**An original person of the Hungarian
pedagogy: Sandor Karacsony**

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Abstract

Sandor Karacsony (1891–1952) is a prominent figure in Hungarian pedagogy, in his educational work, and writings; he combined Reformed theology and education science theory. Karacsony interpreted the reform pedagogical responsibility (playfulness, experience-oriented education, etc.) principles, and studied that it referred to the different ages, e.g., the role and prospects of autonomy. However, for example, respecting the other people, placing the individual development into the center, creating benevolent atmosphere, etc., can be explained with his Calvinistic conviction as well (Karacsony, 1995, 2004). According to Karacsony, the joined development of body and soul is recognizable, we always have to look at the whole person. His conception has a lot of similarities with the dialectical conceptualization of Hubert Henz, Ernst Christian Trapp, and Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, furthermore with Dilthey, Nohl, and Wilhelm Flitner's pedagogical fundamental relation, communication-centered theory. Examining Sandor Karacsony's findings on education, it can be stated that he speaks not so much about education but rather collaboration and a sharing of life. In short, the general aim of the upbringing is the increase and the finding of what is possible only with relating and common language.

Keywords: reformed pedagogy, educator, reformed values, education

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Introduction

My previous research findings have drawn my attention to the fact that both the religious, theological foundations, and also social psychology are indispensable for examining Sandor Karacsony's pedagogy and pedagogical psychology.²

At the beginning of the essay, some definitions have to be defined, since my previous research showed me that, e.g., the protestant and reformed pedagogy are used as synonyms in the home and foreign literature. Protestant pedagogy involves the evangelistic and reformed (i.e., non-catholic) education. In Reformed pedagogy, however, the specialities of the Reformed religion are perceptible.

The intellectualities and trends that influenced the first period of the 20th century that is Sandor Karacsony's era, such as Christian humanism, reform pedagogy, and existentialism, emphasized the emotional competencies, interoperability besides/instead of mental development.

Karacsony sounded the importance of human relations, the possibilities of caring about our relationships. He was ahead of his time as these kinds of research got attention only in the 1960–1970s (e.g., [Altman & Taylor, 1973](#); [Clark & Mills, 1979](#); [Hamilton, 1964](#); [Wish, Deutsch, & Kaplan, 1976](#)).

As the founder of the Institute of Social Psychology (1942), Karacsony developed a unique system of social psychology, which describes the relationship of man with other people and with God. In other words, it sheds light on the horizontal and vertical relationships of man.

Karacsony's (2004, p. 260) social psychological system that describes his approach is based on the "social soul," by which concept he means a spiritual behavior or attitude toward our fellow men and the world around us. In Karacsony's opinion, the upbringing is essential for both the society and the individual. One of the educator's principal tasks is to let strengthen and develop the moral and ethical characters through the transmission of knowledge.

² Sandor Karacsony pursued linguistic and pedagogical studies in Budapest after the high-school graduation of Reformed College of Debrecen, then in Geneva, Munich, Vienna, and in Graz. He was wounded during the Second World War and after the world war he taught in one of the schools of Budapest and in the scouting and reformed youth movement works in organizations. He was the doctor of Philosophy, Pedagogy, and the Hungarian linguistics in the University of Debrecen in 1929. In 1932, he became private tutor at the University of Debrecen and from 1942 he had been a professor. He held a public position after 1945. From 1948, his activity from a political viewpoint was criticized and attacked. A specific one exists according to his philosophical fundamental idea "Hungarian way of thinking" and one for this suitable "Hungarian world view," which is the Hungarian social-psychological base of the theory his manifestations (this concept originates from Wilhelm Wundt). Sandor was primarily an educator and a lot preceded his own age in a look.

The life, work, and books of the deeply religious, Calvinist Sandor Karacsony – as a Doctor of Philosophy, Pedagogy, and Hungarian Linguistics (1929, Debrecen) – are quite naturally defined and permeated by an analysis of man's social interactions, an emphasis on the role of interpersonal communication, respect for God, and his belief in education and educability. Religion and the Reformed faith are the starting point, the alpha and omega of everything. He acquired this foundation primarily in his family; his maternal grandfather was a Reformed pastor, and his mother passed on the spiritual heritage she had received at home. Second, it was during his studies at Reformed schools (he attended the Reformed Public Elementary School of Foldes between 1897 and 1902, then the Reformed College of Debrecen between 1902 and 1910) that he internalized the religious beliefs and behavior ([Kocsis, 2016c](#)).

