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Interconnectivity and Importance of Environment and Nature in Spiritual and Religious Tradition

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Original Research Articles

Interconnectivity and Importance of Environment and Nature in Spiritual and Religious Tradition

Sourasis Chattopadhyay^{1*}

Abstract

This research explores the interconnectivity and significance of the environment and nature within spiritual and religious traditions, emphasizing spirituality as a human sensibility that evolves through a deep connection with the environment. By engaging with both the tangible and intangible realms, individuals foster an understanding of the infinite, finding spiritual motivation and conceptions. Almost universally, religious traditions recognize nature as a divine and transformative force, underscoring the spiritual imperative to conserve the environment—a concern now elevated to a global agenda. This study aims to revive ancient spiritual ecology ideals to promote environmental conservation and enhance human well-being. Using a conceptual framework grounded in spiritual and social consciousness, this research integrates established theories on spiritual ecology with traditional religious customs, examining their role in fostering environmental awareness and cognitive growth. Data and findings from recent studies highlight the urgency of addressing environmental degradation and psychological challenges across diverse communities. By aligning religious and spiritual beliefs with environmental conservation, this study presents spiritual ecology as a potent model for encouraging sustainable behaviors and fostering a harmonious relationship with nature.

Keywords: Spiritual Ecology; Spiritual Wellbeing; Religious; Spiritual Ideals

Introduction

Spirituality is a human sensibility and perception that rises at the time when an individual accustoms with the environment, sees it closely and feels an inherent attachment towards it. The environment where an individual's spiritual senses evolve is agreed by most of spiritual masters as an all-encompassed domain (Munsoor, & Munsoor, 2021). These domains include the areas where the individual can form questions and looks for their answers by means of understanding.

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Such areas include both known and unknown, living, non-living, earthy and supernatural realms. Simply said, a spiritual environment is where an individual finds resources to enrich his or her sensibility of understanding the endlessness, the entity that has power beyond the powers. This is the space where he finds his motivation to search and form his or her spiritual conception (Sharma, 2023). Almost all the religious principles agree that nature, in its original shape forms the perception of spiritual understanding in individuals who devotedly looks for the realization of divinity.

In other words, religions of the world see nature and the creation of the universe as a divine phenomenon. That is, in terms of religion, creation of universe is sacred, undiluted and it is an endless process of transformation and reconstruction. Consequently, nature, the domain that is size-less and continually transforming entity becomes the core resource spiritual perception. Thus, question of conserving the nature is also an important concern of spiritualism (UNEP, 2023). This concern that is practiced by religious masters and religious preachers from ancient days are now a global agenda and it being taken care of.

Conceptually, we can thereby say that spiritualism has an inseparable connectivity with an individual's natural ecosystem. Furthermore, the extent of attachment and inquisitiveness of the individual towards nature is thought to be influential in his or her spiritual enrichment. In this article, we will establish this interpretation by means of theories and supportive evidences. Thus, this study attempts to regard nature as the crucial domain to instill spiritual motivation in human mind supporting for further development and extensity.

On those terms, conservation of nature is also discussed as a vital part of religious and spiritual movement that certainly is a necessity and worldwide demand to secure human well-being. The article aims to justify the reemergence of spiritual ecology as a subject of importance in society as well as spiritual motivation that on its part increases our attachment and integrity with the environment and lets us be compassionate and aware in ensuring its proper conservation. Before explaining our central theme, firstly, we are providing a chosen review of literature that indicates the role, importance and connectivity of nature in spiritual motivation.

Objectives

1. To examine contemporary spiritual and religious theories on nature and its interconnectivity with the living world.
2. To assess the role of spiritual awareness in environmental conservation initiatives.
3. To analyze the role of Spiritual Ecology in promoting human well-being and fostering harmony with the natural environment.

Literature Review

Ali Kirman (2014) stressed on the need of enforcement of environmental conservation and ethical norms to secure nature and its resources from the reckless consumption and damage that are caused since 20th century with the rise of globalization. The author discussed on secular and religious theories on nature's role and its vitality for human as well as the world's wellness that, according to him can play effective in this scenario to spread awareness and consciousness among the people to take care and be close to the nature to eradicate the alarming rate of degradation that is caused to the environment due to technologies and industrialization. The author recommended that at this time, it is essential to generate morality and sense of cooperation and love by means of spiritual guidelines so that the society can stay balanced and value for its environmental prospects.

