

Sleeping soul: A concept representation of metaphysical anthropology of the funeral traditions of Torajan people



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The funeral tradition of the Torajan people is one of the most recognised funeral traditions in the world, a part of Indonesia's rich indigenous knowledge. However, this particular tradition has been in decline over time because of the alienation caused by the spreading of Christianity. This research aimed to reinterpret metaphysical anthropology of the funeral tradition of the Torajan people using the concept of the sleeping soul from the narration of Jesus in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3. The research used a qualitative approach with theological and ethnographic research types. The results of this study reveal that the concept of the sleeping soul in the biblical view can reinterpret metaphysical anthropology in the funeral tradition of the Torajan people as follows: (1) souls are eternal in the process of death, (2) souls of the deceased are helpless and (3) the sleeping soul is an eschatological hope for Christianity and Torajan people.

Contribution: The aim of this research is to find a Christian metaphysical anthropology doctrine that is cordial to the funeral tradition of the Torajan people. The relationship between the two is that they have the same way of appreciating human existence metaphysically. This finding contributes to Christianity in the preservation of Torajan culture.

Keywords: anthropology; metaphysic; funeral; sleeping soul; Toraja.

Introduction

Indonesia is rich in indigenous knowledge. This knowledge is integral to nationality and should be preserved as part of the national identity, and alongside each other, traditions could become national culture. A part of indigenous knowledge is funeral practice (De Jong 2013:2017). Funeral practices in each Indonesian tribe are unique, with different characteristics and features. Funeral practices constitute Indonesian indigenous knowledge, which must be preserved by all means. Toraja is one of these tribes that is famous for their funeral traditions.

One of the challenges in preserving indigenous knowledge is alienation from recognised beliefs and religious practices in Indonesia. The contradictions between having faith in popular beliefs and indigenous knowledge become a reason to alienate Indonesian indigenous funeral practices. The writer understands the presupposition of Erich Fromm regarding alienation, namely, a situation where the individual is alienated from the environment and himself (Fromm 1995). One example is the indirect alienation of Christian followers, who believe that one must not blend magical things with the Christian funeral procession. If Christians alienate others, Christianity must be able to systematically establish a theology that is friendly to indigenous knowledge practices but still aware of the danger of syncretism. Proof of this alienation can also be found in the De Jong (2013:2017) report, which stated that Christian missionaries considered Torajan funeral practices as improvident spending.

A Christian theology about funeral processions must be developed in order to preserve Indonesia's rich culture but still remain in accordance with Christ's teachings. These funeral practices can also be found in other parts of Indonesia, for example, *slametan* from most of the Javanese (Clifford 1983), *entas-entas* from the Tengger people in Bromo (Panuntun, Pute & Mangalik 2020), *rambu solo* or 'descending smoke' from the funeral practice of the Torajan people (De Jong 2013:176), *tiwah* from the Dayak people in Kalimantan (Hoffman 2018:81), *kwangkai* from the Dayak Benuaq people, particularly from East Kalimantan (Adriansyah et al. 2017:9), *ngaben* or cremation from the Balinese (Geertz & Geertz 1975:196), *alawau amano* from the Central Maluku (Natalia Pattipeiluhu 2013), *saur matua* from the Batak people in Toba (Yoserizal & S 2016) and many

others. It is clear that there is some kind of recognition or tribute to the astral realm of ancestral spirit by almost every tribe in Indonesia, specifically in funeral practices. This becomes a chance but also a challenge to develop a friendly Christian doctrine towards indigenous traditions that strictly denies any form of syncretism. The type of systematic theology that the writer offers is a 'sleeping soul' metaphysical anthropology of systematic theology towards death in accordance with Christ's teachings.

The study of the concept of the 'sleeping soul' in the metaphysical anthropology of death can be used to accommodate and deconstruct funeral practices from different Indonesian tribes. This 'sleeping soul' was originally the view of John Calvin regarding death, reinforced by biblical remarks from Christ in Mark 5:35–42 and in Daniel 12, which reconstruct the views of the 'sleeping soul' towards evangelical views. A deconstructed view of the 'sleeping soul' can then be linked to funeral practices in Indonesia to create a contextual theology friendly towards tradition but strict against syncretism. The type of reconstruction in the explanation of 'sleeping soul' is as the research has carried out in previous studies such as Christian hospitality in Javanese *bancaan* tradition (Panuntun & Susanta 2021). The basic presupposition in the research is that Christianity should not alienate local culture.

