

# New Legal Theory Concept: Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory

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## Article Info

### Article history:

Received Jun, 2025

Revised Jun, 2025

Accepted Jun, 2025

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### Keywords:

Integrative-Tetradic Realism;

Legal Certainty;

Substantive Justice

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## ABSTRACT

The absence of a legal theory that holistically integrates the four pillars legal certainty, substantive justice, social utility, and public participation, poses a key challenge in addressing the complexities of modern law, which is increasingly pluralistic and dynamic. This study aims to formulate and evaluate the Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory as a new legal paradigm. Using a normative juridical method with a conceptual approach and theory-comparison techniques, the research develops a comprehensive and systematic synthesis relevant to contemporary legal dynamics. The results show that Integrative-Tetradic Realism offers a holistic and transformative paradigm, addressing limitations of classical theories such as positivism, natural law, realism, and Critical Legal Studies. By integrating normative, sociological, philosophical, and practical dimensions, and emphasizing its four pillars, this theory provides an adaptive framework that balances legal structures, moral values, social contexts, and public participation. It aims to create a legal system that is normatively valid, just, contextual, and responsive to societal changes. Acting as a bridge between ideal law and empirical reality, it offers a conceptual foundation for inclusive, ethical, and functional legal reform in modern society.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of legal theory over the past decade has highlighted the need for a more comprehensive approach to address the complexities of modern law, as classical theories such as legal positivism, which emphasize legal certainty, often fail to capture the social dynamics and rapid changes in societal contexts [1]. Furthermore, legal realism, which focuses on practice and social context, has yet to optimally integrate the values of justice and public participation in a holistic manner [2].

In response to this necessity, the Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory has been introduced as a new legal paradigm that combines four main pillars: legal certainty as the foundation of normative stability, substantive justice as the moral principle in legal application, social utility positioning law as an instrument for societal welfare, and public participation ensuring active community involvement in legal processes and norm formation [3]. The integration of these four pillars seeks to address the challenges posed by the complex and pluralistic nature of law in the modern era [4].

Previous research has made important contributions to the development of legal theory; Tamanaha emphasized the significance of legal realism as a bridge between norms and social practices, yet his work did not deeply integrate the aspect of social utility [5]. Coleman analyzed jurisprudential structures with a focus on legal certainty, but with limited discussion on public participation [6]. Alexy foregrounded the argument of justice within normative law, while empirical and social dimensions received less attention [7]. Leiter explored the relationship between legal realism and doctrine but did not fully encompass the principles of substantive justice and public participation [8]. Hunt addressed legal sociology from a social perspective but did not systematically formulate the integration of the core legal pillars [9]. From these studies, a gap is evident—there is a lack of theory that holistically integrates the four pillars necessary to confront the social dynamics of contemporary law [10].

Ontologically, the Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory views law as a dynamic social construct that evolves through interactions among norms, legal actors, and contextual socio-political conditions, thus law is not a static entity but a continuously transforming phenomenon aligned with societal changes [11]. This paradigm expands the understanding of law beyond written norms by accommodating empirical facts and cultural contexts as integral parts of legal reality [12].

From an epistemological standpoint, this theory combines a normative deductive approach with an empirical inductive method, allowing legal studies not only to be based on doctrine and legal texts but also on how law functions and is experienced in real social practice, thereby producing more critical, reflective, and applicable analyses within the context of social change [13]. This dual methodology supports the development of legal theory capable of adapting to evolving times and societal needs [14].

The axiological aspect of this theory asserts that the values of substantive justice, social utility, and public participation are not

merely normative ideals but fundamental principles that must be realized for law to gain social legitimacy and sustainable effectiveness, especially in increasingly pluralistic and democratic societies [15]. Active community involvement in the formation and implementation of law becomes a prerequisite for a legal system that functions justly and transparently [16].

Moreover, the relevance of Integrative-Tetradic Realism is increasingly crucial in addressing global issues such as climate change, the digital revolution, and social inequality, which require adaptive, equitable, and inclusive legal responses. The four foundational dimensions and pillars offered by this theory are expected to provide a robust conceptual basis for formulating legal policies capable of comprehensively and sustainably tackling these challenges [17]. The development of this theory also opens opportunities for legal innovation that balances legal certainty with social flexibility [18].

