



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Liberal Cannabis Policies on Political Decisions Based on Civil State in the Northeastern Region

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to study the level of liberal cannabis policy and the political decisions model based on the civil state policy, the level of access to liberal cannabis policy, and the political decisions model based on the civil state policy that enhanced the quality of life of the population in the Northeastern region. The population in the Northeastern region consisted of 21,318,428 individuals, who formed the sample group of 400 people. The sample group was selected using a simple random sampling method by drawing lots until the required number was reached. The research instrument used was a questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.978. The research findings indicated that most questionnaire respondents were females between 18 and 25 years old, single, with a bachelor's degree education, and were students. Their monthly expenses ranged from 0 to 5,000 Baht, with household sizes of 4 and 5 members. They were in good physical health and spent 3-4 hours daily on social media like Facebook and LINE. This study also found that the level of liberal cannabis policy, the level of access to liberal cannabis policy, and the political decisions model based on the civil state policy that enhanced the quality of life of the population in the Northeastern region were overall at a moderate level ($\bar{X} = 3.46$, S.D. = .731). When considering each aspect, it is found that two aspects were at a high level, namely the aspect of liberal cannabis policy ($\bar{X} = 3.56$, S.D. = .716) and the aspect of civil state policy ($\bar{X} = 3.54$, S.D. = .902), while two aspects were at a moderate level, namely the aspect of political decisions ($\bar{X} = 3.50$, S.D. = .972) and the aspect of enhancing the quality of life of the population ($\bar{X} = 3.23$, S.D. = .905).

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INTRODUCTION

The wave of globalization significantly impacts the economies and societies of various countries worldwide, especially those with interconnected economies and high reliance on foreign nations, such as Thailand. According to the predictions of many scholars, this global trend affects economic, social, and political changes (Constitution Drafting Committee, 2015, pp. 81-83). Consequently, it influences the formulation of national economic development plans within the framework of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, including the transformation of Thailand towards Thailand 4.0 and the agenda for national reform, aiming for "security, prosperity, and sustainability". The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (2017) stated to Parliament, under the leadership of General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister, on Thursday, July 25, 2019, that

there are 12 central and 12 urgent policies. The statement from the Secretariat of the House of Representatives (2019) aims to elevate the sufficiency economy according to the National Economic and Social Development Plan and to drive communities towards security, prosperity, and sustainability, emphasizing “happiness” and “public welfare” through cooperation from all sectors in line with the principles of a civil state. The concept of a “civil state” posits that “all Thais are citizens of the nation,” the civil state model aims to mobilize all sectors to bring about sustainable changes in all dimensions. The mechanism driving these policies, as outlined by the Office of the Council of State (2017), is a crucial gear in propelling the economy to help develop the quality of life for Thai people. In addition to the civil state policy, there are also notable policies of the government under Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, such as the policy of unlocking cannabis from its classification as a Type 5 narcotic, announced on June 9, 2022. This policy opens opportunities for people to reasonably benefit from cannabis and hemp (BBC Thai, 2022). Despite the legalization of the plant, questions remain regarding how much this policy can increase income for the people and to what extent the government will regulate cannabis and hemp. The Royal College of Physicians of Thailand suggests that the government should expedite legal measures to control cannabis and cannabis products, urging the Parliament to expedite the drafting of the Cannabis and Hemp Act to protect consumers from inappropriate cannabis consumption (The Royal College of Physicians of Thailand, 2022).

Based on the reasons mentioned above, the scholars are interested in studying whether the people in the Northeastern region can access government policies and to what extent they can access the liberal cannabis policy, which is a government policy. When accessed, what benefits can be derived from the liberal cannabis policy? To what extent can this policy enhance the quality of life of the people? Additionally, how influential are the civil state policy and the liberal cannabis policy on the political decision model of the people in the Northeastern region? There has been no prior study on the liberal cannabis policy that affects political decisions and the guidelines for developing civil state policy to enhance the quality of life of the people in the Northeastern region. Therefore, it would be beneficial to strengthen knowledge and apply it in policy formulation for the benefit of most of the population in the country in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