It should look at some features, which show the theoretical model of Karacsony in sense of the philosophy of religion. First of all, love, received from God, has to pervade the educator's pedagogical activity, and should be transmitted by him. It may face this view in Hubert Henz's ideological system. The final aim of love is to lead the pupils to God.

Sandor Karacsony's View on the Role of the Reformed Religion

Sandor Karacsony emphasizes that every Christian member has to confess to their faith. The main exercise of the priest is to preach the Bible verses to the audience. This means that practising the religion is based on at least two people.

According to Karacsony, religion is not just a dogma, it is a lifestyle, it has to appear in every act, in every relationship. He declares that the Reformed religion is the perfect basis for him and faith has to be a special attitude, which appears in every Christian person's character. These personal traits are: to be simple, to be humble, and to be stubborn (usually).

According to Bullinger ([1997](#)), there is a difference between religion and Christianity. Sandor Karacsony agrees with this statement. Religion is rather a physical thing, such as the church, the church laws, confession, and the church membership. Christianity shows people how to behave in (real) life. Jesus taught us on how to live properly. Bullinger declares that the "saved" people tend to be more selfish than the glorified, who fully accept God's gift, but the complete self-surrender and renunciation too.

In one of his works, he writes that people live their lives with a double schema and view ([Karacsony, 1991](#)). Sandor Karacsony constrains the atheist's worldview with the believer one. He declares that this type of form of life makes one unfruitful, troublous, and hopeless. According to Sandor Karacsony, the features of Christianity are grace, spirit, redemption, and deliverance from sin.

The Bible verses are the single guidelines, which recommend good life regarding the individual, but the people have individual differences. That is why there are no general rules for a proper life.

The main pillars of the Reformed Church are to emphasize grace, to build a democracy into the church organization, and to consider the individual's personal growth.

According to Sandor Karacsony, it is impossible to live a proper life, to carry out the work for the Hungarian people, without faith, without looking at God. Protestantism is a spiritual behavior, which is not only rigid (because of its history) but also changing due to its church members. In his other approach, he said that the Protestant man is holy, so they are motivated by God's spirit, but they are free too. A free man can truly be free because of the holy state. The Protestant Church's efficiency depends mainly on every member of the congregation ([Kocsis, 2018](#)).

The Stages and Products of Sandor Karacsony's Religious Development

If we want to make the religious socialization processes effective, it is necessary to have these basic abilities: we have to trust in others, in other words, we have to trust at least one more other persons than ourselves, it is one of the most important conditions for trust in God; we have to develop our people-to-people contact and in this way we can develop our people-to-God relation when we pray. Furthermore, we have to accept and comply with the norms, which is a basic rule of religious behavior.

Religious socialization contains many elements, which can and should be brought to consciousness: people have the pursuit to belong to someone, to be a member of a community, to discover their identities, to have a meaningful life, and to be creative. Moreover, features have to encourage interests for the transcendent in the process of personality development.

Religious socialization is, in fact, a process in which way we can develop our relationship with God. Religious socialization can appear in our religious behavior.

There are a lot of tasks and functions of religious socialization: religious socialization has to introduce us into the church, support us to become a member of the church, we have to learn and acquire our religious culture, understand, and interpret the symbols of religion.

Sandor Karacsony ([1996](#)) delineates his religious socialization process, its development stages in his book, and he tells us how he came to faith. First of all, he describes his childhood, because he got acquainted with the Bible first in this period: her family met in the evenings in the grandfather's room, and they read the scriptures together. Until his

grandfather's death, it was a traditional family habit. Later, the next step was the worship services, where he saw the Bible in the hands of the pastor. That made a big impression on Sandor Karacsony, so he practiced at home in the way that he stood on a stool with the Bible in his hands. As he became a student at the Reformed College of Debrecen, he felt that it was a duty to read the Holy Scriptures. He read the verses in secret when he was adolescent, but not long after that he had some doubts because of the education of the science subjects and finally he turned away from the "fairy tales." He denied the Bible for 1 year, but later, he recognized that religion belonged to his everyday life. The personality and lifestyle of his religious education teacher encouraged him to turn to God (Kocsis, 2016a, pp. 348–371).