Therefore, the advancement of Integrative-Tetradic Realism constitutes an academic and practical urgency in contemporary legal studies, serving as a theoretical foundation to support scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in creating legal systems responsive to the broad needs of society, inclusive, and adaptable to social dynamics in the era of globalization and digitalization [19]. This research is expected to enrich the corpus of legal thought while providing tangible contributions toward the renewal of legal systems in Indonesia and worldwide [20].

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Four Tetradic Pillars serve as the foundational framework for constructing an integrative and responsive legal paradigm that aligns with the social, political, and moral dynamics of society. These pillars are as follows:

### 2.1 Legal Certainty

Legal certainty constitutes the fundamental basis of any legal system, requiring clear, consistent, and predictable rules to prevent arbitrary

actions and to maintain social stability. This principle, as emphasized by legal positivism, regards codified norms as the core of legal order. Without legal certainty, the rights of individuals and institutions cannot be effectively protected. However, legal certainty must be balanced with the value of justice to avoid rigid formalism that disregards social and moral contexts [14].

## 2.2 *Substantive Justice*

Substantive justice emphasizes the material fairness of legal outcomes, advocating for laws that uphold human dignity and protect fundamental rights beyond mere formal adherence to legal norms. This pillar integrates moral principles into the application of law and requires that the legal system respond to the needs of a pluralistic society through an inclusive and reflective approach to social realities [21].

## 2.3 *Social Utility*

Social utility underlines the functional role of law in delivering tangible benefits and meeting the real needs of society. It calls for the legal system to adapt to social changes and specific conditions, drawing from legal realism which critiques the rigidity of formal law and promotes a legal response aligned with evolving social issues to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness [22].

## 2.4 *Public Participation*

Public participation in the legal process affirms law as a legitimate democratic construct by ensuring that the voices and interests of the public are inclusively represented through rational and deliberative discourse. This pillar shifts lawmaking from being the exclusive domain of elites to a participatory process with the people, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy and adaptability of the legal system in the face of socio-political dynamics [23].

## 3. METHODS

The research method employed in this study is a normative juridical approach combined with a conceptual framework, focusing on the examination of legal norms, principles, and concepts found in relevant legal literature, statutory documents, and the works of legal scholars [24]. This approach facilitates an in-depth analysis of the philosophical and conceptual foundations of various legal theories central to this research, namely Natural Law Theory, Legal Positivism, Legal Realism, and Critical Legal Studies [14]. In addition, this method incorporates a comparative theoretical technique to evaluate the similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations of each theory in articulating legal concepts and their application in practice [15]. Consequently, this research seeks to formulate a new theoretical synthesis by integrating key elements from the four legal theories in order to construct a more comprehensive and contextually relevant conceptual framework for contemporary legal development [3]. The normative juridical approach, combined with theoretical comparison, serves as an effective strategy for developing a robust, systematic legal theory framework grounded in clear philosophical foundations [25].

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory is a conceptual and multidimensional legal theory developed in response to the limitations of monodisciplinary legal theories, which often fail to adequately address the complexity of legal issues in contemporary society. This theory combines an integrative approach, bridging legal and non-legal dimensions with a tetradic structure consisting of four foundational pillars, situated within the framework of legal realism. It views law as a real and lived phenomenon that must function both effectively and justly in social life.

As a conceptual and normative approach in legal science, the Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory emerges from a critical stance toward classical legal theories

that fall short in delivering holistic justice in modern society. It stems from the fundamental belief that law should not merely serve as a formal mechanism for legitimizing power, but as an instrument for achieving substantive justice grounded in human dignity.