Schauer et al. (2016) stressed on nature's influences and motivation on human mind that developed their well-being, mindfulness and compassion towards their surrounding habitat. However, the authors admitted that modern urban society had least scope to be close to the unadulterated nature to enrich their perception on integrity with natural surroundings and thus, the current society is much aloof in terms of compassion towards environmental conservation. However, since the concern of environmental conservation is vital nowadays and so it is equally important, as the authors believed to let the people come close to the natural ecosystem. The study was conducted to measure the impacts on nature in building the spiritual conception among the respondents. The procedure revealed that immersion with nature motivated the spiritual well-being among the respondents.

Sayem (2018) made an analysis on traditional religious practices and established their connectivity with the nature. Two religious, namely Christianity and Islam were scrutinized by the author and thereafter, these relationships were recommended as by the researcher as a guideline to spread consciousness and awareness among the people in conserving the environment. According to the author, religious connectivity with nature is necessary to be made known to the people in order to make them conscious of protecting them and utilize their vital elements to ensure human well-being. Such an awareness will in turn make the human society be integrated again with the unspoiled nature that, the author felt is a vital component in creating healthy and sustainable habitat.

According to Daldoss Pirri (2019), modern western culture has a key role in detaching people from their natural coexistence and thus creating a society that is unaware of nature's vitality and prospects. On the other hand, there still exists jungle dwellers indigenous people who follow their nature based religious customs and believe in unusual knowledge that they call 'Other Reality'. In this study, the researcher made an extensive study on a Shamanic ritual called Ayahuasca that is performed in Amazonian tribes where the practitioners to whom the

researcher interviewed agreed on their experience of 'Other Reality' that was beyond the knowledge of usual world and made them believe in the power on their surrounding nature that could transform and give rise to another ways of thoughts and visions towards their environment.

In a recent spiritual discussion done in a 2019 workshop of St Ethelburga's conducted on the awareness of spiritual ecology, it was emphasized that the learning on spiritual ecology is necessary because, knowingly or unknowingly, we all have a connectivity with our natural environment that supports our physical and spiritual well-being. The workshop is particularly conducted as an awareness program on environmental conservation where the concept of spiritual ecology was referred to as a universal and ancient religious concept that is neutral of every religious stream of the world. Nonetheless, spiritual ecology is described and debated in various religious principles and is mandated as an integral part of spiritual procedure. The concept integrates nature and human beings with all its surrounding components in harmony and compassion. Such sensitivity, according to the trainers of the workshop is vital in today's world to grow attachment towards environment and conservation of habitat.

Shirlin & Selvaraj (2023) made a comparative exploration of eco-theological concepts with the traditional religious ideals in context with Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Animal Dreams*. In this analysis, they described eco-spiritualism as the channel that established interconnectivity between human sensation and nature. There, as the authors argued that this spiritual stream was distinctive from that of traditional religious ideals. The authors stressed that the concepts of eco-spiritualism is a workable method to identify the connectivity between human, nature and surrounding habitat.

Summary, several scholars have emphasized the necessity of integrating spirituality, religious beliefs, and ethical norms into environmental conservation efforts. Kirman (2014) highlighted the urgent need for moral enforcement to curb reckless environmental exploitation driven by globalization and industrialization. He advocated for spiritual awareness as a tool to instill a sense of responsibility and cooperation in society. Schauer et al. (2016) explored how nature influences human well-being, mindfulness, and compassion. Their study revealed that direct immersion in nature fosters spiritual awareness, but modern urban life has distanced people from their natural surroundings, leading to reduced environmental consciousness. Sayem (2018) examined the relationship between traditional religious practices and nature, specifically in Christianity and Islam. He argued that religious teachings could serve as a guideline to promote ecological awareness and encourage sustainable living by reconnecting humanity with the unspoiled environment. Daldoss Pirri (2019) analyzed how modern Western culture has contributed to detaching people from nature, contrasting it with indigenous practices such as the Amazonian Ayahuasca ritual. His findings suggested that indigenous spiritual traditions foster a deeper connection with the environment through experiential knowledge beyond conventional understanding.