State policy concept

The concept of state policy originated in 2015 at the event “Integrating People's Power for Grassroots Economy” as part of the government's development policy under the administration of General Prayut Chan-o-cha, in collaboration with various sectors, including the government, private sector, academia, and the public (Achavanuntakul, 2016). This concept aims to apply the sufficiency economy principles as a guideline to address people's problems and achieve the country's vision of “security, prosperity, and sustainability,” establishing a foundation for the future according to the “Thailand 4.0” model. One of the critical components is driving the country through a “civil state,” which emphasizes holistic collaboration and coordination. The term “civil state” originates from the first verse of the Thai national anthem, which signifies “Thailand unites Thai people with flesh and blood – It is land of Thailand belongs to the Thais – Long maintained its independence – Because the Thais unite together”. Therefore, the “civil state” serves as a pathway to fostering unity and strength among the people in Thai society without discrimination or division (Pinprateep, 2015, 250: p.7).

Cannabis policy concept

Thailand has had cannabis laws since 1934, prohibiting its use and possession (Kanato et al., 2016) until the announcement of the Narcotics Act (No. 7) in 2019, which opened opportunities for cannabis and hemp to be utilized for medical research and development, as well as for medical treatment under the supervision and control of physicians (Changket, 2019).

Research questions

1. What is the level of liberal cannabis policy and the political decision model based on civil state policy?
2. At what level is the access to liberal cannabis policy and the political decisions model based on the civil state policy, which aims to enhance the quality of life of the people in the Northeastern region?

Objectives of the study

1. To study the level of liberal cannabis policy and the political decisions based on the civil state policy.
2. To study the level of access to liberal cannabis policy and the political decisions model based on the civil state policy that enhances the quality of life for people in the northeastern region.

Research hypothesis

The sample group reflects the level of impact of the liberal cannabis policy on political decisions and the guidelines for developing civil state policy to enhance the quality of life for people in the north eastern region at a moderate level or higher.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Scope of the Study

1. Population and sample group

1.1 Population: The population consists of 21,318,428 people residing in the northeastern region of Thailand (Office of the Election Commission of Thailand, 2021).

1.2 Sample group: The sample group comprises 400 eligible voters from the northeastern region, divided into 227 females and 173 males. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, which has a reliability level of 95.5% and a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ (Yamane, 1973; Suwanrak, 2012: p.146). The sample was randomly selected and distributed across various provinces using multi-stage sampling through drawing lots.

2. Variables include:

2.1 Status and general information of the respondents: gender, age, marital status, educational background, occupation, approximate personal monthly expenses (in Baht), number of household members (including the respondent), physical health status, the most used social media platform each day, and the number of hours per day spent on social media.

2.2 Independent variables: Liberal cannabis policy encompasses the following aspects: policy objectives, knowledge of cannabis cultivation, the economic aspect of cannabis cultivation, recreational cannabis cultivation, control and monitoring, cannabis policy alternatives, and information awareness.

2.3 Dependent variables: Quality of life development, which encompasses health, social security, human rights, social partnership promotion, occupation, and global food safety centers.

2.4 Mediation variables: There are two mediation variables. The first is the civil state policy, and the second is political decisions, which include political interest, political discussions, political involvement, fundamental political rights, political intermediaries, political partnerships, and political parties.

Research instruments: The research instruments used in this study are in the form of a questionnaire divided into six parts as follows:

Part 1: General Status and Information of Questionnaire Respondents. The type of instrument is in the form of a checklist.

Part 2: Questions related to liberal cannabis policy, comprising seven variables: cannabis policy objectives, knowledge of cannabis cultivation, the economic aspect of cannabis cultivation, recreational cannabis cultivation, control and monitoring, cannabis policy alternatives, and information awareness.

Part 3: Questions concerning political decisions, including seven variables: political interest, political discussions, political involvement, fundamental political rights, political intermediaries, political partnerships, and political parties.

Part 4: Questions regarding the civil state policy, which includes guidelines for developing the civil state policy.

Part 5: Questions concerning the development of people's quality of life, comprising six variables: health, social security, human rights, promotion of social partnerships, occupation, and global food safety centers.

Part 6: Recommendations beneficial to the impact of the civil state policy on political decisions and the guidelines for developing civil state policy to enhance the quality of life for people in the northeastern region.