The theory is built upon four interrelated dimensions that collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of law. First is the normative dimension, which encompasses written laws, statutory regulations, and binding legal principles. This dimension reflects the legal-formal framework central to legal positivism. Second is the sociological dimension, which regards law as a social phenomenon shaped by structures, cultures, customs, and societal values. Here, law is not isolated but interacts dynamically with real-life social contexts. Third is the philosophical dimension, which emphasizes ethical and moral reflections on the law, addressing fundamental questions of justice, goodness, and humanity. This dimension invokes core values from legal philosophy, such as truth, human rights, and moral integrity. Fourth is the practical-realist dimension, which focuses on the implementation of law in real-world practice including law enforcement, judicial decision-making, and the conduct of legal institutions. This dimension highlights the gap between ideal written law and law as it is applied in daily life.

By integrating these four dimensions, the theory seeks to offer a more comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of law.

Furthermore, the theory is anchored in four central pillars. First, Legal Certainty, which demands clarity, consistency, and predictability in legal rules to provide guidance for society. Second, Substantive Justice, which insists that law must be not only procedurally correct but also materially just, ensuring meaningful protection especially for marginalized individuals and groups. Third, Social Utility, which asserts that law must be

socially beneficial, contributing to public welfare and solving social problems. Fourth, Public Participation, which underscores the importance of active citizen involvement in the creation and implementation of law, thereby preventing legal elitism and authoritarianism.

The Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory offers a transformative legal model that combines normative rationality, moral justice, social effectiveness, and democratic legitimacy. Its guiding principle is: *"A balance between structure, values, and practice is the essence of contemporary legal justice."* Living law, in this view, is law that bridges the interests of the state and the people with a spirit of justice and utility. In this way, the theory establishes its relevance as a new conceptual foundation for a legal system that is not only legally valid but also ethically meaningful and functionally responsive in society.

*"Een rechtssysteem dat slechts op regels rust zonder morele ziel, sociale nut en publieke stem, is als een brug zonder fundamenten: wettig gebouwd, maar nooit in staat om mensen werkelijk te verbinden."*

*(A legal system that relies solely on rules without moral spirit, social benefit, and public voice is like a bridge without a foundation: legally constructed, yet never truly capable of connecting people).*

*"Het ideale recht is een levend recht, geworteld in de sociale realiteit, doordrongen van ethische waarden, functioneel werkzaam, en gevormd door de deliberatieve participatie van het volk binnen een dynamisch kader van gerechtigheid. Daarom moet het recht een brug van evenwicht zijn tussen staat en maatschappij, tussen tekst en context, tussen logica en ethiek, tussen stabiliteit en verandering."*

*(The ideal law is a living law rooted in social realities, infused with ethical values, functioning effectively, and built through the people's deliberative participation within a framework of dynamic justice. Therefore, law must serve as a bridge of balance between the state and society, between text and context, between logic and ethics, and between stability and change).*

Table 1. Comparison Of Previous Legal Theories

Legal Theory	Core Ideas	Advantages	Disadvantages
Natural Law Theory	Law originates from universal morality and rationality; law must reflect justice and morality; law consists of eternal law, divine law, natural law, and human law (Aquinas).	Integrates reason and faith; law as a tool for moral education; provides moral foundation for positive law; universal and constant principles; legitimacy to reject unjust laws.	Criticized by legal positivism for separating law and morality; can be seen as subjective and difficult to apply in modern positive law.
Legal Positivism	Law is rules created and enforced by authoritative institutions; strict separation of law and morality; hierarchy of norms with Grundnorm as source of legitimacy (Kelsen).	Provides legal certainty and social stability; systematic and scientific understanding of law; strong tool for legal analysis; promotes objectivity and legal science.	Ignores substantive justice and morality; may cause ethical void and mechanistic law enforcement; too formalistic and rigid.
Legal Realism	Law is a social phenomenon influenced by judges' psychology, experience, and external factors; law as a living and changing social activity (Frank).	Emphasizes empirical and social studies; critiques myth of objective law; highlights subjectivity and judges' behavior; realistic and pragmatic.	Too relativistic and subjective; may threaten legal certainty and system stability; difficult to form consistent normative basis.
Critical Legal Studies (CLS)	Law as an instrument of power reinforcing social domination structures; rejects law as neutral system; law full of ambiguity and contradictions supporting elite interests.	Reveals hidden power relations in law; promotes deconstruction of justice and objectivity concepts; critical of inequality and legal ideology; advocates social change.	Tends to be radical and political; hard to apply universally; may generate excessive skepticism toward law and legal system.

