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<h1>The Endowments in the Eastern Beylik and Their Social-Cultural Functions during the Ottoman Beys Era (1671–1830 CE): A Historical Analysis of Institutional Structures, Management Systems, and Community Impact</h1>				
<p>Zia Kouider</p>		Dr Laboratory of the Economic and Social History of Algeria, University of El-Oued Algeria E-mail: zia-kouider@univ-eloued.dz		
<p>Yahiaoui Saad</p>		Laboratory of the Economic and Social History of Algeria, University of El-Oued Algeria E-mail: yahiaoui-saad@univ-eloued.dz		
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This study provides a comprehensive historical examination of endowments (awqāf) in the Eastern Beylik of Ottoman Algeria during the rule of the beys (1671–1830 CE), highlighting their decisive role in shaping social welfare and cultural life. Endowments functioned as key financial, religious, and educational institutions that supported mosques, zawiyyas (“religious angles”), Qur’anic schools, public utilities, and social services. The research investigates the administrative structures governing endowments, the mechanisms of oversight employed by Ottoman authorities, and the reforms introduced by notable figures such as Salih Bey, who implemented systematic registries and restored neglected charitable properties. Through archival evidence—particularly the Constantine waqf registers—this study demonstrates how endowments preserved cultural identity, ensured religious continuity, financed educational establishments, and contributed to social cohesion across rural and urban communities. The paper further analyzes the legal and administrative principles underpinning endowment operations, their types, and their socioeconomic impact, ultimately revealing their function as foundational pillars of public life in the Eastern Beylik.</p>				
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1. Introduction

Introduction

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The Endowments in the Eastern Beylik and Their Social-Cultural Functions during the Ottoman Deylik Era (1671–1830 CE): A Historical Analysis of Institutional Structures, Management Systems, and Community Impact
Zia Kouider; Yahiaoui Saad

During the Ottoman period, endowment institutions (*awqāf*) in the Eastern Beylik emerged as one of the most influential mechanisms shaping social organization, religious life, and cultural continuity. These institutions gradually evolved into a legally protected system, gaining immunity from taxation, confiscation, and unlawful intervention, which enabled charitable practices to flourish within local society (Asadov, K., 2025). Endowments acquired diverse forms of property—including real estate, agricultural lands, orchards, pastures, and forests—administered under urban inspection systems and judicial oversight. Over time, these endowments transformed into multifaceted welfare structures that supported religious education, social solidarity, and public services, thereby preserving the region's cultural and spiritual fabric (Sa'd Allah, 1998).

Archival studies, particularly those based on the rich corpus of documents preserved in the Constantine archives, demonstrate the centrality of *waqf* institutions in sustaining mosques, zawiyyas, Qur'anic schools, and charitable services. These documents reveal the detailed contractual mechanisms used to establish, manage, and protect endowments, highlighting their central role in the development of cultural and religious life across the Beylik of Constantine (Belbrouat, 2008; Dabbah, 2018).

This study seeks to answer a fundamental question: **How did the endowments function, and what was their social and cultural significance in the Eastern Beylik during the reign of the deys (1671–1830 CE)?**

To address this main question, the following sub-questions are posed:

- What was the concept of the endowment, and how was it applied in the Beylik?
- What types of endowments were prevalent?
- Which endowment institutions were most prominent?
- What were the social and cultural functions of these endowments?

The purpose of the study is to examine the institutional organization of endowments and evaluate their contribution to social cohesion, religious education, and cultural continuity. The analysis also sheds light on taxation and administrative practices that shaped relations between Ottoman authorities and rural tribes in the Eastern Beylik. To achieve these aims, the study relies on the historical method—particularly descriptive and analytical approaches—which are appropriate for interpreting archival materials and understanding the socio-institutional structures of the Ottoman period.