A 2019 workshop at St. Ethelburga's reinforced the importance of spiritual ecology, emphasizing its universal relevance across religious traditions. The discussion framed spiritual ecology as an ancient yet essential concept that integrates humans with nature, fostering harmony and environmental responsibility. Lastly, Shirlin & Selvaraj (2023) examined eco-theology through literary analysis, comparing traditional religious ideals with eco-spiritualism in *Animal Dreams* by Barbara Kingsolver. They highlighted eco-spiritualism as a method to establish a meaningful interconnection between humans and their natural habitat, distinct from conventional religious perspectives. Together, these studies underscore the role of spirituality, religious traditions, and ecological consciousness in fostering environmental stewardship and human well-being.

Materials and Methods

Research Type

This study follows a qualitative research approach, focusing on conceptual analysis and theoretical exploration. It synthesizes insights from religious and spiritual traditions to propose a framework for environmental consciousness and sustainability.

Study Population and Sample Groups

The study examines various religious and spiritual traditions, including the Bahá'í Faith, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and indigenous belief systems. It analyzes scriptures, historical texts, and contemporary research to explore their perspectives on environmental conservation.

Selection Techniques

A purposive sampling method is used to select religious teachings, philosophical perspectives, and documented case studies that emphasize the interconnectivity between nature and spirituality. Sources are chosen based on their relevance to environmental ethics and sustainability.

Research Tools

1. Literature Review – Analysis of religious scriptures, philosophical texts, and scholarly research on spiritual ecology.
2. Comparative Analysis – Examination of common themes across different traditions related to environmental stewardship.

3. Case Studies – Review of past and present applications of spiritual and religious principles in environmental conservation efforts.

Research Procedures

1. Conceptual Framework Development – Establishing the theoretical foundation of spiritual ecology and environmental conservation.

2. Data Collection – Gathering information from religious scriptures, philosophical works, and environmental studies.

3. Synthesis and Analysis – Identifying patterns, correlations, and contradictions between spiritual traditions and ecological sustainability models.

4. Discussion and Interpretation – Evaluating how traditional teachings can be applied to modern environmental issues.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

1. Document Analysis Reviewing existing literature on spiritual ecology and environmental consciousness.

2. Interpretative Analysis Extracting key insights from religious texts and scholarly articles.

3. Contextual Evaluation Assessing the relevance of ancient spiritual teachings in addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

This methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of how spiritual and religious traditions can inspire sustainable environmental practices, ultimately reinforcing the need for an integrated approach to ecological conservation.

Results

Alignment of Contemporary Spiritual and Religious Theories with Environmental Interconnectivity

Contemporary spiritual and religious thought increasingly presents the human person not as an isolated individual but as part of a vast, living web of relationships. Across traditions, spirituality is described as a journey toward transcendence, enlightenment, and ultimately a profound sense of oneness with the cosmos. Rather than positioning humanity above nature, many modern interpretations frame human life as deeply embedded within it. Religion, though often expressed through institutions, doctrines, and communal rituals, converges with spirituality in its moral vision: both call individuals and communities to ethical responsibility and

collective care. In this shared space, environmental interconnectivity emerges not as a peripheral concern but as a central theological and spiritual theme.

The alignment between contemporary religious theories and environmental interdependence is especially evident in the theological principles articulated by major world faiths. Within Christianity and Islam, for instance, the language of stewardship and guardianship plays a defining role. Interpretations of the biblical Genesis narrative and Qur'anic teachings increasingly emphasize accountability rather than domination. Humans are understood not as exploitative rulers of the Earth, but as entrusted caretakers who must answer for how they treat creation. This shift from mastery to responsibility reflects a broader ecological re-reading of scripture that situates humanity within, rather than above, the living world.

In Hinduism, environmental reverence is woven directly into ritual and philosophy. The sacredness of rivers, forests, mountains, plants, and animals is not metaphorical but ontological: nature itself is imbued with divine presence. The interconnectedness of all life is expressed through concepts such as dharma and the cyclical unity of existence, reinforcing the idea that harming the environment disrupts both cosmic and moral balance. Such teachings cultivate a reverential posture toward the natural world, shaping ethical behavior through spiritual awareness.

