are more likely to have a favorable response to GTL and have better sustainability results (Li et al., 2024).

The mediating role of self-determined motivation between the leadership and environmental behaviour is testified by current empirical studies. Implementation of transformational leadership, as an example, enhances employee autonomy, which further increases environmental initiative and creativity. Similarly, highly intrinsically motivated employees are more likely to demonstrate more persistent and genuine green behaviours. These results show that leadership alone is insufficient, instead, it should be accompanied by a favorable motivational climate (Kwiotkowska et al., 2022). In that regard, the leadership-motivation relationship is especially relevant in service-intensive industries (e.g. hospitality), where front-line workers must strike a balance between the organisational goals and customer satisfaction. The self-determination theory (SD) provides a subtle account of the process of internalisation of sustainability objectives by the employees and thus enables the conversion of leadership impact into behavioural results. Therefore, the treatment of SD as a mediator does not only enhance theoretical knowledge but also provides practical information in developing interventions that can maintain employee interest in green practices (Ogiemwonyi et al., 2023).

In spite of the growing concern in the antecedents of sustainable tourism development, there are still some research gaps. The majority of the studies that are available focus on the external factors such as governmental regulation, consumer demand, and corporate environmental policies, but do not consider the internal organisational processes, such as leadership and psychology of employees. The leadership styles discussed in the green contexts have focused mostly on transactional or laissez-faire styles and ignored the transformational aspect that is key to instilling intrinsic motivation and long term commitment. The part of emotional constructs is insufficiently explored: passion is frequently considered a marginal variable, instead of explanation mechanism (Zhao & Liu, 2023). Moreover, the literature that combines the three

constructs, green transformational leadership (GTL), green harmonious environmental passion (GHEP), and SD, in one framework is limited, especially in the context of the hospitality industry of developing nations. This is a major omission considering the unique cultural, institutional and economic environments that influence the attitudes and behaviours of employees in such environments. With the increasing pressure of sustainability issues, there is an urgent need to conduct research that not only determines the effective styles of leadership but also explains the psychological mechanisms through which they can determine sustainable behaviour (Woo & Kang, 2020).

Pakistan is a particularly good setting to such a query. Pakistan has a lot of potentials in terms of sustainable tourism development due to being endowed with various types of landscape, rich cultural heritage, and growing international recognition as a tourism destination. However, this potential is threatened by environmental degradation, poor enforcement of regulations and low citizen awareness. In this context, hospitality industry plays a central role in encouraging eco-friendly activities to ensure that tourism development is environmentally friendly. The lack of the strong institutional framework requires the internal organisational variables such as green leadership and employee motivation to cover the external weaknesses (Dahinine et al., 2024). The exploration of the role of GTL in promoting GHEP and SD among employees in Pakistani hospitality organisations is an insight into how a sustainability culture can be developed internally rather than imposing it on employees and also, strategies that can be adopted in the context of developing economies, which can be well received by the socio-cultural dynamics of developing economies. These findings strengthen theoretical generalizability as well as practical relevance.

Following the theoretical and empirical background discussed, a number of hypotheses inform the current study. The first is that GTL will have a substantial positive influence on the sustainable tourism development since the leaders who ensure and encourage the environmental values will influence the behaviour of the employees in the same way. Second, GHEP is likely to have a comparable positive effect, which proves the importance of emotional involvement in the maintenance of pro-environmental behaviour. Third, it is hypothesised that SD has a positive direct impact on sustainable tourism development and thus emphasises the issue of intrinsic motivation (Shien et al., 2022). Fourth, the relationship between GTL and sustainable tourism development is also supposed to be mediated by SD, which means that leadership affects the results by affecting psychological motivation. Fifth, it is expected that SD will mediate the association between GHEP and sustainable tourism development and demonstrate the role of passion in encouraging employees to take action when they feel a sense of autonomy. All these hypotheses create a comprehensive model that reflects how leadership, emotion, motivation and behaviour interact in the environment of sustainable tourism and hospitality industry in developing countries (Hermawati, 2020).

3.0 Methodology

The research uses an empirical research approach in accordance with its aim of examining the effect of green transformational leadership, green harmonious environmental passion, and self-determination on sustainable tourism development in the hospitality industry of Pakistan. The

reason that was used to choose a quantitative research design is that it can collect standardized data on a large sample size, which can be statistically analyzed and provide a basis of generalizability. Since the study will seek to examine more complicated associations between psychological and behavioral variables, this design is especially suitable to hypothesis-testing steps and structural modeling. The study is informed by a positivist philosophical stance that supports objectivity, empirical measurement, and deductive logic in the process of testing theories like Self-Determination Theory. In this context, reality is considered measurable and knowable, which allows evaluating the causal relationships between variables using structured tools and statistical methods.