In his young adult ages, he has cooperated actively with the Reformed Church. He ministered 20 years long and read the Bible when he was capable of accepting, loving the others, and abandoning his egoistic self.

There is no doubt that the church congregation is one of the most important things in the religious socialization. It has generally a huge influence on the church members, how they feel and how they live their life. It depends on which type of community model they choose. The main types are administrative, organization, and community models.

Sandor Karacsony advocated and practiced the community model during his activities. He declared that it is the real community of life in groups; it is not just spending time together: it has to be a shared activity, we have to spend time in the way that we listen to each other, converse dialogue, and we make effort to understand the others. In addition to his church offices, he organized a small group, a circle of disciples around himself, with whom he was in close contact. He attached great importance to the opportunities that appear, become alive, and practice in a relationship formed with another person/people. The base of Sandor Karacsony's circle of disciples consisted of the participants of the Bible study group he organized, who then were given guidance for their whole way of life and work during the explanations of the Word. Mr. Gyorgy Kontra, one of his disciples, recalled in 1994: *"Those whom God blessed to be able to attend Sandor Karacsony's Bible study once, have been drawing strength from the Bible since then for their lives"* (Karacsony, 1995, p. 5).

The "Master" put together a Bible Reading Plan for them, with the help of which they carried out continuous Scripture reading, a method based on Calvin's doctrines. His disciples also took an active part in the publication of this Bible Reading Plan. This practice was later adopted by the Synod of the Reformed Church. Sandor Karacsony taught his disciples to think, which is worth more than all knowledge transfers.

Reformed Values in Sandor Karacsony's System of Views

Personality development or education means the forming and activating of the religiousness hidden in man (the Christian value system), so every educator – religious education teacher or educator who gets in contact with children or even adults – should apply religious education in practice. What are those characteristics of Sandor Karacsony's philosophy that are in line with the value system of the Reformed religion?

He considered that every child is special and important, just as his supreme master, Jesus. For the deeply religious Karacsony, it was important to use phrases the concept of which comes from the Bible (e.g., "grown-up" instead of the pupil, student or "growth" instead of education). The message of the Bible also appears in his view on the unity of languages. According to Karacsony, we are only different because of our languages, otherwise, we are one in Christ, and roots are the same, so we have to understand each other. Above all stands love, the smart love, which means the basis of the relationship between the educator and the student in his pedagogy.

The acceptance of the autonomy of the other person is really important because he respected God; therefore, he respected the other person. Before Christ we are all equal, so we have to honor people and recognize the other person as an equal partner. Karacsony expects from all the adults, educators to transmit the Reformed faith, he proclaimed the priesthood of all believers responsibly. Although it is not easy to do in everyday pedagogy, the task of the educators is to testify to their faith – being elevated as priests, and the child, hearing and feeling this, would be strengthened in his faith. According to Karacsony, the grown-up can learn through personal experience and his personality can be developed by teaching him ethical independence and freedom of thought. He had an ecumenical view regarding Christianity, emphasized unity, and the peaceful coexistence in respect of religion (within the nation and among the nations as well).

According to Karacsony, the interaction between body and soul and their joined development is recognizable; we always have to look at the whole person. He made a circle of disciples around himself. They spent a great time together; their relationship was close and confidential. He did not lecture them but tried to think together with them.

Based on his works in Sandor Karacsony's pedagogy, we can detect Reformed values in the following basic statements concerning education and educability (Kocsis, 2010). First, individuals are autonomous that means that they are uneducable, because only social beings are educable. Only the social soul is educable, so educational change can only take place in the course of his relationship with another person.

Second, education is growth. The interaction between the educator and the person being educated fundamental for it; the educator achieves it out by giving something to the

educated passing it on and the student by receiving it from the other. At the end of the education, a collegial relationship develops; moreover, the person being educated may overwhelm the educator; he educates the educator (Karacsony, 2010, p. 10). Furthermore, education equals linguistic education and linguistic relationship.

In addition, education should be a community of work and life. Educational influence can take place during the common work through relating to the other. As stated by Karacsony (2002, p. 92), the relationship between the educator and the person who is educated has life- and work-fellowship, which motivates and provides perspective and strength.