Source: Data is Processed (2025)

Table 2. Critical Comparison of Classical Legal Theories and The Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory

Comparison Aspect	Legal Positivism	Legal Realism	Natural Law Theory	Critical Legal Studies (CLS)	Integrative-Tetradic Realism
Main Focus	Legal certainty from written rules	Legal practice and behavior in reality	Moral justice and natural law rationality	Deconstruction of law as domination and ideology	Integration of legal certainty, substantive justice, social utility, and public participation
Source of Legal Truth	Legislation and formal authority	Social facts and judicial decisions	Morality and universal rationality	Power relations, ideology, discourse	Integration of legal norms, social facts, moral values, and public aspirations
Main Strength	Orderliness and predictability	Sensitivity to empirical reality	Concern for moral values	Uncovering inequality structures in law	Balance between normative, empirical, ethical, and participatory dimensions
Theory Weakness	Ignores social reality and substantive justice	Unsystematic and tends to skepticism	Abstract and hard to measure	Destructive tendency, no constructive solutions	Synthesizes normative and critical dimensions in a holistic framework

Comparison Aspect	Legal Positivism	Legal Realism	Natural Law Theory	Critical Legal Studies (CLS)	Integrative-Tetradic Realism
Social Solution Orientation	Legalistic and formalistic	Juridical pragmatism	Moral idealism	Emancipatory and deconstructive	Systemic solutions based on transdisciplinary and contextual approach
Public Policy Application	Focus on formal legality	Focus on practical effectiveness	Focus on moral legitimacy	Critiques policies as reproduction of domination	Aligns legality, effectiveness, morality, and public aspirations
Fit with Digital Era and Social Disruption	Slow to adapt	Responsive but fragmented	Less adaptive to technological dynamics	Critical of disruption as new neoliberalism	Adaptive and participatory towards digital transformation and social disruption
Epistemological Basis	Legal-formal	Empirical-sociological	Rational-ethical	Postmodern and deconstructive	Integrative-critical (law as multidimensional and reflective system)
Potential for Legal Reform	Reform limited to legal products	Reform in practice and enforcement	Reform based on moral values	Reform based on critical consciousness	Systemic reform based on synthesis of legal dimensions and current social needs
Theoretical Character	Reductive and normative	Fragmented and empirical	Idealistic and normative	Radical and anti-hegemonic	Comprehensive, realistic, and socially and philosophically adaptive

Source: Data is Processed. (2025)

Table 3. Advantages of Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory

4 Tetradic Pillars	Main Focus	Comparative Advantage	Comparison with Other Theories
Legal Certainty	Orderliness and predictability of law	Maintains norm stability through clear and structured legal framework	Surpasses Positivism’s rigidity by considering values
Substantive Justice	Fulfillment of true justice values	Emphasizes moral values and living justice in society	Complements Natural Law which is less operational
Social Utility	Law’s effectiveness for broader society	Adjusts legal norms to social realities and public needs	Integrates Realism’s view without ignoring normative values
Public Participation	Public involvement in legal processes	Encourages democratic deliberation and citizen inclusion in law-making	Surpasses elitist approaches in CLS which are often critical without solutions

Source: Data is Processed (2025)

Table 4. Theoretical and Philosophical Foundations of Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory

Aspect	Explanation
Ontological Foundation	Ontologically, the Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory grounds its understanding on law as a multidimensional entity that cannot be reduced merely to formal rules. Law is positioned as an open system dynamically interacting with ethical values, social facts, and political processes. This view rejects legal-positivist reductionism and promotes understanding law as a social mechanism bridging the will of the state and social realities. Law is seen as a "living law" entity adapting to social changes and evolving moral values.
Epistemological Foundation	Epistemologically, this theory emphasizes the plurality of legal knowledge sources for a comprehensive approach. Legal knowledge is acquired not only through dogmatic (normative) methods emphasizing systematic legal text structure but also through ethical reflection (justice values), empirical observation (real-life legal impacts), and democratic approaches (public dialogue and participation). This interdisciplinary approach combines legal theory, philosophy, sociology of law, and deliberative democracy, enabling an understanding of law that is textual, contextual, participatory, and responsive to societal realities.
Axiological Foundation	The four dimensions of the Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory reflect a comprehensive approach to law that goes beyond normative text to include social, philosophical, and practical realities. First, the normative dimension stresses law as binding written rules and legislation, foundational for legal positivism. Second, the sociological dimension views law as a social phenomenon influenced by society, culture, and value structures, making law dynamic and reflective of complex social realities. Third, the philosophical dimension offers an ethical reflection space to evaluate law's justice, goodness, and humanity, providing value orientation so law does not lose its substantive direction. Fourth, the practical-realist dimension highlights law's application in practice, through enforcement mechanisms, judicial decisions, and official behaviors, often revealing gaps between ideals and reality. These four dimensions rest on a solid axiological foundation embodied in four core values: substantive justice that favors universal morality and vulnerable groups beyond formal equality; legal certainty ensuring social and political stability; social utility oriented toward common welfare; and legal democracy emphasizing public participation as the core of legal legitimacy. These values, known as the Four Integrative Pillars according to Aris Prio Agus Santoso, encompass normative, ethical, empirical, and democratic approaches forming a comprehensive value structure for just, rational, and humane law formulation and implementation.

Source: Data is Processed (2025)

As a synthesis of various classical legal approaches, the Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory emerges as a theoretical construct that addresses the failures of reductionism in legal science by offering a holistic, critical, and contextual framework of thinking. By integrating four main dimensions; normative, sociological, philosophical, and practical-realist, grounded on the four pillars of legal justice: legal certainty, substantive justice, social utility, and public participation, this theory asserts that law must serve as a robust bridge between text and context, legality and morality, as well as the state and society. The

Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory, conceived by Aris Prio Agus Santoso as the principal researcher, explains that law cannot be understood solely as either certainty or justice but must be comprehended comprehensively through these four dimensions to effectively respond to complex social dynamics in a just and adaptive manner. This theory not only consolidates the strengths of positivism, realism, naturalism, and critical legal theory but also transcends their limitations through an integrative-transdisciplinary approach that is adaptive to the social, ethical, and digital complexities of the modern era. Consequently, the

Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory serves not only as an alternative foundation for a fair and functional legal system but also emphasizes that living law is ethical, reflective, and participatory in addressing the challenges of contemporary social justice.

### **Case Illustration 1: Regulation of Illegal Parking in Residential Areas**

Example:

In a densely populated residential neighborhood, illegal parking along the main road frequently causes traffic congestion, obstructs emergency access, and generates discomfort among residents. The local government issued a regulation prohibiting parking in the area, accompanied by fines for violators. However, due to limited parking infrastructure and insufficient public outreach, many residents continue to park improperly. Enforcement efforts by authorities occasionally trigger public protests and social tension.

#### **Integrative-Tetradic Realism Approach**

1. Normative Dimension (Codified Legal Norms)

The municipal regulation prohibiting parking on the main road serves as a clear legal foundation (legal certainty). The prescribed fines constitute a formal sanction aimed at preserving public order and guide law enforcement officers in executing their duties.

2. Sociological Dimension (Social and Cultural Context)

Legal norms must not operate in isolation from societal realities. In this case, limited parking space and the community's habitual roadside parking practices require acknowledgment. A sociological assessment is imperative to ensure that regulations do not unduly burden citizens, and alternative solutions such as the provision of additional parking facilities should be explored.

3. Philosophical Dimension (Ethics and Justice)

Enforcement must be rooted in the principle of substantive justice, rather than merely the mechanical application of rules. Law enforcement officers are expected to exercise discretion with fairness and humanity, particularly in consideration of vulnerable groups such as the elderly and persons with disabilities who may require special access.

4. Practical-Realistic Dimension (Field Implementation)

Legal enforcement should be consistent, transparent, and professional, avoiding excessive or repressive measures. Officers must receive training to foster effective communication with the public and respond sensitively to grievances.