This research focused on the reconstruction of the concept of the sleeping soul in human death, seen from a metaphysical anthropology aspect based on biblical teachings in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3. The writer used the view of systematic theology to recreate Christians' views and practices, and church services towards funeral traditions of Indonesian tribes. The main goal of this article was to deconstruct metaphysical views of death and traditions in Indonesia to be linked to and aligned with the ideas of the 'sleeping soul' in metaphysical anthropology according to Christ in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3. This was also the reason why a deep investigation of funeral traditions of each Indonesian tribe is needed to focus solely on the metaphysical anthropology aspects of each tradition's characteristic. The writer was able to uncover the Torajan people's funeral traditions, focusing on the metaphysical views.

Moving on from the background, the main problem being studied here was 'what are the views of the metaphysical anthropology of the 'sleeping soul' according to Christ in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3 towards the Torajan people's funeral traditions?' The benefits of this research were the following: firstly, to academically compose a systematic theological study about death that is contextual, proper, relevant and introspective against syncretistic practices following indigenous knowledge of Indonesian culture; secondly, to give practical recommendation at the doctrinal level which may be used as a reference for Indonesian churches' funeral services, so that there will no longer be alienation from Christianity towards traditions but still

remain wary towards syncretism; thirdly, to preserve the nation's rich traditions of funeral practices from a doctrinal point of view.

Research methods and design

This study used a qualitative approach with two types of research, namely, theological research and ethnographic research. Theological research is a type of research that uses related Bible sources and references (Lumintang & Lumintang 2016). The reconstruction process of the study of metaphysical anthropology of the 'sleeping soul' is a part of theological research. The writer used theological research to technically interpret narrations from studied texts, Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3. Ethnographic research is a type of research related to culture and the cultural product of a tribe or a group of people (Subagyo 2004). The research aimed to deeply investigate metaphysical anthropology in Torajan funeral traditions.

This research took place in Tana Toraja Regency (Makale and Sangalla Sub-district) and North Toraja Regency (Kesu and Sanggalangi sub-district) from October 2021 to November 2021. The study of literature, Bible verses, interviews and observations were used for data collection. Snowball sampling was used for one *to minaa*¹ to indicate others. The data collection process consisted of several steps. The first step was collecting data related to the narration of the 'sleeping soul' according to Christ and Daniel. The second step was giving an idea about the views of metaphysical anthropology of death of Torajan people. The third step was making an interactive analysis when correlating the 'sleeping soul' study with the views of metaphysical anthropology of Torajan funeral traditions. Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis process was used in this study, which consisted of data collection, data condensation, data display and data interpretation and/or verification (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014).

Results and discussion

Study of metaphysical anthropology of death according to Christ and Daniel

This study was based on the narrations of Jesus in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3. The sleeping soul itself is a quite popular topic in Church doctrine, often considered degrading towards the eternity of souls and not in line with the view of the transience of souls. Calvin (2008:217) argued that soul eternity comes from God's breath of life, which is something eternal and also a part of the human soul. 'Soul' in this case is a form of 'soul and spirit', because Calvin did not differentiate them. A group that believe in soul eternity also believe that eternity is something that God and angels possess. The eternity of the human soul is the same as that of angels, which is through God (Kelly 1905:6). Eternal souls belong to God and will return to him, whilst the sleeping soul is a pejorative term. However, other views like that of Kabanga state that there is not any part of the human that is eternal,

1. Priest of the *aluk to dolo* belief. Acting as the leader of the ritual.

including their souls (Kabanga 2002). Other writers also claim that soul is material, not eternal. The idea that souls are eternal was originally from Plato inserted into Bible verses (Ann 2008:871–872). This became the basis for early churches to wage war against the danger of Gnosticism (Kelly 1905:1). The writer was able to understand the arguments of theologians and reconstruct the study of the sleeping soul based on Bible verses Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3.