The target population was comprised of mid and senior level workers in eco-friendly hotels and resorts in Pakistan. This group was chosen due to its important role in defining and enforcing the sustainability practice in hospitality operations. Considering the increasing popularity of environmentally responsible tourism in Pakistan, particularly in such areas as Gilgit-Baltistan, Murree, Swat, and such cities as Islamabad and Lahore, this emphasis enabled valuable observations on how internal organizational processes can affect the sustainable tourism development. The middle and top-level workers are in the middle of the strategy and implementation and, therefore, they are the most informative in terms of leadership impact and personal motivation to sustainability.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to make the sample representative and at the same time feasible. This non-probability method allowed choosing the participants that had particular qualities related to the research, such as the current engagement in the sustainability-related activities and employment in the hospitality facilities that are known to be environmentally aware. The sample size was calculated based on the needs of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) that is sensitive to the complexity of the model and the number of indicators per construct. The 320 completed responses were considered adequate to have statistical power, according to the established guidelines which suggest at least ten times the maximum paths pointing at any latent construct of the model. The participants were contacted directly and with the help of the hotel authority by gaining their permission to participate voluntarily and in a confidential way.

The data was collected through a structured survey questionnaire that was disseminated both physically and electronically depending on the accessibility and choice of respondents. The questionnaire had validated scales based on past researches to gauge green transformational leadership, green harmonious environmental passion, self-determination, and sustainable tourism development. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure all items with answers varying between strongly disagree and strongly agree, which permitted a subtle attitude response. A pilot test was administered on 30 respondents before the actual data collection to provide clarity, reliability, and contextual relevance of the survey items. The pilot phase provided feedback that was employed to make small linguistic changes and to ensure the internal consistency of scales.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized in analyzing the data because it is a strong statistical method that can be used in exploratory and confirmatory

studies. PLS-SEM was selected since it has the ability to analyze complex models that include many constructs and indicators and it is particularly appropriate in case of studies that have a relatively small to medium sample size. The calculations were performed in SmartPLS 4.0 software where the measurement and structural models could be estimated simultaneously. Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity through Fornell-Larcker criterion were used to test the measurement model in terms of reliability and validity. After confirming that the measurement model was good, the structural model was evaluated to test the path relationship between the constructs, the importance of direct and indirect effects, and the explanatory power of the model with the help of R^2 values and effect size.

Ethical aspects were strictly observed during the research process. Before the data collection, the ethical approval was sought in a reputable academic institution and all the participants were made aware of the nature and purpose of the study. The consent was received using a written consent form incorporated in the questionnaire, which highlighted the voluntary nature of participation, the anonymity of answers, and the possibility to withdraw at any point without any penalty. The data were kept safely and only used in academic purposes so that no individual and organizational identities could be identified based on the findings. These precautions were taken to encourage trust, guard the rights of the participants, and ensure the integrity of the research process.

A combination of a positivist orientation and a robust quantitative design, context-specific sampling, validated instruments, and sophisticated statistical modeling allow proposing a methodologically sound study of the effect of green leadership and psychological motivations on sustainable tourism practices in the hospitality industry of a developing country. The results produced using this method are likely to have theoretical value and practical implications to practitioners who would want to integrate sustainability in core hospitality activities.

Results and Findings

Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 4.1 Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Green Transformational Leadership (GTL)	0.912	0.935	0.682
Green Harmonious Environmental Passion (GHEP)	0.894	0.926	0.714
Self-Determination (SD)	0.881	0.918	0.690
Sustainable Tourism Development (STD)	0.905	0.931	0.729

The psychometric properties of the measurement model are satisfactory. The commonly accepted minimum criterion of 0.70 on Cronbachs Alpha indicates the internal consistency is passed in all constructs: Green Transformational Leadership (0.912), Green Harmonious Environmental Passion (0.894), Self-Determination (0.881), and Sustainable Tourism Development (0.905). Composite Reliability (CR) that considers the factor loading of the items instead of the inter-correlation of the items also exceeds the 0.70 mark with a range of 0.918-0.935. At the same time, the values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct are above the 0.50 limit with the lowest of 0.682 and the highest of 0.729 indicating that over 50 percent of the variance of each indicator is caused by the respective construct and not measurement error. Collectively, the results indicate high reliability and convergent validity, which allows assessing the structural model further with confidence.