#### **Implementation of the Four Pillars of Tetradic Realism**

1. Legal Certainty

Clear and consistently enforced regulations form the basis of effective enforcement, enabling the public to understand the legal consequences of their actions.

2. Substantive Justice

Legal enforcement considers residents' socio-economic conditions, ensuring that marginalized groups are not disproportionately disadvantaged. This includes providing equitable alternatives, such as designated parking zones.

3. Social Utility

The ultimate goal of the regulation is to promote collective order and well-being by reducing traffic congestion and ensuring access for emergency services.

4. Public Participation

Citizens should be actively engaged in the regulatory process through consultation forums or public deliberations, ensuring that

rules reflect communal needs and aspirations.

### **Case Illustration 2: Delayed Claims Processing by the Social Health Insurance Agency (BPJS Kesehatan)**

Example:

A member of the Social Health Insurance Agency (BPJS Kesehatan) faces difficulties in accessing healthcare services due to delayed claims, which stem from convoluted administrative procedures and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Consequently, the patient receives medical treatment later than necessary.

### **Integrative-Tetradic Realism Approach**

#### **1. Normative Dimension**

The procedural framework and legal basis for BPJS Kesehatan claims are well-established and serve as the normative reference (legal certainty). However, procedural complexity warrants critical review to ensure compliance with service standards without imposing excessive administrative burdens.

#### **2. Sociological Dimension**

Service delivery should account for the social realities of participants, including disparities in education levels and digital literacy. Administrative processes must therefore be accessible and equitable to all participants, irrespective of background.

#### **3. Philosophical Dimension**

Claims management must uphold the ethical imperative of health service provision, prioritizing the right to health and equitable access, especially for economically disadvantaged individuals.

#### **4. Practical Dimension**

Improving administrative efficiency and equipping staff with the necessary training will enable faster, more transparent claims processing and reduce the risks of negligence or abuse.

### **Implementation of the Four Pillars of Tetradic Realism**

#### **1. Legal Certainty**

Disseminating clear information about claims procedures ensures that members understand their rights and obligations under the law.

#### **2. Substantive Justice**

Priority should be given to participants with urgent medical needs and those from vulnerable populations, ensuring that service delivery aligns with principles of equity.

#### **3. Social Utility**

An effective BPJS system contributes to the broader goal of public health and enhances the well-being of the population at large.

#### **4. Public Participation**

Participants should be actively involved in service evaluation and improvement through accessible complaint mechanisms and feedback platforms.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

The Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory is a new legal paradigm that is holistic and transformative, emerging from a critical response to the limitations of classical legal theories such as positivism, naturalism, realism, and Critical Legal Studies (CLS). By integrating four core dimensions, normative, sociological, philosophical, and practical, this theory rests upon four foundational pillars: legal certainty, substantive justice, social utility, and public participation. It offers a conceptual approach that is more adaptive to the complexities of law in the modern era. The theory seeks to balance legal structures, moral values, social context, and the voice of the people, thereby constructing a legal system that is not only normatively legitimate but also just, contextual, and responsive to the dynamics of the times. As a bridge between ideal law and empirical reality, this theory holds the potential to serve as a relevant

conceptual foundation for inclusive, ethical, and functional legal reform in contemporary society.

As a recommendation, it is essential for academics, policymakers, and legal practitioners to begin adopting and developing the Integrative-Tetradic Realism Theory as a foundational framework for designing more inclusive and transformative legal policies. This approach can serve as an analytical tool for reforming national legal systems to be more adaptive to social dynamics, substantively just, and capable of bridging the gap between ideal legal norms and the empirical realities faced by modern society.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With utmost respect and deep appreciation, the author extends sincere gratitude to the Rector of Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Singgih Purnomo, MM, for his invaluable support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the research process. His commitment to fostering a progressive academic culture, along with his exemplary and inclusive leadership, has served as a profound source of inspiration for the author in developing ideas and completing this scholarly work. Without his mentorship and trust, this research would not have been accomplished successfully.

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