1. Definition of the Endowment (Waqf)

In Islamic jurisprudence, an endowment (*waqf*) is defined as the “confinement of a property to the ownership of the founder while dedicating its benefit or revenue to charitable or public purposes” (Al-Tarabulsi, 2013, p. 37). Al-Qahtani (1994) further explains that a person may withhold some or all of his wealth from commercial circulation, dedicating it as an endowment such that its ownership cannot be transferred. The benefit, however, is used in the specific manner determined by the founder, without the property itself being sold or inherited. Jurists summarize this principle as: **“Endowing the property while releasing its benefit.”**

Endowments are therefore considered a continuous charity (*sadaqa jāriyah*) and a virtuous act encouraged in Islamic law, intended to produce ongoing social benefit during the life of the donor and after his death (Namir, 2011). The legal principles of endowments in Algeria during the Ottoman era reflected a dual jurisprudential influence: the Maliki doctrine—followed by most Algerians—and the Hanafi doctrine—followed by Ottoman officials and urban elites. The Maliki school emphasized directing endowment benefits exclusively toward their intended public interest, whereas the Hanafi school permitted the founder and his descendants to benefit from certain types of endowments (Halili, 2008, p. 196).

This doctrinal diversity later resulted in the development of multiple types of endowments in the Eastern Beylik, each with specific legal and administrative characteristics.

2. Organization of the Endowment in the Eastern Beylik

During the early phase of Ottoman rule, the administration of endowments in the Eastern Beylik lacked systematic oversight. Numerous archival documents—particularly the endowment registers of Constantine—describe declining conditions, neglected properties, and inadequate management (Dabbah, 2018; Sa'd Allah, 1998). Prior to the reforms of the eighteenth century, many endowments suffered from disorganization, misuse, and unclear administrative authority.

A major turning point occurred under the leadership of **Salih Bey (r. 1771-1792 CE)**, whose governance marked one of the most comprehensive reform periods in the history of endowments in the region. Salih Bey initiated a large-scale census of all endowment properties, established unified registers, and placed their supervision under the authority of judges and muftis. His reforms required that endowment agents be held accountable every six months, ensuring transparency and reducing the misuse of funds (Qushi, 2009, p. 19). The reforms also mandated that any annual surplus be reinvested in additional properties, thus expanding the endowment base and strengthening its financial sustainability (Najaf, A., Najafov R. 2025).

Before these reforms, the region had experienced instability, administrative weakness, and fiscal pressures, which contributed to the deterioration of endowment revenues and the destruction of some properties (Bouhamida, 2018). Under Salih Bey's directives—and with the supervision of the Hanafi judge Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Rashidi—significant efforts were undertaken to revive and reorganize the institution. A notable document dated 1190 AH/1776 CE states that the administrators of Constantine's mosques had “neglected the endowments and lost many of them,” prompting Salih Bey to order a full investigation and the preparation of three identical registers documenting all existing and lost endowments (Qushi, 2009, pp. 19-21).

2.1 Structure of Endowment Administration

The management of endowments relied on a well-defined internal administrative system. The principal supervisor—known as the **mutawallī** or **agent**—was appointed by the ruler (pasha or bey) and was responsible for implementing the conditions set by the founder. The mutawallī was required to possess integrity, religious knowledge, and moral uprightness, and could be replaced by the ruler if necessary (Sa'iduni, 1984).

In some cases, endowments were overseen collectively by a council composed of scholars, judges, or financial officers. These councils monitored revenues, ensured compliance with religious and legal rules, and supervised expenditures. Because appointment to these positions offered prestige and financial benefits, individuals often sought proximity to ruling elites to secure such roles (Aliwan, 2007).

2.2 Economic Basis and Utilization of Endowments

Endowments varied extensively in type: real estate, wells, farmlands, orchards, bathhouses, markets, and water sources. Their revenues were used to sustain:

- schools, zawiyyas, and Qur'anic study circles;
- salaries of teachers, imams, and caretakers;
- food and clothing for the poor, orphans, and the descendants of the Prophet (*ashrāf*);
- maintenance of mosques and shrines;
- support for students and scholars;
- certain doctrinal or legal activities, such as promoting the Hanafi school (Namir, 2011).

However, not all endowments generated substantial income; some merely covered their basic maintenance costs. If a trustee failed to manage the endowment effectively—such as neglecting agricultural lands or orchards—the revenues would decline and the charitable purpose would gradually become unsustainable (Dabbah, 2018).