The writer had a presupposition that human souls are eternal; however, it is not considered a 'better' material and become a main mould as it is in Gnosticism. The writer still believes in physical and metaphysical unity created well by God, as said in Genesis 1–2. The writer also realised that there is a divine aspect in human metaphysics, the soul, a divine breath from God as stated by Calvin. The writer reinforced this idea by making an exposition from Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3.

The event in Mark 5:35–42 was that the child of Jairus fell sick and later in verse 35 was declared dead. Christ made a statement that the child was asleep when it was clear that she was already dead. The narration in verse 40 states that everyone laughed at him, creating a satirical atmosphere that the child was still alive, but sleeping (Jamieson, Fausset & Brown 2009:2214–2215). Jesus then asked for assistance from his trusted disciples, and by saying *Talitha kum*, he awakened the child (Fleming 2005). Jesus performed a miracle and made the audience speechless, even though they were mocking him in the first place when he said the child was 'asleep' when it was clear that she was already dead. Jesus asked Jairus to believe and then a miracle happened. The word 'sleep' here was understood as a short death by believers. Being dead was like taking a nap. However, 'sleep' here was also often used as a word replacement for 'dead' in the texts (Henry 2000). As seen from the narration, though, Jesus was serious when saying the word, making him a laughing matter for the audience. He told them to get out. It can also be interpreted that Jesus woke the child as if she was asleep, even though it was clear that she was already dead. If the body (physical) and soul (metaphysics) of the child are powerless because of death, namely, with the presupposition that the soul is mortal, the soul should have no power, but Jesus used the term 'sleep'. The sleeping soul can also be interpreted in the narration as something that Jesus saw as helplessness, because the physical body was dead. Jesus was not teasing or empathising, since the people laughing were firmly told off. This narration can be considered as a supporting argument that in death, humans have a part that is eternal, their soul; however, souls are helpless, hence the name 'sleeping soul'.

This interpretation can be linked with the text of Daniel which uses the same word 'sleep'. However, uniquely, Daniel was given visions about the end of times. The visions explained that men will be awakened from their sleep, some would receive eternal death and some eternal life (Fleming 2005). The use of the words 'sleep' and 'wake' in the second verse is the form of the first resurrection and judgement for

all men (Jamieson et al. 2009). Seeing the narration being repeated, the words 'sleep' and 'wake' can be applied to believers and non-believers, divided into those who receive eternal life or suffering. From the narration, it can be said that all men in the end will be awakened from sleep, so there is something eternal in them, and that something will be resurrected as a whole. It will later receive either eternal life or eternal suffering; that something can be interpreted as the soul, which later will be resurrected along with the body.

The writer wrote a presupposition that the metaphysical anthropology of man's soul is eternal, as stated by Calvin, even when the physical body dies. However, this eternity of the soul is limited and powerless, so it can be described as asleep. Only by God's power can it be awakened; therefore, in this case the form of the miracle can be trusted and logically reasoned. Eternal but helpless souls will be awakened in the end of times along with the physical body as an eternal unity. This eternal unity follows the interpretation of the resurrection in Daniel 12:1–3 and the power of God that can magically raise the dead. Body and soul that have been awakened will then either be judged for eternal life or eternal suffering, or eradicated until there is nothing left.