In relation to this, by only professing educational and spiritual content, we are not able to educate people. Content can have formal educative power, it may have an effect, result or not, but according to Karacsony mostly not (at schools mainly this kind of education takes place). He esteemed the personality of the educator more highly than every new method. Obviously, he acknowledged the effort and work put into the experiment to develop new, modern educational methods – although he challenged the effectiveness of them – Karacsony appreciated the self-reflection, the great attitude to the education of the pedagogue a lot better. And above all stands love. The pedagogue, in general, must love people, which means the love of values as well. The parent, the pedagogue must love the child, the school, and should not expect anything in return. They have to accept the child completely.

Finally, education should be Presbyterian education. That means, that there is a coordinate relationship between the educator and the student; the pedagogue is not above the student. The synod-Presbyterian principle is valid in the school as well: the educator is only a commissioned person.

After seeing the characteristics of Sandor Karacsony's pedagogy, we examine the educational places, locations in his work, and concept where he could gain pedagogical experience in connection with his offices and other roles. The richness and versatility of his work are distinct, visible in the light of this list. First of all, the family was the primary location for him for learning the basic values, like the Reformed identity and relating to each other. School provided life community for the collaboration of the educator and the student. In scouting an opportunity was provided for the younger generation to get to know the older generation and take part in activities together. As a newspaper editor, Karacsony realized the joint work of young and old, experienced and inexperienced; readers could join in the work of editing as well. As a writer, he realized that readers want to read about topics, cases, which are common with the writer.

He adjusted his lectures and courses to the needs of his audience. His aim was to make the message understand. In accordance with the principle of the priesthood of all believers, he

preached the good news, the gospel. That was the evangelization in the church, which actually was a testimony given for the visited churches. Karacsony was representative of church and mission movements; in these roles, he also noticed the power and influence of the community. As the leader of different organizations, he experienced that people expect to be led, demand goals, tasks, and programs. The leader must have a rich relationship network, which has to be experienced. He was an international committee member too and so he realized that we should relate to other nationalities in a Hungarian and honest way, and so we will be accepted as partners.

Karacsony offered a form of life, a life program that is not only for pedagogues, and which are relevant in European comparison as well [see Barth (1990); Goleman (2007)]. Based on his writings, it can be stated that he saw the events around him in context, realized the importance of faith in the life of the individual, and contemplated the questions of pedagogy and the problems of Hungarian people in context.

Sandor Karacsony's Image of Pedagogy and Pedagogues

Sandor Karacsony's view is equal to the classic approach where pedagogy has to set out fundamentally from the relation between the educator and the educated persons; Dilthey formulated this thought in 1894 in his work. Karacsony, according to Herman Nohl (Kron, 1997, p. 283), interpreted the pedagogical relation as an interaction. In the educational progress, both participants are equal, the educator and the pupils are in a coordinating relationship with each other, so that the students' role value is increasing.

In Sandor Karacsony's perception, the upbringing means Hungarian education, primarily. He defined the tasks in this concern. He grouped the agendas around three essential points. The education has to be modern, Hungarian, and efficient.

The upbringing will be "modern" if the educator and the pupils find it and use the common language. They will be Hungarian, if they communicate in Hungarian and relate to fellows in Hungarian manner.

The characteristics of the relationship between students and educators are autonomy and freedom. Furthermore, it is important to be sincere and true. Next, we have to speak and think clearly. Moreover, the educator has to believe in the mission, which activity comes from God, and make confessions among his fellows.

Schleiermacher's (1964, p. 42) dialectic perception reflects in that statement is where the upbringing gets although historical-social phenomenon, but it is rather realized in the relation between the younger one and the elder generation, and in the impact which has had on each other, yet. Nevertheless, Karacsony differed from Johann Friedrich Herbart's

notions and similarity can be after all experienced between the two views. Both of them declared that the peoples are moldable and shapeable, while Johann Friedrich Herbart imagined it on a direct manner, where Karacsony considered it in an indirect way, but their opinion is equal in that the mutual contact of educators and the educated can foster the upbringing. The pedagogical humanism characterizes the philosophy of Karacsony, as to the continuously forming – in communities, the tradition, and the culture – the personality of the educated person receives a big emphasis, and all these are pervaded and shaped by transcendence and the deep and reformed faith. In short, the general aim of the upbringing is the increase and the finding of what is possible only with relating and common language.