Contemporary ecotheological scholarship further deepens this perspective. Thinkers such as Michael S. Hogue and Heather Eaton reinterpret classical theological categories—creation, sin, redemption, and salvation—through ecological lenses. Their work argues that environmental degradation is not only a scientific or political issue, but also a spiritual crisis requiring ethical restructuring. By reframing theology in ecological terms, they call for a transformation of humanity's relationship with the Earth from one of extraction to one of mutual flourishing.

Similarly, the development of spiritual ecology as articulated by Leslie Sponsel expands the conversation beyond single traditions. Spiritual ecology integrates indigenous knowledge systems, interfaith dialogue, and scientific understanding, proposing a holistic worldview grounded in reverence, interconnectedness, and responsibility. It reflects a growing recognition that ecological crises demand not merely technological solutions but also spiritual and cultural renewal. Together, these strands of thought support the conclusion that contemporary spiritual frameworks consistently articulate a worldview of interdependence and moral accountability toward nature.

This theological and spiritual alignment is not confined to theory; it also finds expression in concrete environmental initiatives. Spiritual awareness has demonstrably influenced conservation efforts at institutional and global levels. Organizations such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have formally acknowledged the spiritual and cultural values of nature as central components of conservation strategy. By recognizing that ecosystems

are not only biological systems but also sacred landscapes, conservation discourse has broadened to include moral and cultural dimensions.

A landmark example of faith-based environmental advocacy is the 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* issued by Pope Francis. The document calls for “care for our common home,” linking ecological degradation with social injustice and urging global solidarity. Its impact extended far beyond Catholic communities, shaping international conversations on climate change and sustainability. In Indonesia, the 2016 environmental fatwa issued by the national Islamic council declared forest arson a sin, reinforcing peatland restoration efforts and grounding environmental protection in religious obligation. Likewise, the Parliament of the World's Religions adopted an interfaith Fifth Directive emphasizing sustainability as a shared moral commitment across traditions.

Empirical data further reinforces these institutional developments. Survey findings from the World Values Survey, spanning 91 countries between 1989 and 2014, reveal a statistically significant positive correlation between religious belief and environmental activism, charitable giving, and advocacy. These findings suggest that religious worldviews can act as catalysts for conservation by shaping values, motivating collective action, and framing sustainability as a moral imperative rather than a mere policy preference.

Beyond environmental outcomes, spiritual ecology also contributes significantly to human well-being. Ecopsychological research consistently demonstrates that exposure to natural environments enhances cognitive functioning and reduces psychological distress. Roger S. Ulrich's Psycho-evolutionary Theory, for example, proposes that humans possess an innate adaptive response to natural settings, which accelerates stress recovery and fosters emotional regulation. The natural world, in this view, is not only an external resource but also an internal necessity for psychological balance.

The ecological-self theory advanced by Elizabeth A. Bragg suggests that expanding one's sense of identity to include nature strengthens psychological health. When individuals perceive themselves as interconnected with the environment, they experience greater meaning, belonging, and resilience. Empirical research supports this claim. Studies employing the SHALOM scale to measure spiritual health have found that stronger spiritual wellness—across personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental dimensions—is associated with lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among university students.

Taken together, these findings illustrate that spiritual ecology operates at multiple levels. It reshapes theological understanding, informs institutional conservation efforts, and nurtures individual psychological well-being. Environmental responsibility becomes not only an ethical duty but also a pathway to inner harmony. By fostering a sense of interconnectedness, contemporary spiritual frameworks affirm that the health of the planet and the health of the human spirit are inseparable.

In sum, the evidence supports three interrelated conclusions. First, contemporary spiritual and religious theories consistently articulate an ecological worldview grounded in interdependence and moral accountability. Second, spiritual awareness significantly influences conservation initiatives, mobilizing institutions and communities toward sustainable action. Third, spiritual ecology enhances human well-being by strengthening psychological resilience and fostering harmony with the natural world. Together, these dimensions reveal a powerful convergence: caring for the Earth is both a moral obligation and a profound expression of spiritual fulfillment.