The view of metaphysical anthropology in Torajan funeral tradition

The writer conducted field research to uncover the existence of soul or spirit (metaphysics) of the funeral tradition in the view of Torajans' religion, *aluk to dolo*. The Torajans believe that death is when the soul separates from the body (M. Ruruk [Interview with *To Minaa*, Tana Toraja] pers. comm., 27 Oct. 2021). For Torajans, death is something to be honoured, which is why the procession takes a long time from death to funeral. The bodies are usually kept in the home (Hollan, Wellenkamp & Of 1996:174). The death procession in Toraja is very majestic because of the strong kinship that is strengthened by the same culture called *Longko Torayan*. This culture also reflects the hospitality of the Toraja people in carrying out the funeral tradition (Panuntun 2020). *Longko Torayan* as the background of this kinship value is passed down to the next generation so that every Torajan person could sincerely participate in this funeral tradition (Febriani, Sari & Bua 2020). Especially in Lembang Tumbang Datu, Sangalla, a cottage or *lantang* will be made for the deceased. Firstly, the dead are bathed, injected with formalin, put to sleep and then covered with clothes or *dibalun*. The entire process is called *to makula*. Once the whole complete family has gathered, then the *rambu solo* will soon take place. The deceased or *to makula* has their head facing west at all times. The family will still provide food for the deceased as if they were still alive. The food is placed near the feet. The family of the deceased then says, '*kande kalena mi tu kandemi*', literally translating as, 'eat the food by yourself'. Then, before *rambu solo* takes place, the deceased is relocated so that their head faces south (N'. Dion [Interview with *To Minaa*, Tana Toraja] pers. comm., 2021). Death in Lembang Penaian, Sanggalangi, North Toraja, is when one loses a closely related person such as a parent, relative or child. When someone

dies, based on the family's decision by meeting, the time for the deceased's *rambu solo* will be decided. Some do it later, whilst some do it right after death. Death is declared when the deceased's soul is departed from the body or *tassuk penanna lan mai kalena*, usually called *ma'kerok*, which literally translates to 'not eating rice'. This takes place in *rambu solo*. The deceased before *rambu solo* procession is called *to makula*, literally meaning sick person, and is provided with food just like a living person. If *to makula* or *to mate* is not provided with food, *bombo mendeata* will get angry. *Bombo mendeata* can literally be translated to 'spirit that will become god'. (N. Bara' [Interview with *To Minaa*, Toraja Utara] pers. comm., 2021). As can be seen from this, death rituals are an integral part of Torajan people's lives. The writer would like to emphasise two terms: *bombo* [spirit or soul] and *to makula* [sick person]. The Torajan believe that in death, there is something that is still alive and thus should be honoured by providing it with food. For Torajan people, the deceased is still considered *to makula* or a sick person if the funeral procession and rituals have not been completed.

The writer looked into the view of the metaphysics in the Torajan funeral tradition and found that the deceased is still considered sick and the family still need to take care and provide food for the *bombo* or spirit. *To makula* signifies that the deceased is not completely dead. *Penanna*, or the spirit, will leave, carried away by the wind, and the body will stay. In *alukta*, death is when the body separates from the spirit or soul, and the soul is carried by wind to *Puang Matua*. The soul will never die and continues to exist. The soul will leave and become *to membali puang*, then continue to *pong lalondong*, the protector of *Puya* or *ke Puya*. The ancestors are no longer here, but they will still continue to live in their family's memories and dreams (N'. Dion [Interview with *To Minaa*, Tana Toraja] pers. comm., 2021). The view of *to mina* in Lembang Penaian states that the spirit or soul from the deceased becomes *bombo mendeata*, that is, they will never cease to exist and continue to live in their family's dreams; only the body dies. The soul of the deceased or *bombo mendeata* will remain around their home or where the *rambu solo* takes place (N. Bara' [Interview with *To Minaa*, Toraja Utara] pers. comm., 2021). This is in line with the view of the existence of souls (metaphysics) in *to mina* in Kesu. It states that in *aluk nene* [the religious views of the ancestor], bodies are buried alongside the ancestors, but souls or spirits will return to the Creator, broken bodies and eternal souls (T. Sarungallo [Interview with *To Minaa*, Toraja Utara] pers. comm., 2021). The same view is also shared by *to minaa* of Lembang La'bo, stating that death in *aluk nene* is when the body separates from the soul or spirit. When we die, our spirits or souls will return to the sky because *puang matua* is located there and men will return to their Creator (T. Palimmi [Interview with *To Minaa*, Toraja Utara] pers. comm., 2021). From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the existence of souls in humans after death is eternal. There is something eternal about humans, namely, the existence of the *bombo*. The term *bombo* can be identified with the spirit or human soul.