Discriminant Validity – HTMT Criterion

Table 4.2 Discriminant Validity

Constructs	GTL	GHEP	SD	STD
GTL	-	0.682	0.641	0.704
GHEP		-	0.611	0.668
SD			-	0.653
STD				-

The values of heterotrait monotrait ratio (HTMT) of all constructs studied provided estimates that are far below the conservative value of 0.85 thus establishing discriminant validity among the variables. To be more exact, the HTMT values of Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) and Green Harmonious Environmental Passion (GHEP) (0.682), GTL and Self-Determination (SD) (0.641), and GTL and Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) (0.704) showed different yet similar constructs.

Collinearity Statistics – VIF Values

Table 4.3 Collinearity Statistics

Paths	VIF
GTL → SD	2.137
GHEP → SD	1.892
GTL → STD	2.304
GHEP → STD	2.126
SD → STD	1.776

Upon reviewing the values of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) that corresponds to each

of the predictor paths in the structural model, one can notice that all the scores are significantly lower than the standard critical value of 5. The trend implies that there is no multicollinearity between the independent variables. Specifically, the values of the observed values, GTL 2.137 GHEP 1.892 GTL 2.304 GHEP 2.126 SD 1.776 indicate that each predictor has a unique explanation weight to the model, with no significant overlap or redundancy with its other concurrent variables. These results, therefore, show that the constructs are statistically independent of each other in the model, thus making the path coefficients solid and interpretable in further structural analysis.

Model Fit Indices

Table 4.4 Model Fit Indices

Model Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	0.042	< 0.08
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.921	> 0.90
Chi-Square	415.38	-
d_ULS	0.876	-
d_G	0.723	-

The current analysis of model fit shows that the structural model fits the data quite well. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is estimated at 0.042 which is far much below the recommended 0.08, indicating that there was minimal difference between the observed and predicted correlation and that the model fit is good. In addition, Normed Fit Index (NFI) is 0.921, which is much higher than the acceptable level (0.90) and thus indicates that the proposed model is better than the null model. Although a Chi-Square value shows 415.38, it is interpreted together with other criteria since it is sensitive to the sample size. Other indices, d_ULS (0.876) and d_G (0.723) indicate internal consistency and convergence of the model, but no stringent cutoffs are indicated.

Structural Model – Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Table 4.5 Structural Model

Hypothesis	Path	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	GTL → STD	0.344	5.212	0.000	Supported
H2	GHEP → STD	0.296	4.387	0.000	Supported
H3	SD → STD	0.379	6.024	0.000	Supported
H4	GTL → SD	0.408	5.831	0.000	Supported
H5	GHEP → SD	0.366	4.915	0.000	Supported

The structural model presents strong empirical support of the proposed relationships: all

the path coefficients are statistically significant, and T-values and p-values are higher than 0.001. The Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) has positive and significant direct effect on Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) (beta = 0.344, t = 5.212, p = 0.000) which means that the leadership that is focused on the environmentally-oriented results is very important in the development of sustainable practices in the hospitality industry. Similarly, Green Harmonious Environmental Passion (GHEP) has a positive impact on STD (beta = 0.296, 4.387, 0.000), which means that the intrinsic commitment of employees to environmental values is a direct cause of sustainability results. There is also a significant direct impact of Self-Determination (SD) on STD (beta = 0.379, t = 6.024, p = 0.000) indicating the significance of the intrinsic motivation as a determinant of eco-friendly behavior. Also, GTL (b = 0.408, t = 5.831, p = 0.000) and GHEP (b = 0.366, t = 4.915, p = 0.000) significantly predict SD, which means that green leadership and emotional passion contribute to increasing the autonomous motivation of employees to be engaged in environmental activities. The results confirm the theoretical framework and prove that leadership and psychological variables combine to promote the development of sustainable tourism.

Discussion and Conclusions

The study explains the outstanding role of green-oriented leadership and psychological motivation in the development of sustainable tourism in the hospitality sector of Pakistan. The empirical results show that there is a positive relationship between Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) and Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) that is direct and positive. Inspirational, exemplary, and empowering leaders can ensure that the actions of employees are aligned with the sustainability goals of the organization, thus showing that leadership does not just meet the managerial expectations but also acts as a behavioral driver that influences organizational values and practices. The potential of GTL to promote sustainability is based on its capacity to develop a strong environmental vision, to promote innovation in the delivery of environmentally friendly services, and to support the process of aligning personal values of employees with the environmental objectives.

Aleena Syed: Research Idea, litrature

Samar Rahi: Writeup, Data Analysis

Ahmed Muneeb Mehta: Problem Identification, data collection, analysis and Theoretical Framework

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest in this article's research, authorship, and publication.

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