Data analysis

1. Analysis of data to inspect the quality of the instrument

1.1 Content validity analysis by calculating the index of congruence between the questions and the operational definitions and indicators of observed variables in each latent variable (item-objective congruence: IOC). The questionnaire was given to experts to assess the quality of the questions in terms of content validity. A purposive sampling method was used to select three experts to evaluate the validity of the questions. They were asked to evaluate the congruence of the questions with the operational definitions and indicators of observed variables in each latent variable to analyze the item objective congruence (IOC) index. The IOC values for all questions used in this study ranged from 0.66 to 1.00, indicating that the IOC values for all questions in the questionnaire were more significant than 0.50. It can be concluded that all questions were congruent with the operational definitions, demonstrating that the questions were congruent and appropriate. Therefore, it can be determined that the questions were congruent or had content validity.

1.2 Reliability analysis of the questionnaire was conducted for each latent variable and overall by calculating the alpha (α) coefficient using Cronbach's method. The questionnaire developed was tried out with a sample of 40 individuals from the population (in Rayong province), not the sample group. The data collected from this try-out was then analyzed to determine the reliability of the questionnaire for each latent variable. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire questionnaire was 0.978.

2. Data Analysis for addressing the research objectives on the study of the impact of liberal cannabis policy on political decisions based on the civil state policy that enhances the quality of life for people in the northeastern region. Statistics used for analysis are as follows:

2.1 Data analysis includes basic statistical measures for general data, such as percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Data interpretation

1. Data interpretation criteria are defined as follows (Srisa-ard, 2002):

4.51 – 5.00	Indicates the highest level.
3.51 – 4.50	Indicates a high level.
2.51 – 3.50	Indicates a moderate level.
1.51 – 2.50	Indicates a low level.
1.00 – 1.50	Indicates the lowest level.

RESULTS

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of respondents in the questionnaire sample group as displayed in the table below.

Status	Number (People)	Percentage
1. Gender		
1.1 Male	173	43.30
1.2 Female	227	56.70
2. Age		
2.1 18 - 25 years	239	59.80
2.2 26 - 33 years	56	14.00
2.3 34 - 41 years	39	9.80
2.4 42 - 49 years	39	9.80
2.5 50 – 57 years	21	5.30
2.6 58 years and above	6	1.50
3. Marital Status		
3.1 Single	284	71.00
3.2 Living with a Spouse	92	23.00
3.3 Widowed/Divorced	14	3.50
3.4 Separated	10	2.50
4. Education Background		
4.1 Junior High School	4	1.00
4.2 Senior High School	122	30.50
4.3 Diploma	26	6.50
4.4 Bachelor's Degree	215	53.80
4.5 Master's Degree	21	5.30
4.6 Doctorate Degree	12	3.00
5. Occupation		

Status	Number (People)	Percentage
5.1 Student/Undergraduate	151	37.80
5.2 Househusbands/Housewife	6	1.50
5.3 General laborer	60	15.00
5.4 Factory worker	42	10.50
5.5 Company employee	9	2.30
5.6 Subdistrict headman/Village headman	3	0.80
5.7 Local government officials, local council members	2	0.50
5.8 Government officer	55	13.80
5.9 State employee/State laborer	45	11.30
5.10 Self Employed	27	6.80
6. Your daily expenses per month are approximately		
6.1 0 - 5,000 Baht	140	35.00
6.2 5,001 – 10,000 Baht	117	29.30
6.3 10,001 – 15,000 Baht	45	11.30
6.4 15,001 – 20,000 Baht	37	9.30
6.5 20,001 – 25,000 Baht	11	2.80
6.6 25,001 – 30,000 Baht	18	4.50
6.7 30,001 Baht or more	32	8.00
7. Number of household members		
7.1 2 people	35	8.80
7.2 3 people	71	17.80
7.3 4 people	134	33.50
7.4 5 people	85	21.30
7.5 6 people	41	10.30
7.6 7 people or more	34	8.50
8. How is your physical health?		
8.1 Health and wellness	328	82.00
8.2 Minor illnesses	30	7.50
8.3 Chronic diseases but can take care of oneself	26	6.50
8.4 Chronic Illnesses Requiring Occasional Care	1	0.30
8.5 Chronic Illnesses Requiring Regular Care	1	0.30