The eternity of the soul was also observed by the writer in the *Manta'da* ritual. The ritual was conducted by the family who owns the *tongkonan* in order to ask permission for

renovation from the ancestral spirits. The ritual was hosted by *to minaa*, and *ne' sando* acted as the priest of *aluk todolo*. Uniquely, the ritual is very close to metaphysical anthropology because in this ritual, *to minaa* asked permission to represent the family to the previous ancestral spirits inside the *tongkonan*. *Ne' sando* in this ritual offered *piong*,² clay cauldron-steamed pork with various types of rice. The conversations with ancestral spirits here prove that that the Torajans have respect for the eternity of their ancestral spirit.

Another observation was made in the *rambu solo* taking place in Kesu, North Toraja. In this event, the writer witnessed that great enthusiasms came from the family and friends to honour the deceased, *to mate*. A large amount of meat was given away, which indicates gratitude and blessings for the people around. The blessings come from the soul of the deceased which has reached perfection, *membali puang*. In their ancestors' religion, souls are eternal but not all become *membali puang* (T. Sarungallo [Interview with *To Minaa*, Toraja Utara] pers. comm., 2021). Torajan people view souls in funeral ritual as something that does not die and is eternal, which then later will reach perfection or *membali puang* or become god-like. Others say *bombo mendeata* or spirits that become gods.

This view of the eternity of the soul has great impact on today's life. The deceased and their living family still have a very close relationship. The deceased, after becoming *to makula*, will still be provided food placed in a particular place. Then, when their spirits become gods, the Torajans require blessings from their ancestral spirits alongside *Puang Matua* (M. Ruruk [Interview with *To Minaa*, Tana Toraja] pers. comm., 2021). The same thing was also stated by *to minaa* from Lembang Tallung Penaian, that is, spirits or souls of the deceased will become *bombo mendeata*, so they will never die and will always come back in their family's dreams; only their bodies die. The spirits or souls of the deceased or *bombo mendeata* will still be around their home or around where the *rambu solo* takes place. *Bombo mendeata* is the same with *membali puang*, which bless the living family. The same concept was also explained by Ne' Dion, *to minaa* from Lembang Tumbang Datu. Relationships between the living and their ancestors can be seen in *manta'da* and remembered by the living family, and in reality, become blessings to the living from the ancestors. For example, when we sleep, our ancestors or deceased family will appear in our dreams asking to be provided with food. This indicates that we need to perform *manta'da* as an act of remembering the deceased, showing gratitude, asking for blessings and to be protected from catastrophe and asking for health recovery. If *manta'da* is not performed, the living family will get sick and then die. From this, in the views of Torajan people, eternal souls have great impact on today's life by giving blessings or damnation. The correlation between the living and deceased must be preserved well in the rituals, one of which is *manta'da*, where family members communicate with the spirits or souls of their ancestors.

2. Traditional Torajan cuisine with a lot of herbs.

In the view of the metaphysical anthropology of death amongst Torajan people, it can be concluded that souls or spirits are eternal. Death is the separation of body and soul. Bodies rot but souls will return to the Creator. The souls must be taken care of by the living, and various traditions were based on this which then became a part of Torajan's indigenous knowledge, such as *manta'da* or *rambu solo*. Relationships of ancestral spirits with the living relatives can bring blessings or disaster to the living, and therefore the rituals are performed in order to honour the souls or spirits of the deceased.

The view of the 'sleeping soul' towards concept representation of metaphysical anthropology of funeral traditions of Torajan people

The view of the 'sleeping soul' from the narration of Jesus in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3 is the same as that of Torajan funeral metaphysical anthropologies. The resemblance here is the view that bodies die, but metaphysically, the existence of souls will still continue. In the narration of the 'sleeping soul', the living souls are described by the word 'sleep', lacking the power to move the body or influence life. The belief of the metaphysical anthropology of Torajan funerals states that death is the separation of body and soul. The later process is becoming *bombo* or spirits, which do not die and exist eternally.

The metaphysical anthropology of the 'sleeping soul' and that of the Torajan people have similarities, but there are also basic differences. The view of the 'sleeping soul' states that the eternality of the souls is limited and powerless and hence described as 'sleeping', and only by God's power it can be awakened; in this case, the form of miracle can be trusted and logically reasoned. Eternal but powerless souls will later be awakened in the end of times alongside their physical bodies and become an eternal unity. Bodies and souls that have been awakened will then be judged, to receive eternal life or suffering until there is nothing left. In the view of the metaphysical anthropology of death of the Torajan people, souls or *bombo* can have great impact on today's life. *Bombo* must be honoured as they might be angered and can cause sickness or disaster to the living if not honoured. Mutual honour and relationship between the living and ancestral *bombo* are believed to create happiness in both.