Discussion

Interconnectivity, Spiritual Ecology, and Environmental Transformation

The findings of this study affirm that contemporary spiritual and religious thought converges around a profound and unifying insight: the interdependence of all life. Across traditions and theological frameworks, humanity is increasingly understood not as master of the natural world but as an integral participant within it. Ecotheological scholarship, particularly the work of Hogue (2010) and Eaton (2002), critiques anthropocentric theology and instead situates human beings within dynamic ecological systems. This reframing challenges the notion of domination and replaces it with relational embeddedness—an understanding that the well-being of humanity is inseparable from the well-being of the Earth.

This perspective resonates strongly with longstanding arguments that religion shapes moral cognition and behavior. The Christian and Islamic concept of stewardship, rooted in accountability before God, parallels Hindu reverence for sacred ecology, where rivers, forests, and landscapes are imbued with spiritual significance. Though emerging from distinct metaphysical traditions, these frameworks converge on a shared ethic of environmental responsibility. Such convergence supports Ozgul's (2022) assertion that scientific and economic strategies alone are insufficient to address ecological crises; cultural, spiritual, and ethical dimensions must complement them. In this way, spirituality provides not only metaphysical meaning but also normative guidance for ecological engagement.

Religion's influence extends beyond abstract doctrine into practical behavioral transformation. The findings demonstrate that religious institutions are uniquely positioned to mobilize collective environmental action. Landmark initiatives such as *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis and various Islamic environmental fatwas issued by global Islamic councils illustrate how doctrinal interpretation can transform environmental protection into a moral and spiritual obligation. By framing ecological degradation as a matter of sin, stewardship, and accountability, these teachings embed environmental responsibility within deeply internalized belief systems.

These patterns align with established behavioral theories, including the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Value-Belief-Norm Theory of Environmentalism, which emphasize the predictive power of moral norms and personal values. Religious traditions reinforce environmental ethics through multiple reinforcing mechanisms: moral obligation articulated through sacred texts, communal reinforcement within congregational life, institutional authority vested in clerical leadership, and intergenerational ethics that stress responsibility toward future generations. Global correlations between religiosity and environmental engagement suggest that spirituality functions as both motivational structure and ethical compass.

Nevertheless, the study reveals uneven institutional engagement across faith traditions. While Catholic and Islamic environmental initiatives have achieved notable global visibility and organizational coherence, other major traditions have yet to institutionalize environmental governance on comparable scales. This disparity underscores the need for structured interfaith collaboration, where shared principles of ecological care can be translated into coordinated global action. Such collaboration could amplify moral authority and create unified ethical narratives capable of influencing public policy and grassroots behavior alike.

Beyond collective action, the research also illuminates the intimate relationship between spiritual ecology and human flourishing. Evidence linking ecological connectedness with psychological well-being supports ecopsychological theories, including Ulrich's stress recovery framework and ecological-self theory. Exposure to natural environments appears to reduce stress and enhance emotional regulation, but the findings suggest that spiritual interpretation deepens this effect. Nature is not merely restorative scenery; it becomes a sacred context that reinforces belonging and meaning.

Leung and Pong's (2021) work further indicates that spiritual wellness acts as a protective factor against psychological distress. These findings resonate with the World Health Organization's multidimensional model of well-being, which recognizes spiritual dimensions alongside physical and mental health. The implication is profound: spiritual ecology contributes to human flourishing by restoring relational harmony—between individuals and themselves, between communities, and between humanity and the broader ecosystem. Environmental responsibility thus emerges not only as an ethical duty but as a pathway to psychological resilience and existential coherence.

The implications for sustainable development are equally significant. Dominant GDP-driven development paradigms have accelerated ecological degradation, contributing to the Anthropocene and perpetuating the "take-make-dispose" economic model described by Abumoghli (2022). Such frameworks prioritize short-term growth over long-term planetary stability. In contrast, spiritual and religious paradigms emphasize moderation, stewardship, intergenerational responsibility, and shared moral accountability. These principles challenge extractive economic logic and offer a corrective ethical foundation for sustainability discourse.