Status	Number (People)	Percentage
8.6 Bedridden and requiring close medical supervision	1	0.30
8.7 No annual health check-up, so unaware of any chronic diseases	13	3.30
9. Which social media do you use the most each day?		
9.1 Facebook	216	54.00
9.2 Line	63	15.80
9.3 Twitter	13	3.30
9.4 Instagram	40	10.00
9.5 YouTube	26	6.50
9.6 TikTok	39	9.80
9.7 Online games that allow you to chat with others	3	0.80
10. How many hours per day do you use the social media mentioned in item 9?		
10.1 1-2 hours per day	105	26.3
10.2 3-4 hours per day	145	36.3
Total	400	100

2. Results of the analysis on the impact level of the liberal cannabis policy on political decisions and the guidelines for developing the civil state policy to enhance the quality of life for people in the northeastern region, both overall and in specific aspects, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Questions by Aspect	\bar{X}	S.D.	Interpretation
Liberal Cannabis Policy (P)	3.56	.716	High
Political Decisions (D)	3.50	.972	Moderate
Civil State Policy (Ci)	3.54	.902	High
Quality of Life Development (Dq)	3.23	.905	Moderate
Total	3.46	.731	Moderate

From Table 2, it is found that respondents have opinions about the level of the liberal cannabis policy on political decisions and the guidelines for developing civil state policy to enhance the quality of life for people in the northeastern region. Overall, it is at a moderate level with ($\bar{X} = 3.46$, S.D. = 0.731). When considering each aspect, it is found that two aspects are at a high level, and two are at a moderate level. The aspect with the highest level is the liberal cannabis policy with ($\bar{X} = 3.56$, S.D. = 0.716), followed by the state policy with ($\bar{X} = 3.54$, S.D. = 0.902). The aspect at a moderate level

comes first in political decisions with ($\bar{X} = 3.50$, S.D. = 0.972), and the last is the quality-of-life development of people with ($\bar{X} = 3.23$, S.D. = 0.905).

DISCUSSION

The results regarding the impact of liberal cannabis policy on political decisions and the guidelines for developing civil state policy to enhance the quality of life for people in the northeastern region are presented. Overall, the research results align with the research framework and hypotheses. Several critical points for discussion have been identified by the researchers, as follows:

1. Liberal cannabis policy: The mean score indicates a high level of control and monitoring of cannabis policy and alternatives, information awareness, and recreational cannabis cultivation. At a moderate level are aspects such as knowledge of cannabis cultivation, the economic aspects of cannabis cultivation, and the cannabis policy objectives. These findings align with the research hypotheses, suggesting that the level of the liberal cannabis policy based on political decisions and the guidelines for developing civil state policy to enhance the quality of life for people in the northeastern region is moderate. This is consistent with the research of Srisukchayakul (2021) on cannabis politics, which found that the use of cannabis policy in public health services is appropriate and meets the needs of the population, promoting support for the agricultural industry, competition, and the promotion of cannabis-related policies, which will become more prominent, and many political parties will raise this issue in the next election. It is also consistent with the research of Taupachit and Kessomboon (2021) on cannabis policy: a comparative analysis of Thailand, the United States, Canada, Germany and Israel, which found that the use of cannabis for medical purposes and the format should be appropriate for the context. For Thailand, it should be open for use by service providers or self-treatment, with various systems covering production, cultivation, distribution, use, and comprehensive advertising control; aligned with the research of Eksuweeraphong (2022), which found that the situation of cannabis possession for medical purposes in Surat Thani Province, perceptions regarding cannabis laws, and the use of cannabis for medical purposes by the general public and patients still deviate from reality due to receiving inaccurate information. This leads to unrealistic expectations regarding the use of cannabis for medical purposes, contrary to the intentions of the law, aligned with the research of Thararup and Pongpirun (2022), studying the perspectives of the community on the liberal medical cannabis policy, it was found that: (1) During the years 2019-2022, the liberal cannabis policy for medical purposes has enabled patients to receive treatment from physicians at cannabis clinics and has allowed community enterprise groups to cultivate cannabis in accordance with the law. (2) Regarding the perspective of community enterprise groups authorized to cultivate cannabis, the policy aims to use medical benefits to generate income for community enterprise groups. (3) Regarding the perspective of farmers who wish to join community enterprise groups for cannabis cultivation, the policy aims to use medical benefits and provide opportunities for legal cannabis cultivation by farmers., aligned with the research of Unyaphan and Nonthanathorn (2021), investigating the knowledge, attitudes, and practices towards cannabis use among the people in Bangkok metropolitan, it was found that attitudes towards medical aspects, legal aspects, economic aspects, and social aspects, among others, influence the practices related to cannabis use., in line with the research of Mueannuek and Nonthanathorn (2022), which examined the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding cannabis use among residents in the southern region, it was found that attitudes towards the legality, economic aspects, social aspects, and others have an impact on the practices related to cannabis use among the population in the southern region., in line with the research conducted by Mueannuek and Nonthanathorn (2021), which examined the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding cannabis use among the population in the northern region, it was found that attitudes towards cannabis use, in terms of medical aspects, legal and policy aspects, economic aspects, social aspects, and others, influence the practices related to cannabis use among the population in the northern region., in line