Based on these similarities and differences, the writer compiled a systematic theology on the sleeping soul formed with the narration of Jesus in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3 to reinterpret from the view of the metaphysical anthropology of a Torajan funeral. The compilation of said systematic theology is as follows:

Firstly, souls are eternal in the process of death. From the similarities between the study of the 'sleeping soul' according to Jesus in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3 and the metaphysical anthropology of a Torajan funeral, it can be said that souls are eternal. This view becomes a meeting point between Christianity and local indigenous knowledge,

specifically from the view of metaphysical anthropology of death amongst the Torajan people. Eternal souls allow traditions and other indigenous knowledge in Toraja such as *ma nene'*, *manta'da* and *rambu solo'*, which are a form of honouring the spirits of the deceased, to be preserved for having the same pillar and principle. Christianity can provide a different view towards the deceased because they are not really dead and some parts of them are still alive, which are the souls. From this view, Christianity is able to accommodate various forms of tradition honouring the deceased with the same belief that souls are eternal in the process of death.

Secondly, souls of the deceased are helpless. The helplessness of the soul of the deceased is described by the word 'sleep'. Deceased people will not have an impact on any aspects of today's life even though their souls are eternal. Christianity can include the belief that the living souls are asleep and later will be awakened to be judged with the living and the dead. This part is different from the view of the metaphysical anthropology of death amongst Torajan people, even though both viewpoints share the belief that the existence of souls is eternal. However, it must also be said for the Torajan people that eternal souls cannot have any kind of impact on today's life. Christianity can tolerate the rituals and traditions of Torajan people but will strictly declare that souls cannot give blessings or cause disaster in ordinary life. The souls are alive but helpless. People can perform rituals as far as they wish to give honour or commemorate, but not to prevent sickness or ask for blessings. This is the most difficult part of the 'sleeping soul' study to reinterpret the metaphysical anthropology of death in Torajan people. It must be strongly emphasised that one must be a devoted Christian but still willing to preserve and take part in the funeral traditions of Torajan people, based on the fact that souls are eternal but after death they are helpless and unable to have any impact on real life.

Thirdly, the 'sleeping soul' is an eschatological hope for Christianity and also the Torajan people. Moving from the similarity that eternal souls become hope in the eschatological side, the deceased and the living still have a relationship between them. Christians will still have relationship with and honour their ancestors, having the view that their ancestral spirits are eternal. This becomes an eschatological hope that between the living and the dead, relationships may still exist. It also gives meaning to the traditions talking specifically about death, which can be reinterpreted by the church. Churches are able to preserve indigenous knowledge without alienation and suspicion of mystical forces in the tradition. Instead, both can have the same foothold with eschatological hope for relationships between the living and the dead.

Conclusion

This research aimed to give a clear picture of the view of the 'sleeping soul' from the narration of Jesus in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3 to reinterpret the view of metaphysical anthropology of death in Torajan people. The view of the 'sleeping soul' can be reinterpreted from the view of the

metaphysical anthropology of death in Torajan people as follows: firstly, souls are immortal in the process of death. Secondly, the souls of the deceased are helpless. Thirdly, the 'sleeping soul' is an eschatological hope for Christianity and also the Torajan people. This article suggests further research to reinterpret funeral traditions from other tribes in correlation with the 'sleeping soul' from the narration of Jesus in Mark 5:35–42 and Daniel 12:1–3.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

D.F.P. contributed to the main idea, correcting the grammar, supervising the ideas and making the structure. W.S. contributed towards the writing, administration and data collection process.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval to conduct this research was obtained from Intitut Agama Kristen Negeri Toraja (clearance number: 02/LPPM/IAKN-T/I/2022). In this study, a consent letter was obtained from the respondents and they voluntarily accepted to participate in the interview process.

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Data availability

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