It proves Sandor Karacsony's sense of reality and thorough knowledge that he has no illusions about schools and pedagogues. It appears as a question in one of his books whether there are really suitable teachers in schools. He draws a sad conclusion, which he explains with low salaries and the lack of social honor. Then, as a summary, he says that in Hungarian schools, it is not those who teach that should, and they do not teach what and how they should. (Karacsony, 2003, p. 158). Being a pedagogue should be considered as if we were our pupils' or children's Story Bible, as Endre Gyokossy (Gyokossy & Szathmary, 1997) put it in one of his books. In other words, Karacsony places the emphasis on the personality, attitude, and faith convictions of the pedagogue.

According to Sandor Karacsony, it is worrying that the teachers have rather the pursuit to be professionals (or they are professional) than to be a priest, to be wise, and to be a sophocrats and masters. Sophocrat is a true believer, who is humble, but he lives his life actively, he makes creative works, said Karacsony. If we think about wisdom, we can ask the question: Who is wise? The general Christian understanding is that those who have fear on God and who can see the correlation between the world, people, and the meaning of life. Moreover, he lives responsibly and conscientious and he finds the harmony between himself and the surroundings. Generally, we reach the peak of our wisdom in our elder ages, because of our life experiences; on one hand, we cannot declare that it is in each case true; on the other hand, we can reach the wisdom not only in the old ages.

The attitude of the teacher has to become to fruition during teaching with a priestly soul. Karacsony emphasizes the importance of the task, which appears with wholeheartedness. However, we have to take into consideration that it depends on how capable they are of accepting and receiving the stuff. The teachers should use the skill to be able to decide from the children's faces what students are thinking. The authority of the teachers is also important who leads and sometimes dictates the children. They have to accept that they cannot become rich during teaching; it is rather a service, with humbleness and trustworthiness. The teacher is motivated and intelligent. According to Sandor Karacsony,

it is required that teachers behave exemplarily, although he knows that teachers are fallible as well. Moreover, they should be socially sensitive, knowledgeable, cultured, flexible, self-conscious, purposeful, and open to problems and they should have a vision about the future. The duty of the teacher is not only to pay attention but to cheer up the students and to maintain a good atmosphere in the classroom. Last but not at least, teachers have to be deeply religious.

To sum up, we can say that the pedagogical career mirror of Karacsony presents the main features of the teachers, which means that not only the professional knowledge but the characteristic and faith are also very important.

Sandor Karacsony made a separate category in his system of the Reformed pedagogical scientist: the Reformed teachers are expected to work properly and he makes categories about the pedagogue, depending on their faith. According to Karacsony, none of the Reformed teachers are good. He declares that it is partly not their fault, because the Reformed pedagogue training does not stress the importance of the Reformed features during the education. In fact, state school teachers are only trained, who should go to church service. That is why he emphasizes the need for constant self-education ([Karacsony, 1985](#), p. 185). Furthermore, according to a lot of specialized literature (including Sandor Karacsony), it is very important to see ourselves realistically to have self-knowledge.

Janos Calvin ([1986](#), p. 234) declares that teachers – as the church servants – must accept God's gift and grace with humility during the teaching. The entrusted church members have two duties: recognizing God's sending will for service and accepting the church office, in order to ensure the church's activity and order.

Karacsony affirms Calvin's teachings when he writes that Reformed educators must be characterized by faith and humility. Faith and commitment can be recognized by its "stickiness," i.e., it chains students to himself. Karacsony mentions Janos Apaczai Csere's moving school as an example: whenever he was forced to leave a place, his students followed him; as a result, his school never actually stopped functioning. Reformed educators must be aware that they cannot make statements ex cathedra. Students are "only" entrusted to them, they help bring out the best of the students during their studies, and they do not stand above their students. In this sense, they have a collegial relationship. ([Kocsis, 2016b](#)).

According to Sandor Karacsony, it is the most beautiful task to be a Reformed teacher, although he admitted that it is not easy. Teachers tend to think themselves smart, perfect, and they forget or neglect their Reformed identity. Despite this fact, he puts faith in the future that it could improve, at least in the Reformed schools.