2.3 Misuse and Decline during Periods of Weakness

During periods of political instability, some Ottoman officials exploited endowment properties, treating them as personal assets. This tendency led to corruption and the diversion of revenues, prompting complaints from local

scholars. A notable example is the complaint of the scholar **Ahmed bin Sassi al-Buni**, addressed to Dey Muhammad Bakdash, lamenting the severe decline of Annaba's endowments. His poetic verses, recorded by Ibn Maimun (Al-Jaza'iri, 1981), describe negligence, injustice, and the corruption of the endowment system.

El-Ouratilani provides an especially vivid account of the mismanagement and appropriation of endowments in Constantine. In his description, he notes that Ottoman governors "neglected the endowments and seized them with great control," treating these charitable assets as if they were *private, permissible property*, even though they were neither their personal possessions nor originally endowed for their benefit (El-Ouratilani, 1908, pp. 110-111). He further describes how officials appropriated the revenues of schools and religious institutions, diverting their resources and undermining the very purposes for which they had been founded. Such abuses, he argues, contributed directly to the disappearance of learning and the decline of scholarly culture. According to him, judicial and religious offices themselves were corrupted, with judges and muftis reportedly acquiring their posts through gifts and bribes rather than merit. His testimony aligns closely with other contemporary and modern assessments of administrative deterioration in the late Ottoman period (Sa'd Allah, 1998; Anonymous Author, 1981).

Despite these deviations, it is important to highlight that the primary beneficiaries of endowment revenues were, in principle, the institutions and individuals intended by the founder. These included the administration of the endowment itself, students and teachers in religious schools, and staff of mosques, zawiyyas, shrines, and other devotional establishments. Within these institutions, beneficiaries ranged from preachers and imams to muezzins, Qur'an reciters, teachers of jurisprudence, and caretakers. Endowment funds were also used to finance basic needs such as candles, oil for lamps, incense, carpets, and maintenance costs (Namir, 2011; Dabbah, 2018). Surplus revenues were typically reinvested to establish new mosques, schools, or zawiyyas, reinforcing the role of endowments as the principal source of religious and educational funding in both the urban centers and rural settlements of the Eastern Beylik.

In Constantine, historical accounts indicate that the city contained more than one hundred religious and educational institutions, including thirty-five mosques, approximately 169 zawiyyas, and seven major schools serving around 600 students—150 of whom were rural students receiving annual stipends funded by endowments (Sa'd Allah, 1998, pp. 228-232). Such statistics underscore the magnitude of the endowment system and its unparalleled contribution to sustaining the intellectual and spiritual life of the region.

Social Inclusivity in Endowment Practices

The establishment of endowments in the Eastern Beylik was not restricted to a particular gender, social class, or ethnic group. Archival records reveal that beneficiaries and donors alike included men and women, adherents of both the Maliki and Hanafi schools, Ottoman officials, local elites, and ordinary townspeople (Halili, 2008). Women, in particular, appear to have played an active role in establishing family endowments, partly as a strategy to protect their property from confiscation upon the death of their husbands or the extinction of their lineage. A typical formula stated: "*I endow this house first for myself during my lifetime, then for my descendants and the descendants of my descendants...*" (Bouzid, 2016). These practices demonstrate the diversity and adaptive functions of endowments, not only as religious acts but also as instruments of property protection and intergenerational stability.

3. Types of Endowments

Endowments in the Eastern Beylik fell into two principal categories, each grounded in specific jurisprudential traditions:

3.1 Charitable Endowments (Waqf Khayri)

Charitable endowments constituted properties whose revenues were dedicated directly to public welfare. These endowments financed mosques, zawiyyas, shrines, and other religious and educational institutions, ensuring their preservation and enabling the uninterrupted performance of their religious, cultural, and social functions (Al-Tarabusi, 2013; Sa'd Allah, 1998). Charitable endowments formed the backbone of communal life, supporting worship, education, hospitality for travelers, and social aid for the poor and disadvantaged.

3.2 Family Endowments (Waqf Ahli / Dhurri)

The second type, often called “the entail” or *waqf dhurri*, consisted of private endowments whose revenues benefited the founder, his children, and subsequent heirs until their line became extinct. Only then would the endowment revert to public charitable purposes. The widespread establishment of family endowments was partly attributable to the permissive rulings of the Hanafi school, which allowed founders and their descendants to benefit from endowment revenues under certain conditions (Halili, 2008). By contrast, Maliki jurisprudence—followed by most Algerians—prioritized immediate charitable disbursement without deferral until the founder’s death (Bouzid, 2016). This doctrinal divergence produced the dual structure of endowments characteristic of Ottoman Algeria.