with the research conducted by Hemnuk and Nonthanathorn (2021), which explored the knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding cannabis use among the population in the central region, it was found that attitudes towards cannabis use, in terms of legality, economics, social factors, and others, influence the practices related to cannabis use among the population in the central region., aligned with the research conducted by Saran Paisitpiriya and Nonthanathorn (2021), which explored the knowledge, attitudes, and practices towards cannabis use among the population in the central region, it was found that attitudes towards cannabis use, concerning medical aspects, legal and policy aspects, economic aspects, social aspects, and others, influence the practices related to cannabis use among the population in the northeastern region., and in line with the research by Chankheagla (2022) on the management models of the cannabis business, it was found that the effectiveness and efficiency of cannabis business management depend on key factors, including political policy guidelines, organizational management processes, suitable locations, quality cannabis products, and effective marketing channels.

2. Political decisions: It was found that the mean score is at a moderate level. respondents still need to learn about the extent to which such policies affect their decisions or their affiliation with political parties may already dictate their choices, thereby minimizing the impact of state policy on their decisions. Thosuwanchinda (1992) stated that individual decisions are based on a variety of choices, with the best option being the one that best meets the goals or desires of the voters. This aligns with the research of Kenaphoom (2016) on democratic-style political decisions: concepts and characteristics. In a democratic system, political decisions are related to the ownership of democratic power, forms, and methods of using democratic power, as well as the benefits or impacts that occur. Political decisions depend on the foundation of political benefits, aligning with the research of Aphidennaphalai (2019) on the factors that influence people's decisions in electing politicians, with the most influential factor being the benefits that people will receive from politicians. This corresponds to the research of Photisuk (2016), which found that people's overall participation in local politics is moderate, and political decisions are moderate. This aligns with the research of Mala (2020) on the issue of political authority relations, which found that there is a mixture of both old and new patterns of power relations, especially about the new patterns, including the reputation or political achievements of each candidate, the policies of each candidate, the popularity of each candidate's political movement, and the reputation of the political party to which the candidate belongs.

3. Civil state policy: It was found to be at a high level in 19 aspects, such as increasing the benefits of the 30 baht universal coverage scheme card, the scheme to reduce water and electricity bills, the government's co-payment scheme, adjusting and increasing the living allowance for the elderly, persons with disabilities, the underprivileged, and those living in the community to ensure a valuable, happy, and enhanced quality of life. Other aspects include reducing loan interest rates for farmers to alleviate the burden of interest on them, tourism development and integration, promoting secondary city tourism (Nawatwithi: Tourism Community Scheme), debt moratorium or loan interest relief for customers of the Government Savings Bank, the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC), or extending debt repayment periods and enhancing the quality of life to drive grassroots economy in accordance with the "Sustainable Thainess Scheme" and The "We Win" financial aid scheme, among others. These aspects are at a moderate level in 10 items, such as supporting large-scale agricultural extension system project promotion or linking markets for farmers participating in large-scale agricultural extension system projects, the "One Tambon One Million Baht" project to empower communities to address issues directly and collaborate in accordance with civil state principles, and the People's State Credit project for independent occupational groups provided by the Government Savings Bank, such as vendors, motorcycle taxi drivers, and public transport service providers. Achavanuntakul (2016) stated that the government currently emphasizes the leading role of both the government and the private sector in fostering cooperation in operations. It is consistent