Karacsony declares that teachers without faith cannot achieve success, because they cannot draw strength from anywhere. Moreover, it is because of the lack of their social psychological preconditions. The teachers' resources are humility with love and joy, which are fundamental for the relationship between teachers and students.

In fact, being a pedagogue in his understanding is not a vocation or a duty, but a mission. In this, Janos Kalvin's concept of the teacher as God's tool and the picture of the teacher as a missionary can be discovered. Karacsony declares that Hungarian secondary schools can only be saved by the missionization of the student soul. According to Karacsony, the difference lies in the fact that vocation wants to serve, whereas the mission wants to love, even if it requires sacrifice. In pedagogy, it can be seen as sacrifice that the teacher offers himself, his time, his knowledge, and his actions to the other person. In other words, the combination of a responsible and joyful work (service) and, if necessary, selfless sacrifice (good works voluntarily offered) means love to the other person.

Sandor Karacsony describes himself as someone whose insight into human nature was better than average, who was able to reinterpret his statements, and who admitted when he was wrong (Karacsony, 1996, p. 7). In Sandor Karacsony's conceptional system, the educator's personality is very important, since he educates in all moments and all situations. Affecting each other, the strength of the educational communities presupposes unambiguously, however, that the man is moldable and shapeable. It means that upbringing is not a planned process and it may be talked about in an indirect manner only. The learning process has only a result if a real living contact is based on a dialogue, which exists between the educator and the educated, where the pupils are able to perceive the teaching material. The emphasis, in this process, is not on the methods, but on the depth of the communication and contact with each other. This kind of mentality is typical to Dilthey's, Nohl's, and Wilhelm Flitner's pedagogical systems.

Summary

Although Sandor Karacsony never referred to any verses of the Bible, his writings and activities are based on biblical foundations. He taught through his character, due to his Reformed approach, and he stressed the importance to have a good connection and look at students as whole people. What Karacsony's life example taught is that, on one hand, it is important to accept the others; on the other hand, we have to know the people's purpose, i.e., their theoretical and practical ideas. We have to consider the fact that we have to adapt not only to external but the internal conditions and circumstances, expectations (external conditions are the family, the society, workplace, etc.).

"To be" – according to Karacsony's activity – means that our relations are healthy and good, with others, God, and ourselves. If someone fully accepts himself that he could be

positive and have a positive effect on his relationships, certainly, it influences the relationship with God too.

Karacsony carried out a concept, in which he wrote about social relations and the connection between relationships and pedagogy. He showed how to get in touch with someone to create communities efficiently and how to teach people to do this. The concept of Sandor Karacsony – who was an education science specialist – is that we cannot live without relations (neither in adulthood nor in childhood). Karacsony expects that the religious attitude has to appear in the relations.

Karacsony declares that the Reformed and Catholic sciences do not exist per se, but it has differences between the scientific conceptions of the different religious scientist because their attitude reflects their scientific mentality. If we consider the previous thought, we can see that Sandor Karacsony's philosophy appears strongly in his Reformed conviction and his life work is particular, singular, and thoughtful. "Reformed" word means that we have to turn to God's Word under all circumstances (Busch, 2008, p. 13).

We can declare that Sandor Karacsony was a real Reformed believer because he bore in his mind at first place the teaching of Jesus Christ. He showed how to use the Protestant principles in the practice through his concept and activity. He had the purpose in his life to be a good example for students to declare his Reformed faith.

Karacsony's activity was significant, he was a community man and he made a huge influence on the people, with whom he had a connection, particularly students. As a result, there are many institutions and workshops that protect the spiritual heritage of Sandor Karacsony. Certainly, there are some Karacsony students and some members from the Bible study group in his associations. Religion and education are the organic unity, a complete whole in Sandor Karacsony's life form, which opens up an exceptionally attractive, harmonic perspective in the area of treating people, and establishing contact with them.

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Author's contribution

JBK is a senior lecturer at the Institute of Education, University of Pannonia. His research interests include Religious Education, History of Education, and Research Methodology. The author is responsible for the study concept and design, analysis and interpretation of data and study supervision.

Ethics

The study procedures were carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. No ethics issues were involved because the study was based on a literature review.

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