4. Prominent Endowment Institutions

The Eastern Beylik possessed a complex and diversified endowment landscape. Among the most significant institutions were the following:

4.1 Endowments of the Two Holy Mosques (Mecca and Medina)

This institution represented one of the largest and most prestigious categories of endowments in Ottoman Algeria, comprising nearly three-quarters of all real estate endowments in some regions (Al-Qahtani, 1994). Part of the revenue was sent to support the holy sites, while the remainder was distributed to the poor, travelers, and individuals affiliated with the Two Holy Mosques who resided in or passed through Algeria. Portions of these revenues were also used to ransom Muslim captives. The institution was responsible for annual grants to its employees and for supporting three Hanafi mosques in Algiers.

4.2 Endowments of Maliki Mosques

Ranking second in volume and revenue, the endowments of Maliki mosques reflected the predominance of the Maliki school among Algerian populations (Sa'd Allah, 1998). Their revenues financed maintenance, religious activities, scholarly stipends, the salaries of the mufti and the mosque agent, and other expenses necessary for the functioning of Maliki religious institutions.

4.3 Endowments for the Paths of Good Deeds (Wujūh al-Birr)

This semi-official institution managed Hanafi mosques and their affiliated properties, providing assistance to needy adherents of the Hanafi school. Its administration was collective, reflecting the interconnectedness of charitable activities and Ottoman bureaucratic oversight (Namir, 2011).

4.4 Endowments of the Ashrafs

These endowments supported the descendants of Fatima al-Zahra', who enjoyed great respect among the population. Ottoman rulers often granted special endowments to this group as a form of patronage and legitimization (Sa'd Allah, 1998).

4.5 Andalusian Endowments

Designed to support the families of Andalusian refugees who settled in the Eastern Beylik after their displacement, these endowments functioned as mechanisms of solidarity within a marginalized community. Ottoman authorities, sympathetic to their plight, facilitated the development of these charitable structures (Sa'd Allah, 1998).

4.6 Endowments of the Public Treasury (Bayt al-Māl)

Supervised by a trustee known as the *bayt al-malī*, this institution combined political and charitable functions. Its revenues came from neglected, abandoned, or heirless properties, as well as state-confiscated assets (Sa'iduni, 1979).

It financed burials for the poor, weekly alms distributions, and other social services, while also contributing funds to the state treasury.

4.7 Military and Public Facility Endowments

These endowments supported poor soldiers, maintained barracks, towers, and fortifications, and ensured the upkeep of essential public utilities such as wells, irrigation canals, and cisterns (Al-Jaza'iri, 1981).

4.8 Endowments of Zawiyyas and Shrines

The spread of Sufism and the popularity of saint veneration contributed to the rapid growth of endowments dedicated to zawiyyas and shrines. Their revenues supported pilgrims, students, the poor, and the rituals conducted at these sites. The rulers often encouraged these endowments for political reasons—to strengthen ties with influential Sufi orders (Bouzid, 2016; Sa'd Allah, 1998).

4.9 Educational Endowments

These were among the most important institutions sustaining cultural life. Schools, libraries, mosques, and zawiyyas often had dedicated endowments but also benefited from supplementary charitable revenues. Because education was not a state responsibility, the burden fell on society, prompting individuals, scholars, and rulers alike to establish endowments. Bey Saleh bin Mustafa, for example, renewed the endowments of Constantine and founded a higher school near the Sidi Lakhdar Mosque in 1789 CE, complete with internal regulations and administrative guidelines (Qushi, 2009).