with the findings of Phattaphon Thotsamat et al. (2022) who conducted a study on the efficacy of implementing the Pracharat policy in Buriram Province. The study concluded that several factors, such as addressing poverty, improving quality of life, lowering social disparity, and satisfaction with the Pracharat policy, were generally rated at a moderate level. This also aligns with the research of Chongsithiphol et al. (2020) on evaluating government policy in promoting SMEs in Thailand: a comparative study by region and type, which found that the average is at a high level in terms of accessing funding sources and financial services and in terms of convenience in contacting government services. This corresponds to the research of Lorprakhon (2020) on The Implementation of Pracharath Policies into Action: A Case Study of Pracharath Rak Samakkee Chachoengsao (Social Enterprise) Co., Ltd., which found that the civil state connection policy has clear goals and supports policies and resource allocation but still has budget constraints. This aligns with the research of Sirisukantha (2018) on the participation of the elderly in driven economic foundations and civil state policies in Maetha district, Lampang province, which found that grassroots economy and people's participation in operations are mainly in agricultural projects, with overall participation levels at a moderate level. This aligns with the research of Sasen (2021) on the citizen's role and duty according to the new democratic way of local and community development under the civil state policy: a case study of Dong Fa Huan community, Ban Nong Manao, village no.7, Kham Yai sub-district municipality, Muang district, Ubon Ratchathani province, where community participation in public affairs, civil influence rights, community consciousness, and local cultural conservation are at a high level. At a moderate level, they are learning and demonstrating public commitment, community responsibility, and community lifestyle for community and local development.

4. Quality of life development: It was moderate in various aspects, including health, social equity promotion, the global food safety center, human rights, social security, and occupation. UNESCO (1981) stated that quality of life is the feeling of satisfaction with various components of life and living in a good, happy environment. It encompasses physical and mental well-being and the ability to adapt to the environment and society. World Health Organization (1994) highlighted that quality of life is a multidimensional concept that blends individual perceptions of physical and mental well-being, independence, social relationships, environment, and personal beliefs under cultures, values, and individual life goals. Similarly, Meeberg (1993) explained the meaning of quality of life as the level of satisfaction with life in all aspects, including personal mental well-being. Ferrell (1996) described the quality of life as a sense of maturity in life gained from life experiences, comprising four dimensions: physical, mental, social, and spiritual, as noted by Khonto-Nguen (2016, p. 5), stated that quality of life means living well or living happily. "Quality of life" has many components, especially those related to the environment and the emotional and mental feelings of individuals in that state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Proposed policy or research findings implementation

1.1 Implementing policies to align with the local context. Policymakers should continuously adjust, change, or amend policies accordingly.

1.2 Amending laws for the benefit of the majority of the population and projects that enhance the resilience of the grassroots economy (Pracharath Project) should be sustainable and address long-term issues.

CONCLUSION

The study of the impact of liberal cannabis policy on political decisions and the guidelines for developing civil state policy to enhance the quality of life for people in the northeastern region indicates that people are still unsure whether accessing cannabis policy will enhance their quality of life. Based on the study results, the public is uncertain about the objectives of cannabis policy and who it benefits. It is recommended to increase public knowledge about cannabis cultivation and its policies. Currently, liberal cannabis policy has not significantly increased income for the majority of

the population. However, it has led to increased political interest among the population and interest in the policies of political parties. As for the guidelines for developing state policy to enhance the quality of life for people in the northeastern region, most people agree with policies that can improve their quality of life in the long term. These include increasing benefits for the universal coverage scheme card, adjusting and increasing the living allowance for the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the underprivileged, reducing loan interest rates for farmers, and providing debt relief.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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