Integrating spiritual ecology into environmental policy and governance could enhance public engagement and strengthen policy legitimacy. Policies grounded solely in technical rationality may struggle to inspire sustained behavioral change. However, when ecological protection is framed as a moral imperative and a sacred trust, it resonates more deeply within communities. Spiritual narratives cultivate intrinsic motivation, fostering enduring commitment rather than compliance driven solely by regulation.

In accordance with the research objectives, this study demonstrates that contemporary spiritual and religious theories articulate a worldview grounded in ecological interdependence. Faith-based institutions significantly influence environmental behavior and conservation initiatives. Spiritual ecology contributes meaningfully to psychological resilience and holistic well-being. Furthermore, integrating spiritual frameworks into sustainability policy holds potential to strengthen global environmental governance.

Overall, spirituality and religion emerge not as peripheral elements within environmental discourse, but as central moral forces capable of reshaping humanity's relationship with the living world. By reawakening a sense of sacred interconnection, they offer both ethical direction and existential hope in an era defined by ecological uncertainty.

Conclusion

In this article, we've presented a global as well as our own perspective of dealing with the current alarming environmental conservation with the aid of traditional and spiritual awareness initiatives that is already an active motion all around the world as we've discussed in our findings. Our findings reveal the contributions of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) that are currently coming up spreading their words to influence the society by working for both people and the environment. Spiritual guides and religious leaders have considerable impact over society at large. The ability to persuade and gather others is the first of these abilities. Anyone may find religious leaders offering spiritual direction or FBOs delivering humanitarian aid. Second, religious institutions have considerable financial clout. Among the world's investment categories, religious groups rank fourth. The inclusion of religious and indigenous leaders in global environmental governance and policymaking is therefore essential. While FBOs are strong institutions and have demonstrated relevance to development around the world, major groups and stakeholders' groups of the UN still do not identify them as such. As such, as we explored, FBOs have been trying to find their way to engage in policy dialogue at the UN as part of the NGO designation. While this might be somewhat effective, it fails to leverage the unique and influential powers of faith actors and the perspectives of spiritual and moral responsibilities to environmental governance brought about by religions. Thus, faith actors, despite their significance, remain underempowered within the margins of dominant discourse and global policy formulation. Their

role should be recognized and be encouraged. Moving towards the individual motivations, in this study, we've presented a few approaches that establish the beneficial effects on human sensitivity and psychology, cognitive functioning and increased self-esteem. Thus, spiritual approaches can serve as to improve human psychological aspects of wellbeing that have been linked to exposure to nature. Furthermore, the study testifies that there is a favorable correlation between a sense of natural connection and psychological health results.

Suggestions

Suggestions for Implementation

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen environmental conservation efforts through spiritual and religious engagement.

1. Religious institutions, seminaries, and academic institutions should incorporate ecotheology and spiritual ecology into their curricula. This integration can cultivate environmentally responsible values among students and religious communities.

2. Establish structured interfaith dialogue platforms focused on environmental ethics. These platforms can encourage shared responsibility across religious traditions and foster cooperative conservation initiatives.

3. Religious leaders should incorporate environmental stewardship messages into sermons, teachings, and community outreach programs. Media campaigns highlighting the spiritual significance of nature can further enhance ecological awareness.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Future research should conduct quantitative and longitudinal studies to measure the direct impact of spiritual awareness on pro-environmental behavior.

2. Comparative studies examining ecological teachings across different religious traditions can provide deeper insights into shared ethical principles and contextual differences.

3. Further interdisciplinary research should explore the psychological benefits of spiritual ecology, particularly its influence on mental health, resilience, and community cohesion.

Declaration of Interests

I declare that I have no conflicts of interest related to the research on the Religious Affairs and State Development Acts on Sangha Administration.

Ethical Considerations

This research adheres to ethical guidelines by ensuring that all sources of information, including religious and spiritual traditions, are cited appropriately and respectfully. No human subjects or personal data were involved, eliminating concerns regarding informed consent and confidentiality. Additionally, this study upholds academic integrity by presenting unbiased interpretations and avoiding any misrepresentation of cultural or religious beliefs.

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Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal, financial, professional, or institutional affiliations may influence—or appear to influence—the objectivity, integrity, or interpretation of research findings. In academic research, conflicts of interest must be transparently disclosed to ensure credibility, accountability, and ethical integrity.

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