2. Methodology

This research adopts a **historical-analytical approach**, suitable for examining institutional structures and social dynamics in pre-modern societies. The methodology includes the following components:

2.1 Archival Method

Primary documents related to endowments—particularly the **Constantine waqf registers**, judicial records, tax notes, and administrative orders—were examined. These sources provided insight into:

- Types of endowments
- Administrative appointments
- Property records (real estate, agricultural lands, forests, pastures)
- Revenue distribution
- Institutional beneficiaries (mosques, zawiyyas, schools, public kitchens)

2.2 Descriptive-Analytical Method

The study describes and interprets historical events, legal frameworks, and organizational structures of endowments, focusing on:

- How endowments were created and validated
- Oversight mechanisms under the deys
- Reforms implemented by Salih Bey and other Ottoman officials
- The relationship between endowments and local communities

2.3 Comparative Historical Analysis

When relevant, comparisons were made with:

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- Other regions of Ottoman Algeria
- Wider Ottoman provincial endowment practices
- Classical jurisprudential definitions of *waqf*

2.4 Secondary Sources

The study incorporates academic literature including:

- Works on Ottoman administration
- Studies of Islamic charitable institutions
- Historical analyses of Constantine and the Eastern Beylik
- Research produced by Algerian historical laboratories

This methodological combination ensures accuracy, analytical depth, and contextual clarity.

3. Ethical Considerations

Although the study relies primarily on historical documents, ethical principles were fully respected:

- **Accuracy and integrity:** Archival quotations and historical records are presented faithfully without distortion.
- **Responsible interpretation:** Historical actors and religious institutions are treated respectfully, avoiding bias or anachronistic judgments.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** As the topic concerns Islamic charitable institutions, religious terminology and concepts are used with precision and respect.
- **Proper citation:** All used sources—primary or secondary—are acknowledged in accordance with academic standards.
- **Research transparency:** The methodology clearly states the nature and limitations of the available archival materials.

Since the study does not involve human participants, interviews, or personal data, no additional ethical clearance was required.

5. Importance of the Endowment

Endowments in the Eastern Beylik constituted the **primary financial backbone** of religious, educational, and charitable life. They were the main source of funding for zawiyyas (religious lodges), mosques, Qur'anic schools, and higher educational institutions, especially in urban centers such as Constantine, Annaba, and other key cities (Aliwan, 2007; Namir, 2011). Major congregational mosques often possessed extensive agricultural lands alongside urban real estate, including shops, houses, bathhouses, and gardens. The revenues generated from these properties ensured the continuity of teaching, worship, and charitable activities and provided a stable material base for scholars, students, and religious functionaries (Sa'd Allah, 1998).

From an academic and intellectual standpoint, endowments made possible a **dense network of teaching circles, Qur'anic schools, and scholarly institutions**. They funded the salaries of teachers, preachers, jurists, Qur'an reciters, and students; they also financed the acquisition of manuscripts and the maintenance of libraries attached to mosques and zawiyyas (Dabbah, 2018; El-Ouratilani, 1908). In Constantine alone, the multiplicity of endowed religious and educational institutions, and the stipends granted to students (including those arriving from rural areas), attest to the central role of endowments in sustaining the learned class and perpetuating Islamic scholarship (Sa'd Allah, 1998).

Socially, endowments functioned as **mechanisms of solidarity and redistribution**. They alleviated poverty by providing food, clothing, shelter, and seasonal assistance to the poor, orphans, widows, travelers, and other vulnerable groups (Anonymous Author, 1981; Nourredine Abdul Qader, 2006). The existence of special endowments for the *ashrāf* (descendants of the Prophet), for Andalusian migrants, and for specific neighborhoods or

localities reflects a sophisticated culture of targeted charity and community cohesion (Sa'd Allah, 1998; Halili, 2008). Endowments thus contributed to social stability by mitigating economic disparities and reinforcing moral obligations toward the needy.

Politically and religiously, endowments played a role that **extended beyond the frontiers of the Beylik**. A portion of endowment revenues was periodically allocated to support the poor of Mecca and Medina and was transported with the annual pilgrimage caravan (Al-Qahtani, 1994). This financial linkage symbolized Algeria's integration into the wider Islamic world and reinforced the spiritual and political legitimacy of the Ottoman authorities as protectors of the holy places (Sa'iduni, 1979). Endowments also underpinned the authority of local rulers, who derived prestige from founding mosques, schools, and zawiyyas and from their role in organizing and reforming endowment administration (Qushi, 2009; Bouhamida, 2018).

The **era of the deys in the Eastern Beylik** witnessed a notable flourishing in both the organization and exploitation of endowments. Rulers whose authority was consolidated and whose reigns were relatively long, such as Salih Bey and other prominent beys of Constantine, closely supervised endowment affairs and established new foundations of their own (Qushi, 2009; Dabbah, 2018). Bey Hassan, known as *Bou Hanak*, for example, founded the Green Mosque in Constantine in 1156 AH/1743 CE, endowing it with significant properties to guarantee its religious and educational missions (Sa'd Allah, 1998). Other high-ranking officials—including pashas, ministers, scribes, and senior officers—also established endowments for mosques, zawiyyas, and charitable facilities. Ridwan Khoja, a leading official renowned for his piety, founded his own zawiya in Constantine and endowed it with sufficient resources to sustain its activities (Al-Jaza'iri, 1981; Sa'd Allah, 1998).

In sum, the importance of endowments in the Eastern Beylik can be seen at several levels:

- **Religious and educational:** sustaining mosques, zawiyyas, schools, and scholarly life.
- **Social:** organizing charity, reducing poverty, and fostering solidarity and cohesion.
- **Economic:** managing extensive agricultural and urban properties, thereby integrating religious and economic structures.
- **Political and transregional:** legitimizing authorities and connecting the Beylik to the broader Islamic world through support for the Two Holy Mosques and the Hajj caravan.

Conclusion

The analysis of endowments in the Eastern Beylik during the era of the deys (1671–1830 CE) reveals their **central role in structuring cultural, religious, and social life** in Ottoman Algeria. Based on archival evidence, legal treatises, and historical narratives, several key conclusions can be drawn.

First, endowments constituted the **main financial source** for zawiyyas, mosques, Qur'anic schools, and educational institutions, particularly in cities such as Constantine and other urban centers of the Eastern Beylik (Aliwan, 2007; Namir, 2011). In this sense, endowments represented the largest and most influential institutional framework supporting religious and intellectual activity.

Second, the **provision of endowments was socially inclusive**. It was not restricted to a particular gender, class, or doctrinal group. Men and women, Malikis and Hanafis, Ottoman officials and local urban elites all participated in founding endowments, often with different intentions—ranging from pure charity to the protection of family property (Bouzid, 2016; Halili, 2008).

Third, the **revenues of these endowments sustained both institutional and individual beneficiaries**. They financed the administration of endowments, paid salaries to teachers, students, preachers, and mosque personnel, and maintained religious and educational infrastructures (Sa'd Allah, 1998; Dabbah, 2018).

Fourth, the study confirms that the endowment system was not immune to **abuse and misappropriation**, especially during periods of political weakness and administrative corruption. Certain Ottoman rulers and officials consumed endowment funds as though they were personal property, prompting contemporary scholars like Ahmed bin Sassi al-

Buni and El-Ouratilani to denounce these practices as grave injustices that contributed to the decline of learning and moral order (Al-Jaza'iri, 1981; El-Ouratilani, 1908).

Fifth, endowments **embodied and reinforced social solidarity** by redistributing wealth to the poor, the *ashrāf*, Andalusian refugees, and other marginalized groups, thus strengthening social cohesion and communal responsibility (Anonymous Author, 1981; Nouredine Abdul Qader, 2006).

Sixth, the endowment system played a **political-religious role beyond local borders**, particularly through contributions to the poor of Mecca and Medina and support for the pilgrimage caravan, thereby integrating the Eastern Beylik into broader networks of Islamic piety and Ottoman legitimacy (Al-Qahtani, 1994; Sa'iduni, 1979).

Finally, the era of the deys—especially under figures such as Salih Bey—witnessed a **remarkable reorganization and revitalization** of endowments, including the establishment of new foundations and the introduction of administrative reforms aimed at controlling revenues and ensuring their reinvestment in religious and educational purposes (Qushi, 2009; Bouhamida, 2018). These developments highlight the extent to which endowments functioned not only as religious institutions but also as instruments of governance, social policy, and cultural continuity.

Taken together, these findings confirm that endowments were a **fundamental pillar of the socio-cultural order** in the Eastern Beylik. Future research could further explore regional variations, the role of women as founders and managers of endowments, and the transformation of waqf institutions under French colonial rule.

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6. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that **there is no conflict of interest** regarding the publication of this article. The study was undertaken solely for academic and scientific purposes, without any financial, political, or institutional influence.

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